

Thesis Submitted For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Oscar Wilde and East Asia: Empire, Nation-State, and the
Globalisation of Aestheticism**

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2011

Declaration

This thesis is all my own work. I acknowledge the University of London regulations on plagiarism and confirm that all sources used to support my research are made explicit in references.

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Abstract

This thesis provides a new insight into the cosmopolitanism of Oscar Wilde, enlarging understanding of Wilde in a broader than national context. It illustrates how the interaction between the British Empire and the Far East contributed to Wilde's aestheticism and literary career, and how his writings were translated, comprehended and transformed in the Far East.

The first part, 'East Asia of Oscar Wilde: The Aesthetic Movement in the Empire', explores the multi-relationships of the aesthetic movement, the British Empire, and the global circulation of Oriental (Chinese and Japanese) commodities/immigrants/ideas, arguing Wilde's writings were cultural products of globalisation. The aesthetic movement was part of the Victorian mass culture, and closely tied to the expansion of the British Empire in the Far East in the late nineteenth century. It perceives Wilde's aestheticism and his participation in the British aesthetic movement as economics and politics within global commerce following the Industrial Revolution, at a time when there were accelerated movements of peoples and ideas across national borders within the British Empire.

The second part, 'Oscar Wilde in East Asia: Aestheticism and National Modernisation' examines the reception, comprehension and adaptation of Oscar Wilde's writings in the turbulent socio-cultural context of modern Japan and China during the early twentieth century. It analyses the literary, cultural and social impacts of Wilde on the modernisation of Japanese and Chinese cultural identities, investigating reader response to Wilde's writings in East Asia associated with the self-narration of emerging nation-states.

It concludes with 'Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism and the Global Circulation of Modernity', summarising the research on Wilde, aestheticism, and the aesthetic movement against the historical background of globalisation and modernisation.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I own sincere and earnest thankfulness to my supervisor Dr Anne Varty for her invaluable guidance during the past four years. This thesis would not have been possible without her help, support and patience. I am also very grateful for the sincere help from Professor Ewan Fernie when he was the director of postgraduate students (research) at Royal Holloway. My special thanks go to my parents in China, who always fully support my dreams.

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Introduction:

Oscar Wilde in a Transnational Context

Born in Dublin as a son of notable Anglo-Irish parents on 16 October 1854, Oscar Wilde received an elite English education at the University of Oxford, travelled to the Continent with J. P. Mahaffy in his youth, became famous through his lecture tour in the American New World, acquired a successful literary career in London, and suffered public disgrace in the same metropolis, exiled himself from England to the Continent after two years' hard labour in prison, and finally died in the Hotel d' Alsace in Paris on 30 November 1900. He has been widely recognised as a cosmopolitan writer, in whose writings multinational cultural elements can be traced. For example, Wilde was greatly indebted to French culture. His aestheticism not only showed a line of British poets going back through the Pre-Raphaelites to John Keats, but also sought inspiration from a group of French aesthetes such as Gautier, Baudelaire and Flaubert. As Richard Hibbitt points out, 'Wilde's own Francophilia and his knowledge of French literature are well known, as are the specific French influences on his own work' (66). Emily Eells argues that 'the dynamics of intertextual exchange at work both in the creation of his oeuvre and its early reception in France engaged him in a process of naturalisation as a French man of letters' (80). Julia Prewitt Brown's monograph *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* presents Wilde's position in the intellectual context of the German Romantics, the French Symbolists, and his own Victorian contemporaries, to depict Wilde's artistic cosmopolitanism against the background of European aesthetic tradition. Meanwhile, Wilde has an international readership. His works have been translated, published, distributed, read, reviewed, emulated and transformed in Europe, North America, the Far East, and other places of the world.

Wilde was a Victorian, but he has also been argued to be one of the nineteenth-century writers who were ‘modern’. As Peter Dickinson lists, the proliferation of Wilde’s posthumous personae embodies various ‘modern’ issues of the twentieth century; he could be read as a literary modernist, a sexual liberationist, an Irish nationalist, an anarchist, a socialist, an individualist, a feminist, an iconoclast, and a pop star (431).

Wilde’s name is usually associated with the British aesthetic movement, which occurred during the late nineteenth century. The movement began to emerge around mid-century in John Ruskin’s criticism of the visual arts. It flourished in the 1870s and 1880s, and led to the *fin-de-siècle* decadence. The aesthetic circle included the Pre-Raphaelites, Walter Pater, Wilde, A. C. Swinburne, William Morris, James McNeill Whistler, Christopher Dresser, E. W. Godwin, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons and Aubrey Beardsley, among others.

This thesis recognises the broad intellectual traditions of Wilde’s aestheticism and writings: the conceptual heritage of the Continental aesthetics, English Romanticism, late-Victorian liberalism and humanism, the Arts and Crafts movement, the Celtic Revival, and so on. Nonetheless, it intends to explore the significant yet so far relatively ignored influences of East Asia on Wilde’s literary career against the background of the British Empire’s expansion in the Far East in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, the thesis attempts to broaden the reception of Wilde in the Oriental context, examining the literary, political, social and cultural impacts of Wilde on Japan and China in transition, in other words, to explore how his writings participated in the narration of modernisation of the representative East Asian nation-states in the early twentieth century. In all, the thesis expects to portray a more comprehensive picture of Wilde’s cosmopolitanism and his global influence, and to characterise the aesthetic movement as a global socio-cultural phenomenon.

Literature Review

The introduction will make a brief review of Wilde studies and acknowledge the significant researches I am greatly indebted to in this thesis.

A prominent early critic to identify Wilde with the British aesthetic movement was Walter Hamilton. His famous defence of the movement, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* was published in 1882. This volume contains sections on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, John Ruskin, A. C. Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, the Grosvenor Gallery, and the Bedford Park Estate. Hamilton traces the roots of the movement to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of the late 1840s and early 1850s, to the critic and supporter of PRB, John Ruskin, to artists and designers of the fine and applied arts, and to a group of promising aesthetic poets including Wilde. In 1908, the first collected edition of Wilde's works was published by Methuen. The collections of Wilde's texts used most frequently nowadays are the 2004 Collins Classics edition of *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, and the ongoing project of multi-volumed *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* published by Oxford University Press. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* edited by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis was issued by Henry Holt Press in the year 2000. Karl Beckson's *Oscar Wilde: the Critical Heritage* collects the reception given to Wilde by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries. Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde* offers a valuable biography of Wilde in vivid detail.

In the past two decades, Wilde specialists have been cultivating various fields with significant academic achievements, such as close reading, theatre history and criticism, new historicism, Irish ethnic studies, gender studies, reader response, cultural criticism, biographic studies and translation studies. The significant monographs include Kerry Powell's *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (1990), Davis Coakley's *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish* (1994), Sos Eltis's *Revising Wilde: Society and Subversion in the Plays of Oscar*

Wilde (1996), Julia Prewitt Brown's *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (1999), Neil Sammells's *Wilde style: the plays and prose of Oscar Wilde* (2000), Jeff Nunokawa's *Tame Passion of Wilde: The Styles of Manageable Desire* (2003), Jarlath Killeen's *The Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* (2007), and so on. The representative collections include *Wilde the Irishman* edited by Jerusha McCormack (1998), *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* edited by Peter Raby (1997), *Wilde Writings: Contextual conditions* edited by Joseph Bristow (2003), and *Advances in Oscar Wilde Studies* edited by Frederick S. Roden (2004), to name but a few.

This thesis is also indebted to several exhibitions timed to commemorate the centenary of Wilde's death. They are *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* at the Geffrye Museum in London from July 2000 to January 2001, *The Wilde Years: Oscar Wilde and his Times* at the Barbican Arts Centre in London from October 2000 to January 2001, and *Oscar Wilde: Spendthrift of Genius* at the British Library from November 2000 to February 2001.

Besides the works of the aforementioned authors, this thesis is especially indebted to the pioneering research of the following Wilde scholars. My supervisor, Dr Anne Varty's *A Preface to Oscar Wilde* (1998) inspires me with the detailed analysis of Wilde's works and his aestheticism. Other preeminent scholars of Wilde studies and the British aesthetic movement, from whom I borrow substantial ideas for this thesis, include Regenia Gagnier, Linda Dowling, Diana Maltz, Ruth Livesey, and Zhou Xiaoyi, among others. I classify the literature review into three categories according to the concerns of my thesis: Wilde and commodity culture, Wilde and politics, and reception of Wilde.

Regarding the scholarship on the relationship between aestheticism and commodity culture, notably, Professor Regenia Gagnier offers an insightful reading in this perspective. Her monograph *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar*

Wilde and the Victorian Public (1986) persuasively argues that Wilde's dandyism is not a pretty pose, but a shrewd response to commercialism; Wilde advertised himself as a cultural product while he remained apart from, and cynical of, middle-class life; Wilde and his audiences belonged to an initial stage of modern consumerism. This research, which contains extended passages of social and economic analysis, pioneered the understanding of the role of arts and artists in a consumerist society. In *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (2000), Gagnier traces a change in Western economic theories in the late nineteenth century, and raises the issue of the new economic criticism. Although this is not a monograph about Wilde, it connects Wilde to the core arguments of aesthetics and economics several times. In Gagnier's account, Walter Pater and Wilde are given canonical status because they represented the late-Victorian 'insatiable consumer' in a capitalist market with highly individuated tastes. Gagnier points out that aestheticism was an expression of emerging consumer society, and as an aesthetic theorist, Wilde endeavoured to find a possibility of restoring or creating a common, shared taste for the public, while at the same time refusing to make his aestheticism become a mere circulation of goods in the marketplace. Gagnier also contributed thought-provoking articles on the discourses of late nineteenth-century economics and aesthetics to journals and symposia, for example, 'Aesthetics and Economics in *A Florentine Tragedy*' in Special Volume on Wilde and the Nineties of *Modern Drama* (March 1994), 'Modernity and Progress in Economics and Aesthetics' in *Rethinking Victorian Culture* edited by Juliet John and Alice Jenkins (2000), 'Production, Reproduction, and Pleasure in Victorian Aesthetics and Economics' in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* edited by Richard Dellamora (1999), to name but a few. Professor Gagnier's research paved the way for a new interdisciplinary understanding of Wilde's relationship with late nineteenth-century British economic, social and cultural conditions. Her works greatly inspire my thesis,

especially the first part. Moreover, Jonathan Freedman's *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism and Commodity Culture* (1990), which examines Henry James's work as it was influenced by and as it influenced aesthetic practice, and situates both the aesthetic movement and James's career in a social realm governed by the marketplace, offers some useful and insightful perspectives for considering the relationship between the aesthetic movement and commodity culture in a broader sense. Carolyn Lesjak's article, 'Utopia, Use, and the Everyday: Oscar Wilde and a New Economy of Pleasure' (2000), which is rich in theoretical analysis through referencing a wide range of modern theorists from Herbert Marcuse, Frederic Jameson, to Michel de Certeau and Theodor Adorno, argues for a new understanding of Wilde's concepts of pleasure and labour, which placed him in the company of William Morris.

Regarding the scholarship on the relationship between aestheticism and socio-political movements, Linda Dowling's *The Vulgarization of Art: the Victorians and Aesthetic Democracy* (1996) is particularly valuable. She argues that Wilde's fictional aristocrats represent not wealth and position, but a potentially universal superior way of being in the world, an anti-bourgeois aristocracy of mind or spirit. She claims that Wilde was symbolically sacrificed for being an aristocrat of aesthetic consciousness, and for believing in the power of art to create a harmonious and free human community. Diana Maltz's *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People* (2006) reveals the interdependence between British aestheticism and the class-based social reforms in late Victorian Britain. She describes a 'missionary aesthete' as 'a lover of beauty and a social reformer concerned to improve the material environment of the poor' (27). The missionary aesthetes included Ruskin, Pater, Wilde, William Morris, Olive Schreiner, and many others, who constituted an influential social network, imbuing *fin-de-siècle* artistic communities with political purpose and political lobbies with aesthetic sensibility. Dr Ruth Livesey

has inspired my research through colloquia, and her monograph *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (2007), which explores how the artists and writers involved in the socialist movement during this period evolved a distinct socialist aesthetic in creative tension with aestheticism.

Regarding the scholarship on reception studies, Sasaki Takashi's monograph *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Japanese Books and Magazines* (2007) and Yoko Hirata's paper 'Oscar Wilde and Honma Hisao, the First Translator of *De Profundis* into Japanese' offer useful first-hand materials for Wilde's reception in Japan. Some chapters of the second part of my thesis are indebted to *The Encyclopaedia of Oscar Wilde* edited by Yamada Tsuyoshi in 1997. Moreover, this thesis, especially the second part, is greatly indebted to Professor Zhou Xiaoyi's articles such as 'Oscar Wilde: An Image of Artistic Self-Fashioning in Modern China, 1909-1949' collected in *Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese literature* (2000), and 'Salome in China: The Aesthetic Art of Dying' collected in *Wilde Writings: Contextual Conditions* (2000) edited by Joseph Bristow. Bonnie S. McDougall, a professor of Chinese at the University of Edinburgh, also offers help to the second part of my thesis. Her book *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China* (1971) focuses on the influence of Western ideas on Chinese literary criticism and the modification of these ideas by some representative Chinese writers for their social and cultural purposes. In her monograph *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century* published in Hong Kong in 2003, there is a chapter devoted to the Chinese reception of Wilde, 'The Importance of Being Earnest in China: Early Chinese Attitudes towards Oscar Wilde'.

Furthermore, two current research projects must be included in the literature review. One is *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe* edited by Stefano Evangelista. The volume was published by London Continuum in 2010. It starts with two timelines. Paul Barnaby's 'Reception Timeline' offers an extensive

and detailed overview of the European reception of Wilde from 1877 to 2009. It records the translations of Wilde's works into forty-seven European languages, meanwhile covers the criticism and the creative reception of Wilde in Europe. Michelle Paull's 'Performance Timeline' compiles a comprehensive list of the European performances of Wilde's plays from 1890 to 2008 including dates, venues, directors, actors and other relevant information. The editor Evangelista then provides an insightful introduction to the volume, outlining the significant features of Wilde's reception in Europe. The following eighteen chapters vividly describe and examine the reception, comprehension, adaptation and transformation of Wilde in European countries in detail, such as Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Scandinavia, Central Europe, and Russia. In all, this is an excellent collection of reader response and reception studies contributed by eminent Wilde scholars, with helpful bibliographies. It traces the literary, cultural, political and social impacts of Wilde's multi-faceted works across Europe from the earliest translations and performances of his works in the 1890s to the present day, which deepens the comprehension of the European legacy of Wilde's works from multi-national perspectives. The volume offers a substantial and outstanding contribution to the scholarship on Wilde's cosmopolitanism. This is the latest published volume of the project 'the reception of British and Irish authors in Europe' (series editor: Elinor Shaffer), and I believe it is the first systematic and large-scale research on the reception of Wilde in a Pan-European context. Although this volume focuses on the European reception of Wilde and is not, therefore, directly relevant to the topic of the second part of my thesis – 'the reception of Wilde in East Asia' - I benefit greatly from the volume in analytical methods for my own research on the Oriental reception of Wilde. The other project is the ongoing 'Global Circulation Project' with Regenia Gagnier as the editor-in-chief, which examines

a global map and dialogue on how key Anglophone works, authors, genres, and literary movements have been translated, received, imitated/mimicked, adapted, or syncretised outside Britain, Europe, and North America, and, conversely, how key works from outside these areas have been translated, received, imitated/mimicked, adapted, or syncretised within Anglophone literary traditions.¹

So far, the project has already included some stimulating papers on the Chinese reception of canonical British writers, such as Guo Ting's 'Translating a Foreign Writer: A Case Study of Byron in China'.

Structure of This Thesis

Part One, 'East Asia of Oscar Wilde: The Aesthetic Movement in the Empire', explores the multi-relationships of the aesthetic movement, the British Empire, and the global circulation of Oriental commodities/immigrants/ideas (especially those of China and Japan), arguing Wilde's writings and the British aesthetic movement are cultural products of globalisation engendered by British imperialist expansion in the Far East during the late nineteenth century. Part One comprises a preface, three chapters, and a summary. This thesis challenges the reading of Wilde's aestheticism as an anti-bourgeoisie elite culture; instead, it proposes that the aesthetic movement was part of the Victorian mass culture, and closely bound up with Britain's political reality, both domestic and diplomatic. The thesis develops by discussing aspects of artistic influence, economic activity, political debate, and ideological communication. For example, it analyses the reception, imitation and assimilation of Chinese arts in the British aesthetic movement. It explores the conflicts and interdependence of aestheticism, global commerce, and cultural industry, arguing Chinese commodities bridged

¹ See Gagnier's introduction, <http://literature-compass.com/global-circulation-project/>

aestheticism and consumerism. It traces the influence of the Chinese immigrants to the West on the social efforts of the British aesthetic movement to promote the status of subaltern groups, including the ‘oppressed’ Irish. It records Wilde’s vision of Japanese applied arts and Japanese women in his construction of Japan as an aesthetic utopia, and how and why he later revised his illusion. It assesses the social and economic importance of Japanese arts to the aesthetic movement, which brought aestheticism significant public influence in Victorian Britain. It investigates Wilde’s interpretation of the ancient Chinese sage Zhuangzi’s Taoism, to examine how Wilde appropriated antique Oriental wisdom as an ideological resource for his late Victorian aestheticism. In the summary of the first part, the thesis perceives Wilde’s aestheticism as a globalised cultural, economic and political phenomenon within the British Empire.

Part Two, ‘Oscar Wilde in East Asia: Aestheticism and National Modernisation’ examines the translation, comprehension, adaptation and transformation of Wilde and his writings in the turbulent social-cultural context of modern Japan and China, arguing that the reception of Wilde in the representative East Asian countries in the early twentieth century not only embodies the globalisation of British culture, but also participates in the construction and self-narration of a modern national identity. Part Two comprises a preface, two chapters, and a summary. The thesis describes the process of how Japanese and Chinese intellectuals responded to the ideology of aestheticism, how Wilde’s works inspired Japanese and Chinese modern literature, such as new poems and modern dramas, how the Japanese and Chinese metropolitan cultural industries exploited the aesthetic movement, and how Japanese and Chinese politicians debated aestheticism and the aesthetic movement for their own purposes involving a certain range of political institutions, such as the nation-state and mass democracy, and realistic, urgent social affairs such as the reform of children’s education, and the rejection of arranged marriage. It records the ways in which

Wilde has been received, translated, evaluated and emulated in Japan and China, and assesses the literary, cultural and political influences of Wilde in East Asia in general. In the summary of the second part, the thesis aims to reach the conclusion that the cultural and social impacts of Wilde's writings shaped some characteristics of modern Japanese and Chinese societies in transition during the early twentieth century that had elementary capitalistic economies and immature democratic political structures. The globalisation of Wilde did not represent the homogenisation of world cultures; instead, it contributed to local diversity and participated in the modernisation of national cultural identities.

Finally, through reading Wilde in the perspective of the interaction of the British Empire and the Far East during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the conclusion of the thesis examines Wilde as a site of encounter shaped by the activated mechanism of empire and nations, to enrich the comprehension of the complexity and modernity of this multi-faceted writer. The thesis concludes that the British aesthetic movement encapsulates the cosmopolitan culture of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century; the reception and transformation of Wilde's writings in the Far East embodies the construction of modern national identity and culture in the early twentieth century.

The thesis employs a wide range of research methods, including close reading, translation studies, theatre criticism, reception theories, postcolonial studies, gender studies, cultural criticism, and comparative literature studies. The thesis makes a number of quotations from Japanese and Chinese texts, which are, as literally as possible, translated into English by me.

Part One

East Asia of Oscar Wilde: The Aesthetic Movement in the Empire

Between 1815 and 1914, a period referred to as Britain's 'imperial century' by some historians, the British Empire was the largest and most powerful empire in history, and the foremost global force in which 'the sun never set'. Alongside the formal control exerted over its colonies, dominions, dependencies and protectorates, Britain's dominance of commercial, financial, industrial, and naval power meant that it effectively controlled world trade and the economies of many nominally independent countries as well. As such, its immense power and influence stretched all over the world, shaping it in all manner of ways.

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, with Britain driving a more assertive expansionism, East Asia fell increasingly under the influence of the British Empire. This brought to these countries significant changes not only in industry and commerce but also in cultural and social life. However, there was an obvious trend in the opposite direction, too. Aspects of Chinese and Japanese cultures were recorded in the period's British newspapers, in parliamentary documents and in a body of writing by British merchants and traders. The East Asian cultures stimulated the prosperity and complexity of the Victorian culture. In contrast to the epigram of Kipling 'East is East and West is West, never the twain shall meet' (136), which indicated allegedly irreconcilable differences between the colonised and the coloniser, Victorian Britain was characterised by a global culture that assimilated both the East and the West.

The British Empire can be seen as a form of internationalism. First, its economy depended heavily on global trading. For example, as Peter Ward Fay estimates, in the 1840s the duties collected by British government on leaf tea imported from China annually amounted to some three million pounds, about half

the cost of running the Royal Navy (qtd. in Allingham). Profits from opium-trade paid a significant part of the cost of colonial administration in India (Trocki 9). As the British economist, William Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) described the global business of the Empire in 1866:

The plains of North America and Russia are our cornfields, Chicago and Odessa our granaries. Canada and the Baltic are our timber-forests; Australasia contains our sheep-farms, and in South America are our herds of oxen. Peru sends her silver, and the gold of California and Australia flows to London; the Chinese grow tea for us, and our coffee, sugar, and spice plantations are in all the Indies. Spain and France are our vineyards, and the Mediterranean our fruit-garden; and our cotton-grounds, which formerly occupied the Southern United States, are now everywhere in the warm regions of the earth. (*Coal Question*, Chapter XVI)²

Secondly, regarding politics and society, Britain for the first time had to consider her policy against the background of global networks. The expansion of the Empire was justified by ‘the white man’s burden’ (Kipling 215). However, while Britain was making the effort to ‘civilise’ and Christianise the indigenous peoples in her overseas territories, who were thought to be incapable of self-government, at the same time, the traditional elite ruling class of the Empire had to face various challenges from both within and outside the British isles: democracy, feminism, the labour unions, socialist movements, a growing educated population, fierce competition from other imperialist powers, growing nationalist spirits of the colonised, and the plea for more autonomy in Ireland. Finally, the Empire represented a global cultural process. At home, especially in London, the consumption of global commodities overlapped with cosmopolitan culture in the metropolis; abroad, the Empire cultivated a global Anglophone culture through the dissemination of English language, literature, art and

² http://www.eoearth.org/article/The_Coal_Question:_The_Problem_of_the_Trading_Bodies [cite 5 May 2008]

ideologies, with translation, reception, and transformation of English culture by the global recipients. Therefore, while it is risky to assert that imperialism determined or influenced all the major British affairs during the Victorian era, the Empire might be seen as the web upon which much of the politics, economy, culture and social ideology were woven.

As a significant cultural trend in the late Victorian period, the British aesthetic movement coincided with the phase of British expansionist imperialism known as High Empire (1870-1918), when the British government and the public became infused with a conscious mood of imperial expansion. They deliberately sought the acquisition of territory and of further trading concessions, instead of merely accepting its growth in what J. R. Seeley called 'a fit of absence of mind' (8). To explore the relationship between the aesthetic movement and the Empire, it will be considered in both national and transnational dimensions. Specifically speaking, first, this thesis challenges a common reading of aestheticism as a way of escaping the secular world. Instead, although the aesthetic movement emphasised 'art for art's sake', it was not isolated from the Victorian mass culture of the late nineteenth century. The aesthetic movement reproduced and circulated the aesthetes' individual tastes to a mass audience through the newly industrialised media, and marketed these tastes as commodities for everyday consumption. Meanwhile, it is noticeable that the blossoming of the aesthetic movement in Britain was closely bound up with the successful expansion of the British Empire to the Far East in the 1860s. Arts and artefacts from East Asia decorated Victorian houses. Without the influence of Japanese ukiyo-e, which was initially used as packing paper in British cargo ships, it is hard to imagine that Whistler, Beardsley, E. W. Godwin, and William Morris would have been able to create their Anglo-Japanese works, and without the translation of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, neither could we observe the Oriental cultures in the writings of Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symonds and Yeats. In other words, the aesthetic

movement is entangled with the British state's domestic modernisation, and the Empire's reliance on foreign commodity, wealth and culture.

The first part of this thesis therefore investigates the place of the aesthetic movement and aestheticism represented by Oscar Wilde in the historical spectrum of Victorian imperial culture, reading aestheticism in relation to imperial expansion, domination, commodification, and cultural imperialism, especially in the context of the British Empire's interaction with East Asia. Chinese and Japanese cultures had significant influences on Wilde. Since his Oxford days, Wilde had begun to show interest in China. In several letters to his schoolmate William Ward, Wilde talked about his impression of Chinese arts and Chinese people. He knew General Gibbes Rigaud who served the war in China in 1860-1864, and he mentioned in a letter that he and the general 'had a long talk' (CL 27).³ During his American lecture tour in 1882, he took China and Japan as references in the speeches of 'The English Renaissance of Art', 'The House Beautiful' and 'The Decorative Art' to support his aestheticism. He also discussed Chinese and Japanese cultures with his friends such as Norman Forbes-Robertson, Helena Sickert, J. M. Stoddart, Mrs. George Lewis, James McNeill Whistler and Charles Eliot Norton in private letters. After his return to London, Wilde maintained enthusiasm for Oriental arts. He decorated his own house in Anglo-Japanese style. In the 1880s, he continued to publicise Chinese and Japanese arts on various occasions, for example, in his lectures 'Impressions of America' (1882), 'Mr. Whistler's Ten O' Clock' (1885), and 'The Relation of Dress to Art: A Note in Black and White on Mr. Whistler's Lecture' (1885). His understanding of Chinese and Japanese aesthetics was reflected in his representative literary and cultural criticism, such as 'The Truth of Masks' (1885),

³ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 27. Further references to this book are cited in the text only, and abbreviated as *CL*.

'The Decay of Lying' (1889), 'The Critic as Artist' (1890), and 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891). He also wrote a review titled 'A Chinese Sage' for Herbert A. Giles's translation of *Chuang Tsu*. His stories *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *The Fisherman and His Soul* (1891), the prose 'The Doer of Good' (1894), the plays *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895) contain implications of East Asian aesthetics and philosophy. Besides writing about and quoting East Asian arts and cultures, he visited Chinese and Japanese art exhibitions, and once attended a dinner held by Japan Society in London as a guest in June 1892.⁴ Such passion for Oriental cultures persisted even after he emigrated to the Continent in 1897.

Although both China and Japan contributed some of the fundamental historical and material conditions to the emergence of the British aesthetic movement and the forming of Wilde's aestheticism, they played different roles in this cultural trend. By focusing on a number of aesthetic dialogues between Wilde and East Asian cultures, this part of the thesis hence organises the observations on cosmopolitanism in Wilde's works in the following steps.

First, this thesis discusses the relationship between the aesthetic movement and the increased importation of Chinese commodities represented by porcelain, textiles and tea, suggesting that Wilde's aestheticism was associated with consumerist society developed by Victorian global commerce. Through analysing the description of collecting Chinese arts and abusing Chinese opium in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), this thesis studies how the symbol of 'China' contributes to the trajectory of the aesthetes from commodity fetishism to decadence.

⁴ See Hugh Cortazzi, *Britain and Japan, 1859-1991: themes and personalities*, London: Routledge, 1991, p.5

Then, tracing the change of Wilde's attitude towards the Chinese coolies, this thesis discusses how and why Wilde drew a metaphorical parallel between the Irish and the Chinese. It is suggested that Wilde's dual English and Celtic cultural identities intersected with imperialism and nationalism, and his aestheticism was accompanied by his efforts to revalue 'superiority' for subaltern groups.

Following the discussion of Chinese influences, this thesis studies the role of Japan in the British aesthetic movement. Japanese culture was one of the strongest external aesthetic influences over Britain from the mid-1870s until the end of the nineteenth century. This thesis reviews the discovery of Japan by imperial expansion, and analyses the reception and assimilation of Japonisme in Wilde's aestheticism. The Japanese arts provided another aesthetic space free from the Western realistic tradition, contributing to the popularity of the aesthetic movement, which aimed at 'art for art's sake'.

Furthermore, through observing the conflicts between Japanese aesthetic utopia and the Victorian culture industry, this thesis discusses the commodification of Japanese art and Japonisme in late-nineteenth-century Britain. It is argued that imperial consumption not only colonised the Japanese arts but also commercialised the notion of Japan, the image of Japanese people, and aestheticism itself.

Finally, this thesis examines the influence of Chinese Taoist ideas on the construction of Wilde's aestheticism. Wilde read the ancient Chinese sage Zhuangzi (369-286 BC) in an English translation by Herbert A. Giles (1889), and published his comments on it in 'A Chinese Sage' in February 1890. The interpretation of Chinese Taoism contributed to Wilde's writings.

Chapter One: Oscar Wilde's China

1. Aristocracy for the Common People:

Chinese Commodity in Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism

This chapter focuses on Wilde's writings on Chinese commodities and demonstrates how these writings helped Wilde to formulate a consumerist aestheticism free from class distinction. First, this chapter briefly reviews the history of Chinese goods in Britain and highlights the changes in social conditions during the aesthetic movement. Through reading Wilde's writings on Chinese commodities, this chapter discusses the relationship between Wilde and Chinese goods and the role of Chinese applied arts in his establishment of consumerist aestheticism for the Victorian public. Secondly, this chapter situates Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the context of late-Victorian imperial culture and its consumption, to draw attention to the binary oppositions in Wilde's aestheticism, and the dilemma of keeping the distinctive identity of the aesthetes amidst the democratisation of beauty. Dorian's collection serves to both recognise and resist the temptations of commodity fetishism. Dorian's endless search for sensations leads him to abuse Chinese opium, which parallels the aesthetes' destined fate of decadence and the correspondingly over-expanded imperial culture.

Known as a poet, critic, journalist, elocutionist, and in particular, playwright in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Oscar Wilde has been presented as a multi-faceted artist, who contributed to the development of artistic and cultural movements of his time. A leader of fashion as well as a social critic, Wilde promoted the slogan 'art for art's sake' and commercialised this credo for the public. He had great enthusiasm for various Chinese commodities and absorbed inspiration from them to establish his theories of aestheticism. When reading *Litterae Humaniores* at Magdalen College, Oxford, he had his considerable collection of blue-and-white porcelain housed on the shelves in his rooms. The famous remark 'I find it harder and harder every day to live up to my blue china' earned him a reputation as an aesthete in the university (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 43-44).

Although Wilde was seen as a peculiar figure by his time, his interest in Chinese arts was nothing eccentric in 1870s England. As early as the thirteenth century, the empire of China had fired the imagination of the Europeans through Marco Polo's celebrated account of his travels in the East. Nevertheless, the Eastern trade remained small during the intervening centuries until the discovery of America. The silver from Mexico and Peru enabled the European East India Companies to extend importation of Chinese commodities.⁵ The new phase of trading with China encouraged the Europeans' taste for Chinese arts and handicrafts. Inspired by the beauty of Chinese goods, and partially for import-substitution,⁶ Western designers and artisans began to imitate the

⁵ The demand in China was almost only for gold and silver, so the European nations had to pay gold or silver for Chinese commodities, see Impey, pp.46-7. This explains why the pursuing power of the West for Chinese goods was limited before discovering the gold and silver mines in Latin America.

⁶ 'Import-substitution' is an economic strategy which encourages national industrial growth to reduce imports of manufactured goods. For the Western countries, to imitate oriental goods was not only due to the enthusiasm for arts, but also an attempt to increase exports and reduce imports.

technical sophistication and exotic patterns of Chinese ceramics.⁷ This vogue for chinoiserie soon spread widely to gardens and architecture as well as the decorative arts, making a taste for objects in Chinese style synonymous with refinement. The eighteenth century saw chinoiserie at its peak in Europe. The fashion of Chinese art was assimilated into the contemporary passion for Rococo style because both tastes shared a similar belief in asymmetry and fantasy in contrast with the heavy Baroque.⁸

Before importing Chinese goods from south China directly in the early seventeenth century, Britain had purchased Chinese commodities through intermediary business. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the popularity of chinoiserie reached its height in Britain. The vogue for Chinese goods was favoured amongst the aristocracy. The Chinese motifs, such as the mythical dragon, elegant bird, pagoda roof and ancient sage began to appear in painting and design. In British designers' eyes, these icons summarised all that was exoticism of China. These images, which usually came from the painting on imported Chinese objects, were also embellished with English designers' own imagination. Chinese style took its influence widely on British decorative arts, interior furniture and landscape architecture. The French born artist, Jean Pillement (1728-1808), who lived in London, was a major designer of chinoiserie decoration in England during the eighteenth century. He published two influential collections of prints -- *A New Book of Chinese Ornaments* (1755) and *Ornaments and Some Flowers in the Chinese Style* (1767). His fanciful images of Chinese figures were adapted for English decorative objects of ceramics, wallpaper and

⁷ The workshops included Medici in Italy, Delft in Holland, Frankfurt in Germany, Rouen and Nevers in France, Liverpool and Bristol in Britain, etc., to name only the largest. See Impey, pp.101-10.

⁸ It seems appropriate to speak of a Baroque Age in England between 1630 and 1730, and shortly before 1740, the vogue of Rococo came to England from the Continent. See Hook, p.12.

textiles.⁹ In furniture manufacture, William (1703-1763) and John Linnell (1729-1796) designed one of the earliest chinoiserie interiors in Britain, the Chinese bedroom commissioned by the fourth Duke and Duchess of Beaumont for Badminton House in Gloucestershire. The most dramatic furniture of chinoiserie was the bed, which embellished its canopy with dragons (Beard 75-6). The elaborate chinoiserie interior surviving in Britain today is the Chinese room in Claydon House designed by Luke Lightfoot in 1769. Above each door, there is a pagoda motif supported by Chinese figures and the tea alcove is covered in abundance of chinoiserie details (Beard 64). Chinese fashion was also seen in English landscape architecture. Sir William Chambers (1723-1796) who travelled to China in his youth brought a great variety of chinoiserie into his garden building. He published the remarkable work *Designs of Chinese Buildings* in 1757. Dowager Princess Augusta invited him to create a number of Chinese style buildings for the botanical gardens at Kew, Surrey in 1759. The publication of Chambers's book and his celebrated examples of chinoiserie in Kew Gardens set up the pattern of the Chinese-style gardens in Britain (Jeffery 252-57, 330). Reviewing the Western art history, we find that the taste for Chinese arts did not begin in the nineteenth-century aesthetic movement but existed no later than the Renaissance and lasted through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Namely, the consumption of Chinese or Chinese-style applied arts in Britain had already been lasting for nearly three hundred years before the rise of the aesthetic movement in Victorian London.

Despite the arguments of artistic principles at the end of the eighteenth century in European continent, Chinese influences persisted in the applied arts in Britain during the nineteenth century and the chinoiserie style was still in use for objects made for the upper market or the nobility in this island. For example, Sir Jeffrey Wyattville's exquisite Fishing Temple (1825) in Virginia Water and Robert

⁹ See Impey, pp.66-7, p.73, p.80, p.83, p.166, p.177

Abraham's amazing Pagoda Fountain (1827) at Alton Towers are outstanding pieces of chinoiserie work (Impey 141). The British Royal family also collected Chinese arts, and some of the interior decoration of Buckingham Palace was inspired by Chinese aesthetic principles (Maxwell 383-92).

However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the British Empire finalised its early global expansion, the consumption of Chinese goods was no longer a privilege monopolised by the British aristocracy, but opened to the public as well. The Victorians saw great expansion of wealth and power of their empire, and experienced cultural shocks from conquering the 'primitive' peoples and obtaining the remote commodities. Many developments occurred that had effects upon the taste, production and status of arts. One revolutionary result was the widening education made more British people literate, which encouraged art consumption among the public, as Mark Bills describes, during the Victorian period, 'the desire to be in touch with art was no longer confined to the few' (104). Meanwhile, the success of the colonial project greatly enhanced ordinary British people's interest in foreign arts and remote commodities. Chinese goods entered into the view of the public through exhibitions and the enlargement of Anglo-Chinese commerce from the 1840s, when a series of treaties were signed between China and Britain, including the most-favoured-nation treatment, the open of commercial harbours along China's coast, and the cession of Hong Kong to Britain. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Britain's trade with China surged and Britain became China's largest exported market in the West (Wang 39-65). The advancement of navigational technology and the decrease of the cost of transportation after the Industrial Revolution greatly reduced Chinese commodities' price in the British domestic market (O'Rourke and Williamson 26). As a result, not only the aristocracy but also the ordinary people, including a young student like the 22-year-old Wilde, had the ability to buy Chinese commodities. Accompanied with this increase of supply, the emerging

bourgeoisie produced by industrialisation and urbanisation formed a potentially enormous market for Chinese goods as the growing middle classes indulged a passion for decorating their newly owned houses. Because taste, pleasure, and luxury are inseparable from the concept of use, yet ideally separate from necessity, the acquisition of goods that have symbolic values such as rich, romantic, fashionable, avant-garde, etc. constitutes a self-confirmation of cultural identity. However, these new clients of art market were neither self-confident in matters of taste nor wealthy enough to consult an architect for a special design of the room decoration. Therefore, the most reliable route was to emulate the previous aristocratic fashions. The Chinese goods, which embodied the exoticism of the Chinese empire and had been popular among the Royal family and upper classes for nearly three centuries but were easily attainable in the Victorian age, made it possible for the Victorian middle classes to obtain an economical aristocratic identity. Reviewing the Victorian social context, we find another background to Wilde's enthusiasm for Chinese goods, that is, in his time, the taste for Chinese commodities or chinoiserie was not necessarily associated with an elitist identity. Besides the upper classes, the ordinary British middle class family also showed interest in Chinese goods and were able to afford the prices. The consumption of Chinese commodities was not limited to any specific social class or economic position during the period of the aesthetic movement in Britain.

i Oscar Wilde's Consumption of China: Porcelain, Tea and Textiles

As Richard Ellmann asserts, Wilde's aesthetic theories could be traced to the influence of many other great Victorian aesthetic champions. During Wilde's Oxford days, John Ruskin (author of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*) and Walter Pater (author of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* and *Marius the Epicurean*) were his most prominent spiritual supervisors. Ruskin was the professor of fine art at University of Oxford. Wilde, having attended Ruskin's

lectures, determined to participate in the practical beautification of the countryside. He sent a copy of *The Happy Prince* to Ruskin in 1888, and accompanied it with a note, 'from you I learned nothing but what was good' (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 48). Pater, who was less interested in social reformation but more attracted by the artistic senses, also made a lasting influence on Wilde's perception of life and art; in *De Profundis*, Wilde recalled Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* as 'a book [which] had strange influence over my life' (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 46). This is similar to the scene in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* where Dorian cannot refuse the allure of the poisoned perfection of a novel that Lord Henry gave him. 'Ruskin and Pater competed for the soul of the young "Dorian Wilde"' and both men were customers of Liberty & Co. in Regent Street, London, a shop that enjoyed the greatest reputation for the retail of decorative artefacts from China and other Oriental countries in the late nineteenth century (Sato and Lambourne 12). Many members of the aesthetic circle collected Oriental applied arts, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, E.W. Godwin, James McNeil Whistler and Théophile Gautier. For example, in *Preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), a manifesto of the guiding principle of the aesthetic movement, Gautier claimed that 'I prefer a Chinese vase, covered with mandarins and dragons.' In this respect, Wilde's enthusiasm for blue-and-white during his Oxford's days served as a confirmation of his identity as an aesthete.

The success of the American lecture tour in 1882 first established Wilde's fame in the aesthetic movement. Styling himself as 'professor of aesthetics', Wilde took the role of spokesperson for the British aesthetic movement in America (Blanchard 7). In this long tour, Wilde lectured in New York, Boston, Omaha, Philadelphia, San Francisco and many other smaller towns before moving to Canada where he spoke in Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston, Quebec and Toronto. He prepared three lectures during this tour. The first was 'The English Renaissance', but he soon found what interested the Americans was not the

history of European thought, Hellenism or the birth of the aesthetic movement in the French Revolution, but rather what the new world should do about its own arts and how the lecturer would advise them to decorate their homes. Therefore, Wilde changed the topic from abstract art theory to concrete artistic practice: that is, 'The Decorative Arts' and 'The House Beautiful', which sounded more practical and more appealing to his American audience. He toured triumphantly with these two lectures for nine months, adding appropriate anecdotes as he arrived in a new city.

The 1882 American tour was a significant event in the development of Wilde's aestheticism. This was the first time that Wilde made profits from the commodification of the aesthetic movement and, more significantly, the commodification of himself. The timing of Wilde's tour had everything to do with Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Patience*, which satirised the aesthetic movement and the popular stereotypes of an aesthete. In this opera, aestheticism was signalled by visual displays: long hair, knee breeches, silk stockings, lilies and sunflowers. Instead of denying such caricatured materialisation, Wilde tried to give the audiences what they expected in appearance, making himself a show for the public. These lectures to American audiences, and the series of lectures on his impressions of America to British audiences when he returned to England, represented the successful interaction between the ivory tower of aestheticism and the beautification of ordinary living. The aesthetic movement could be widely participated in regardless of social position, material fortune or aesthetic knowledge. In such engagement with the public, it is interesting to notice that Wilde often took Chinese commodities as references to support his aesthetic ideas. This seems to begin with his visit to Chinatown in San Francisco in April 1882. He showed great admiration for Chinese artefacts and his interest in things Chinese was extensive, including blue-and-white porcelain, China tea, Chinese

silks, and the textile and costumes of Chinese theatre, all of which were popular icons of China in the Western world.

Blue-and-white is one of the hallmarks of the British aesthetic movement and Wilde showed great appreciation of it in his lectures. This commodity had played a significant role in the foundation of European chinoiserie since the time when China-mania arose in Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. These porcelains were simultaneously functional wares, treasured possessions, and assertions of magnificent power. When they were first introduced to Europe, they were 'as valuable as gold' and 'a great rarity, serving as gifts for potentates and kings' (Emerson, Chen and Gates 24-30). Queen Elisabeth I (1558-1603) possessed several china pieces, while King Charles II had a larger collection. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, William III and Mary II brought several hundred pieces of porcelain from the Dutch republic to England, along with a new Continental fashion (Finlay 172-73). The taste for porcelain became the currency of social emulation among the aristocracy and gradually spread down the social ladder to the prosperous bourgeoisie. The popularity of porcelain throughout Britain stemmed not only from its practical use in dining but also from its incorporation into the new consumer vogue for interior decoration, a trend that grew as the middle classes built increasingly spacious homes.

During the Victorian period, Chinese porcelain continued to be adored. It was much easier for the Victorians to get access to and obtain a greater understanding of Chinese porcelain than their ancestors. There were oriental shops selling Chinese porcelain in London, and we can detect how this Chinese artefact was favoured by observing how much of the Chinese collection in the museums in Britain was made up of blue-and-white, purchased from China during the latter half of the nineteenth century. For example, in 1883 the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert) employed Stephen Bushell, a member of the British legation in Peking, to buy ceramics from China in large

quantities. The 240 pieces he bought not only covered the highly decorative and colourful ceramics which the West was already quite familiar with, but also included objects made for the imperial court and the scholar's table that had not been seen in the West (Finlay 187). To collect blue-and-white porcelain was a wide fashion among the Victorian society. A watercolour painting titled *Lady Betty Germain's China Closet, Knole*, drawn by Ellen Clacy in 1880, depicted this cult. This picture showed the subject's Elizabethan house of Knole, where she formed a large collection of Chinese porcelain. A tall cabinet was full of blue-and-white china, and a young woman in blue garments was appreciating the beauty of them.

Wilde was also very fond of blue-and-white. Besides his famous remark in Oxford quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Wilde said in a letter to William Ward on 3 March 1877, 'I enjoy your room awfully. The inner room is filled with china, pictures, a portfolio [...]' (CL 40). He praised his friend's room decoration because it displayed china and other works of art. The collection and consumption of Chinese porcelain demonstrated William Ward's aesthetic credentials. Walter Hamilton, the first historian of the aesthetic movement, gave a notion of the 'home of the aesthetes' in the epilogue to his *Aesthetic Movement in England* (1882), observing the 'comfort and elegance, [...], books, flowers, and pictures, china and glass ornaments' (113). Owning china, in the eyes of 1870s and 80s fashion, was one of the necessary material pre-conditions to ensure one's aesthetic identity. This idea was widely accepted by the Victorian aesthetic circle. The blue-and-white collectors included almost all the significant members in the aesthetic movement. In Wilde's understanding of house decoration, blue-and-white china, because of its beautiful colour, noble shape and proportioned form, was one of the best objects to bring an aesthetic sense to a room. For instance, in 'The House Beautiful', Wilde described Whistler's breakfast room in London as a 'marvel of beauty'. He said 'the shelves are filled

with blue and white china', and 'the breakfast-table is laid in this apartment, with [...] its dainty blue and white china, with a cluster of red and yellow chrysanthemums in an old Nankin vase in the centre'.¹⁰ Whistler used blue-and-white in his room decoration. The porcelain was decorated with enamel in the shape of Chinese ink-paintings. The themes were usually natural landscapes or noble beauties, describing a peaceful and leisured life of the aristocracy in ancient China. The Nankin vase in the centre of this room belonged to the school of blue-and-white in the Ming dynasty, which is famous for its distinctive quality. Technically speaking, according to Roger Fry's research, to make this kind of vase, the Chinese used cobalt oxide with a transparent glaze unknown in the West, and this special material gave a rich blue colour after firing at a temperature of 1280°C (Fry and Binyon 34). This special technology brought the *Nanking* vase a high reputation for its balanced shape and graceful colour. The chinoiserie pictures painted on it used a very different method of perspective from Western realistic paintings, and brought distinctive quality and design value to blue-and-white china through simple lines and colours, giving the Western consumers fresh artistic enjoyment. Wilde explained why this was 'a charming room' by the standards of aestheticism. He described it 'caught all the warm light and taking on of all surrounding beauty, [...] giving to the guest a sense of joyousness, comfort, and rest'. Moreover, 'nothing could be simpler, it costs little, and it shows what a great effect might be realised with a little and simple colour' (CW 916). The simplicity and elegance of blue-and-white fitted the taste of the Victorian aesthetes and supplied an alternative to the dominance of the neoclassic style in the domestic interior.

In some respects, the aesthetic movement is an inheritor of romanticism of the early nineteenth century. The romance of blue-and-white also attracted the

¹⁰ *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Merlin Holland (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1994), p.916, further references to this book are cited in the text, and abbreviated as *CW*.

aesthetes because it provided them with the space of poetic imagination, an extra use-value of this exotic commodity. During the Renaissance, when Europeans did not know the materials of porcelain, they shared a popular view that porcelain from China had magical powers, as Impey suggests, 'it was widely believed that if poison was placed in porcelain, the bowl would break' (54). The 'marvellous' china persisted in stimulating the imagination of the Victorians. For example, as Andrew Lang's poem 'Ballade of Blue China' (1880) eulogised romantically,

Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark
Of china that's ancient and blue;
Unchipp'd all the centuries through
It has pass'd, since the chime of it rang,
And they fashion'd it, figure and hue,
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

Written at the height of the fashion for blue-and-white, this ballade expressed the emotion of porcelain fetishism. Lang admired these fragile objects, which had survived through numerous centuries, as long as the history of China itself. The mythical representation of nature is traced to the 'reign of the Emperor Hwang' more than four thousand years ago, when China was united as a country under the leadership of a legendary king, who is half God, half-human. Therefore, the taste for blue-and-white was not only consumption of a piece of foreign commodity, but also a poetic experience of an ancient civilisation of glory and romance free from the pollution of modern industrialisation. The aesthetic movement was a reaction against high art and a renewal of interest in eighteenth-century taste. The oriental romance attached to blue-and-white contributed to the rebellion by the aesthetes against religious morality and neoclassicism. In room decoration, the Victorian aesthetes abandoned the rules of 'heavily carved furniture, large mirrors in gilt frames', instead, blue-and-white Chinese porcelain, with its relatively simple decoration, intelligent design,

balanced form, graceful colour, and the romantic implication, became one of the hallmarks of an enlightened home (Aslin, *Aesthetic Movement* 64). Wilde summarised this aesthetic taste and advocated it in 'The House Beautiful', saying 'the beauty [...] depends upon the quality and appearance of the china and glass; for a good permanent dinner set have Japanese or blue-and-white china' (CW 921).

Chinese tea was another major commodity in Anglo-Chinese commerce during the nineteenth century. Liberty & Co. once gave a pack of tea to their clients for free as long as they bought artefacts in the shop, and there was a shop near London Bridge where a piece of china was given away free with every pound of tea bought (Denvir 18). The East India Company first brought Chinese tea to England from Canton in the period of Cromwell's rule, and for a long time drinking tea was confined to the Royal family and the wealthiest class because it was too expensive for normal British people to afford. The Portuguese princess Catherine is credited with introducing the fashion of drinking tea to Britain when she married King Charles II. The monarchy and nobility's consumption established the culture of tea in England. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, when large amounts of Chinese tea were imported and Britain planted tea in its Indian colony (which greatly reduced its price), drinking tea as a pleasurable pastime had quickly spread throughout the country. Afternoon tea became a treasured custom in British household. Tea brought China into the very heart of the English homes, and the impedimenta connected with tea drinking-- kettles, pots, cups, and caddies-- were strongly influenced by Chinese patterns. When Wilde gave his lecture in San Francisco, he went to Chinatown specially to drink tea. In 'The Decorative Arts', he said, 'when I was in San Francisco, I used to visit [...] the Chinese restaurants on account of the beautiful tea they made there' (CW 935).

Chinese culture regards drinking tea as an enjoyment of leisured life as well as an effective means of social communication. As early as in Tang Dynasty (780 A.D.), the activity of drinking tea had already become popular in China. Through the etiquette of tasting manners, the Chinese people used tea to show respect to their guests or express their appreciation. The appropriate manner of drinking tea could demonstrate one's education and social class. Wilde seemed quite interested in the cultural implications of Chinese tea. When he gave the lecture of 'Impressions in America' (1883) around Britain, he talked about Chinese tea to amuse his audience. The London newspaper *The Era* (14 July 1883) reported that 'the lecturer (Oscar Wilde), dwelt upon the beauties and peculiarities of Chinese theatricals in San Francisco, where the audiences show their approval, not by applause, but by taking a little cup of tea.' Every time, as *The Era* recorded, this story of Chinese tea would arouse laughter.

However, in Britain, Chinese tea played a similar role in the social life of the upper classes. Because of its mass consumption in the Victorian era, tea gained a double social identity: being consumed by both the elites and the popular classes, enabling gracefulness and nobility to be achieved economically. In other words, Chinese tea became a meeting point for the various classes of Victorian Britain. In the first scene of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon asks the servant to make afternoon tea for his aunt (CW 359). As Jeremy Lalonde argues, judged by her property and statements, Lady (Augusta) Bracknell was actually a middle class woman. In 'The House Beautiful', Wilde described 'a most beautiful cup as delicate as the petal of a flower' (CW 921), and in 'The Decorative Art', he made an analogy between 'the tiny porcelain cups' and 'the petals of a white rose' (CW 935). In contrast to the pleasure of drinking Chinese tea and enjoying the teacups in Chinatown, when Wilde used 'common delft cups about an inch-and-a-half thick' in 'the grand hotels', he thought 'I have deserved

something nicer' (CW 935). The experience of drinking tea in Chinatown gave Wilde a strong impression of what 'artistic life' should be.

Textiles, a traditional Chinese commodity imported into Europe since Roman times, also stimulated Wilde's interest. They were still one of the most competitive Chinese goods for export in the nineteenth century. Liberty & Co. in London sold silks and dress fabrics from China. According to Elisabeth Aslin, the Victorians described Chinese silk as 'diaphanous, exquisite, being suitable in every case for drapery', and Chinese fabrics were used in the stage costumes for *Patience* and *The Colonel and the Cup*. Liberty first referred to Chinese textiles as 'art fabrics' in 1876, and soon this laudation spread, being widely accepted in the 1880s (*Aesthetic Movement* 82). Wilde recommended Chinese textiles for floor decoration to his American audience. In 'The House Beautiful', he criticised modern carpets as 'unhealthy or inartistic', because 'carpets absorb the dust, and it is impossible to keep them as perfectly clean as anything about us should be'. He suggested 'it is better to use a parquetry flooring around the sides and rugs in the centre', and had the floor 'laid with pretty matting and strewn with those very handsome and economical rugs from China, Persia, and Japan', in this case, 'art and sanitary regulations go hand in hand' (CW 918). Wilde's taste for Chinese textiles was common in his time, for example, an essay on 'Liberty Stuffs, Blue China, and Peacocks Feathers' in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (14 November 1885) introduced rooms decorated by Chinese textiles: 'The walls are hung with the richest embroideries and glow with the most brilliant colours. Here are ancient Chinese tapestry, with golden dragons [...] the state robes of a Chinese mandarin [...] hangings from Chinese temples, embroidered with dragons and beasts and birds.'

Chinese textiles usually have decorative motifs rooted in Chinese myths, legends and traditions. Most of these motifs on embroideries, woven silks and printed cottons appear as balanced, spontaneous forms rather than exaggerated

expressions. The traditional technique places high emphasis on the productive procedure of tinting the textiles. Wilde showed his appreciation of Chinese colouring in 'The Truth of Masks': 'the fine Chinese blue, which we all so much admire, takes two years to dye, and the English public will not wait so long for a colour' (CW 1171). He satirised the consumption of art in a market economy, highlighting the conflict between the production of traditional crafts and the demand of mass consumption in a commercial age, as well as the different attitudes towards time and efficiency in traditional Chinese agricultural society and modern British industrial society.

The costume in Chinese operas displayed the beauty of Chinese textiles. When Wilde was in San Francisco, he visited the Chinese theatres 'for their rich dresses' (CW 921). The costumes in Chinese opera are dazzling, various and colourful. The functions of costume are complex: they provide visual enjoyment, indicate the theme and type of a play, and display the social status of a character. The beautiful colours, exotic designs and decorative accessories of the costume showed the high level of Chinese embroidery and woven skills. Wilde wrote a letter to Norman Forbes-Robertson on 27 March 1882 to share his excitement: 'tonight I am escorted by the Mayor of the city through the Chinese quarter, to their theatre and joss houses and rooms, which will be most interesting' (CL 159).

ii Dorian Gray's Consumption of China: Consumerism, Fetishism and Decadence

Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) comprehensively displays the cultural implications of Chinese commodities in the context of aestheticism. Richard Ellmann notes that Walter Pater 'was delighted with the book', but objected to the portrayal of Lord Henry, who allegedly borrowed too many sentiments from his *Studies in the History of Renaissance* (Oscar Wilde 299). This *fin-de-siècle* Gothic novel, as Anne Varty argues, is 'an extraordinary

anthology of styles, dovetailed to express the central ethical idea that art, serving as a repository for the conscience of a culture, extends or constrains the perceptual range of humanity' (115). Ellmann names the 1880s' aestheticism as 'the age of Dorian', as Dorian supplied the reader with a model of the aesthetic lifestyle (*Oscar Wilde* 289). Dorian is a dandy, who represents a retreat from politics and history into art and commodity culture. He indulges in the pursuit of beauty, pleasure and style through collecting a wide range of strictly aesthetic commodities from the Orient: perfumes, musical instruments, jewels, embroideries, tapestries, porcelain, antiques and cultural relics. In the famous Chapter Eleven, Wilde gives an inventory of the resultant objects of Dorian's evolving passions for collecting, which Regenia Gagnier describes as 'a textbook of *fin de siècle* economic man' ('Market Society' 302).

Among Dorian's collection, there are commodities from East Asia: 'for a whole year, he sought to accumulate the most exquisite specimens that he could find of textile and embroidered work, getting [...] elaborate yellow Chinese hangings; books bound in tawny satins or fair blue silks, [...] and Japanese *Foukousas* with their green-toned gold and their marvellously-plumaged birds.'¹¹ Wilde depicts Dorian's thirst for these decorative oriental luxuries as the external manifestation of this hero's inner artistic superiority. By collecting artistic goods of different nations and different historical periods, 'he sought to elaborate some new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles, and find in the spiritualising of the senses its highest realization' (*Dorian* 278). Chinese hangings in Dorian's collection, due to their artistic freedom, sound artisanship and genuine good taste, contributed to the realisation of the senses pursued by the hero. In this novel, Wilde tries to sell the aesthetic

¹¹ *The Picture of Dorian Gray, the 1890 and 1891 texts*, ed. Joseph Bristow (New York: Oxford UP, 2005), p.285. This is Volume III in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 4 volumes to date, edited by Ian Small. This thesis adopts the 1891 text of this novel. Hereafter cited in parentheses as *Dorian* with the page number from the Bristow collection.

lifestyle in his mind to the readers. Almost all the Chinese commodities that Wilde was interested in appeared in the text. For instance, Lord Henry's Mayfair house library in the fourth chapter:

It was, in its way, a very charming room [...] some large blue china jars and parrot-tulips were arranged on the mantelshelf, and through the small leaded panels of window streamed the apricot-coloured light of a summer day in London. (*Dorian* 208)

Both blue china and tulips were the symbols of the aesthetic movement. This description of Lord Henry's library was based on the composition of Wilde's own room at Oxford, which was decorated with fashionable blue-and-white vases and other oriental artistic treasures. In fact, Wilde offered numerous and elaborate descriptions of the rooms in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Almost every chapter is situated within a different closed space. Wilde fully exploited his talent for room decoration in this novel.

Dorian enjoys popularity among London aristocratic society. Chinese tea as a sociable means appears in Chapter Seventeen, as Dorian talked to the pretty Duchess of Monmouth at teatime, and in Chapter Two, a tea tray is set down upon a small Japanese table, 'globe-shaped china dishes were brought in by a page' (*Dorian* 192). On these occasions, the consumption of Chinese tea identifies the character as educated, graceful, socially and aesthetically superior.

The consumption of Chinese commodities had a long history before the aesthetic movement. However, in Dorian's age, the consumption of 'China' was part of the practice of nineteenth-century imperialism, in which the products of 'past' or 'primitive' cultures (which referred to both those 'dead or dying' oriental cultures and European civilisation in the previous centuries) were consumed in a manner of fetishism. The cultural capital gained by consuming oriental objects

resided specifically in the evocation of an aristocratic yet simpler past, a time characterised by effortless aesthetic cultivation rather than industrial, capitalist striving. Elisabeth Aslin observes that the aesthetes of 1870s and 80s developed ways to 'pass on to others the aesthetic standards discovered in past ornament' (*Aesthetic Movement* 14). In treating the eighteenth century as a golden age in art, which was remote from the shapeless vulgarity of the late nineteenth century, the highly self-conscious aesthetes found resources to conduct their offensive against established artistic notions represented by neo-classicism. As Malcolm Haslam points out, designers and consumers tried every other style known to them, whether from ancient times or from distant places (1). Through the rebellion against neo-classicism, the Victorian aesthetes rediscovered ideas of form and artistic freedom. The elegance, abstraction and simplicity suggested by eighteenth-century Chinese fashion provided the aesthetes with a release from the tiring intricacies of Victorian medievalist design and the insistent realism of its painting. To reshape Victorian culture, John Ruskin recommended a return to pre-industrial methods of production and craft workshops. He questioned whether anything made by machine could really be called art. Ruskin's theory contributed to the popularity of Chinese handicrafts and the consumption of Chinese handmade goods in Britain. As a disciple of Ruskin, Wilde was very familiar with Western art history. When he described Dorian's consumption precisely in order to show the hero's elitist character, he searched for inspiration from the authority of traditional aristocratic taste, among which the consumption of Chinese commodities and other Oriental luxuries separated the nobility as culturally superior to the common people.

Thus, Dorian's acquisition of goods from China and other Oriental nations secures his 'aristocratic' distinction. The relationship between consumers and commodities has been reversed. The consumption of commodities is no longer the consumer's individual choice; instead, commodities decide who the consumers

are. As Thorstein Veblen points out, the facet of conspicuous or honorific consumption is fundamentally an effort to discriminate not between commodities, but between classes (160-61). That is to say, the customers not only consume the practical use-value in a general sense of these commodities, but also gain a certain reputation and cultural power through obtaining the symbolic values such as romance, wealth, fashion, nobility, modern, elegance, etc., which are associated with these commodities. On many occasions, the specific symbolic values of a commodity are created by corresponding social aesthetics. Meanwhile, people's aesthetic superiority is socially recognised when they purchase commodities with an attendant fashionable or cultural implication. As a result, by collecting oriental handmade objects that are distinguished from Victorian machine-made products by their beauty, uniqueness and rarity, Dorian creates the aesthetic consumption above the mass market. He consumes both the practical use-value and the symbolic cultural-value of Chinese commodities and finalises his self-definition of aesthetic identity through such consumption.

However, despite resisting bourgeois or mass styles of consumption, Dorian's collection also implies commodity fetishism. Wilde did not reject the utility of Chinese commodities. For example, the yellow Chinese hangings in Dorian's collection are pieces of art, but they are also commodities with practical use-value as furniture. The utilisation of artistic commodities is an important aspect of the aesthetic movement, which used to be neglected by some Victorian scholars. The emphasis on using takes a significant position in Wilde's writings. For instance, Wilde reconstructs the relationship between art and life in 'The Decay of Lying', pointing out that Rossetti's paintings were not simply visual arts but could be also taken as the consultant on women's dress fashion. In other words, the beauty of Rossetti's arts could be realised in a woman's everyday life. For Wilde, to create a piece of art does not mean the refusal of the market. He encouraged his audience to 'use arts'. For example, he advocates in 'The House

Beautiful' that 'those of you who have old china use it I hope. There is nothing so absurd as having good china struck up in a cabinet merely for show [...], whatever you have that is beautiful if for use, then you should use it' (CW 921). In 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young', he declared that 'one should either be a work of art or wear a work of art' (CW 1245). Each individual might become an artist by following fashions or consuming the commodities of art. Therefore, Dorian's ceaseless search for sensations, in another aspect, shows the obsession driven by consumerism. Lord Henry's aphorism, 'the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it', best explains Dorian's (or Wilde's) consumerist ideology. While Wilde depicted Dorian's collection in order to show this hero's spiritual or aesthetic ascendancy, the logic of the dandy becomes assimilated into the logic of commodity culture. At first glance, it might seem that Dorian's collection represented a kind of extinct European nobility, but the Victorian Empire and the Industrial Revolution had made all these oriental goods easily attainable.

The Victorians witnessed a rapid democratisation of the decorative arts. Books and periodicals on decorative arts appeared in large quantities in the 1870s and 1880s. Entertainment, decoration and fashion formed culture industries. The Victorian public lived in an era of wealth and prosperity, enjoying the products of new modes of manufacturing and distribution in a vastly expanded world of commodities. While Dorian views native, coloured races and their arts as a remote, sealed, pre-industrial civilisation from the past that stands in opposition to modern technology and commodity culture, these objects, in fact, have already been involved in the world capitalist system. Handmade, beautiful but cheap Chinese commodities supplied the Victorians with a 'unique' but economical aesthetic experience. Elisabeth Aslin argues that philistines, a term in the context of the aesthetic movement, referred more to those whose sensibilities were not so well cultivated, rather than acting as a definition of a certain economic status (*Aesthetic*

Movement 15). The Victorian middle classes were eager to display their affluence by establishing collections in imitation of the aristocracy and by emulating the purchasing habits of their upper classes. The aesthetes did much to set up the standards of beauty in bourgeoisie society and to cultivate the public's tastes. As *The Burlington*, a mouthpiece of the aesthetic movement in 1881 and 1882, described,

This improvement is rapidly spreading through all classes of society. Good taste is no longer an expensive luxury to indulge in. The commonest articles of domestic use are now fashioned in accordance with its laws and the poorest may have in their homes at the cost of a few pence cups and saucers and jugs and teapots, more artistic in form and design than were to be found twenty years ago in any homes but those of the cultured rich (qtd. in Aslin, *Aesthetic Movement 15*).

It showed that in practice, an ordinary Victorian family could emulate Dorian's 'aristocratic' collection, so long as they had an interest in these objects.

Wilde's aestheticism assimilated consumerist economics. He tried to sell his audience an economical aestheticism that everyone was able to consume. The room decoration he talked about was in 'the simplest and humblest of homes' (*CW 926*). Wilde adjusted his aestheticism to the model of using the smallest money to get the biggest enjoyment. A person's aesthetic taste did not depend on how much money he squandered on collecting expensive arts, but relied on the actual effects of his artistic devotion. In 'The House Beautiful', Wilde explained this idea by illustrating the example of Whistler.

Mr. Whistler has recently done two rooms in London which are marvels of beauty. One is the famous Peacock Room [...] It cost £3,000; the other room [...] only £30 (*CW 916*).

The cost did not determine the artistic value, because both rooms were successful aesthetic works. Rather, it realised an ideal economic model. A common person could spend just £30 to get as equal artistic enjoyment as those who spend £3,000. This picturesque advertisement appealed to middle class audiences because it created a possibility for them to share an equal aesthetic identity with those who had a superior economic power over them. As Wilde argued in the same lecture, 'art is not given to the people by costly foreign paintings in private galleries' and 'art is not a luxury for the rich and idle'; instead, 'the art I speak of will be a democratic art made by the hands of the people and for the benefit of the people' (CW 926-27). The idea of aesthetic democracy advocated by Ruskin and Morris, 'aristocracy of everyone', obtained its feasibility through Wilde's consumerist aestheticism (Dowling, *Vulgarization of Art* xii).

The descent of the cultural identity of consuming arts from the aristocracy to the common person was an achievement born of the missionary aspect of the aesthetic movement in the social context of Victorian capitalism. The aesthetic movement was a conscious attempt to educate the public to beauty. John Ruskin believed the learned aristocracy had the task of guiding the poor towards the appreciation of art, to 'educate the people to know what was beautiful and good for the moral and social benefits' (Maltz 4). Wilde also concerned himself with the cause of enhancing the aesthetic taste of the Victorian public. Nonetheless, the popularity of art consumption in this commodity culture also brought the aesthetes a dilemma. This philanthropy raised another question: if everyone were educated to have a good taste, the object of aesthetes' taste would be less valuable, and their spiritual superiority could no longer be demonstrated.

Wilde tried to solve this paradox in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by describing the hero's endless reconstruction of his collection of oriental arts, never stopping at one point but persisting in seeking for 'the secret of some new joy'. In Chapter Eleven, the readers are given an inventory of Dorian's evolving passions

for collecting. In fact, this solution was taken from Pater's ideas in the conclusion to *The Renaissance*. Pater demonstrated the transience and relativity of all things and the need; therefore, one should 'be forever curiously testing new opinions and counting new impressions'. The evolving passions of Dorian for collecting, which could be seen as an analogy of the thriving expansion of the British Empire across the world, serves as recognition of the temptations of commodity fetishism. 'The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them' (*Dorian* 277). His desire finally leads to the abuse of opium, the symbol of decadence, magic, joy and inspiration. In Wilde's description of the opium den in Chapter Sixteen, Dorian 'knew in what strange heavens they [opium-eaters] were suffering, and what dull hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy' (*Dorian* 327). The hero is attracted by the opium den, where 'the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new' (*CW* 134). His thirst for opium is driven by the same psychology as that operating in the reconstruction of his collection. The opium addiction is the transmuting form of commodity fetishism.

In the nineteenth century, British traders of the East India Company exported large amounts of opium to China. It needs to point out that there was a distinction between the British government and the British opium-traders. A strong anti-opium sentiment existed in Britain and the official attitude of the British government to the opium trade was neither encouragement nor discouragement. In the public perception of opium in Britain, this drug was more frequently associated with China and was seen as a 'Chinese problem' because the Chinese people were the largest consumer of opium products. It is possible for this reason that in the aestheticisation of opium, Wilde uses 'China' to bridge consumerism and decadence:

At last he got up from the sofa on which he had been lying, went over to it, and, having unlocked it, touched some hidden spring. A triangular drawer passed slowly out. His fingers moved instinctively towards it, dipped in, and closed on something. It was a small Chinese box of black and gold-dust lacquer, elaborately wrought, the sides patterned with curved waves, and the silken cords hung with round crystals and tasselled in plaited metal threads. He opened it. Inside was a green paste, waxy in lustre, the odour curiously heavy and persistent. (*Dorian* 322)

This scene is from Chapter Fifteen, when the hero anxiously unlocks an ornate cabinet, which holds a secret stash of Chinese-boxed opium. Here, the elaborate gold-dust lacquered Chinese box, which is an aesthetic object as well as an exotic Oriental commodity, contains dangerous opium and acts as a medium for Dorian's decadence. The inspiration here might come from Wilde's visit to the opium den during his trip to Chinatown in San Francisco, or his encounter with the Chinese immigrants in London, but more fundamentally be based on the Victorian perception of the Orient, which saw the Chinese empire as a symbol of mystery, hedonism and decadence due to its extravagant lifestyle. In nineteenth-century China, opium was used as a widespread pleasure-giving indulgence. The modestly estimated number of Chinese citizens addicted to opium was no less than four millions, some scholars even believe the total number of addicts in China in the 1830s reached as high as twelve-million (Jean 55). All classes of Chinese people, from rich merchants to common soldiers and peasants, were affected. This drug was renamed as 'fortunate and long-lived cream' by Chinese opium-eaters to describe its fantastic effect of stimulating ecstatic reveries and hallucinations.¹² However, the Chinese empire was rotten because of widespread opium addiction. The depiction of Chinese opium culture was part of

¹² 'Fortunate and long-lived cream' in Chinese: *Fu-Shou-Gao*.

the Victorian construction of an Oriental ‘other’ governed by its addiction to deviance, sexual licentiousness, and immoral sensual pleasure. To many British people, opium was more pernicious when coupled with the stereotype of ‘yellow peril’, because it suggested the possibility of a quasi-racial transformation or degeneration. In Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*, the Chinese immigrants to London from Hong Kong, the newly acquired overseas colony after the opium wars, or from the Empire’s Southeast Asian colonies, brought oriental opium dens to Britain at the same time.¹³ Opium encapsulated the conditions of a relatively new imperial geography in which the British masters found themselves increasingly dependent upon the non-Western world for goods and labour, and facing potential threats brought by the Empire’s colonial exploitation. Anne Varty points out that in Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*, ‘beauty no longer equates unambiguously with goodness’ (123). The decadence of Dorian’s abuse of dangerous opium in order to gain extraordinary sensual experience implies his inevitable trajectory from the indulgence of commodity fetishism to decadence, a trajectory reflected in the Victorians’ perception of Chinese culture, and a possible end for the British Empire itself in the future.

In conclusion, Wilde’s writings on Chinese commodities showed his view of a consumerist aestheticism, one that recommended ‘applied art’ to the public and sensual experiments to the elites. The aesthetic movement was a revival or renaissance of the decorative arts. Artists and designers worked enthusiastically to improve the taste of the public. Aestheticism was not just an elite debate limited to the academy; it also served as a way of materially improving society. Wilde did not reject consumerist culture, but connected it with aristocratic tastes, creating a new economics of beauty, which mixed commodity logic and aesthetic pursuit, ordinary living and artistic utopia. The consumption of Chinese commodities, which initially appeared as a luxurious marker of class distinction, spread from

¹³ See the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of *Dorian Gray*.

the aristocracy and the social elites to a much broader market in the late nineteenth century. It was driven by the forces of consumerism, industrialisation, and the new middle classes' ambitions of social mobility. The aesthetic movement was both an expression of aristocratic sensibility and a plea for social transformation. Chinese commodities, because of their noble heritage in classical times and democratic price in the Victorian age, became the point of contact between interior spiritual superiority and exterior cultural consumption. They served as the memory of aristocratic glory and the everyday enjoyment of the common family, thus entering the philosophy of Wilde's consumerist aestheticism. However, during the democratisation of beauty, Wilde tried to keep the superior cultural identity of the aesthetes. The collecting of oriental arts became a form of commodity fetishism accompanied by the global expansion of the British Empire, and 'China' mirrored the inevitable decadence of the aesthetic movement and the over-expanded imperial culture.

2 Mirror of Self-Consciousness:

The ‘Chinaman’ in Oscar Wilde’s Identity Politics

This chapter situates Oscar Wilde’s writings on Chinese people in the context of and against late Victorian imperial culture. The description of Chinese people by Wilde reflects the development of his identity politics of being both the coloniser and the colonised. His exclusion of the Chinese from ‘beauty’ in Oxford days implied a kind of English imperialist attitude, and his later admiration for the Chinese labourers in San Francisco signalled his warmer embrace of Irish national identity. It is suggested that the change of Wilde’s attitude towards the Chinese people was associated with his thinking on his dual English and Celtic cultural identities. Wilde questioned the racial hierarchy of the Empire and the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon. In his condemnation of the empire, Wilde used the Chinese coolies to revalue the ‘superiority’ defined by the imperialists and replaced the political, military and economic powers with the power of beauty.

For nearly a century, Wilde has been seen primarily as a decadent ‘English’ writer, a dandy walking down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in hand. However, his personality embodied far more than what this caricatured image showed. Born in a family of professional Anglo-Irish middle class in Dublin, Wilde could not avoid answering the embarrassing question of his cultural identity, namely, was he an Englishman or an Irishman? A considerable amount of literature on Wilde's

Irish ethnicity has investigated the social psychology and politics of colonised Ireland in the nineteenth century, to explore the impact of Irish identity on Wilde's literary career. For example, Richard Pine has sought to recover Wilde's Irish otherness as a strategic mode of negotiating marginality in an English-dominated imperial state; Declan Kiberd has highlighted Wilde's subversively Irish performance of Englishness. The symposium of *Wilde the Irishman*, edited by Jerusha McCormack, collected eighteen original and thought-provoking papers on 'Irish Wilde'. Noreen Doody's latest article 'Performance and Place: Oscar Wilde and the Irish National Interest' in *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2010) also shows an eloquent analysis on the relationship between Wilde and nineteenth-century Irish cultural inheritance. Inspired by the foregoing stimulating research, this chapter tries to offer a reading of Wilde's distinctly uneven engagement with race and the empire. By demonstrating a parallel relationship between the change of his attitude towards the Chinese people and the development of his awareness of Irish cultural identity, this chapter tries to discover the contribution of the 'Chinaman' in Wilde's strategy of self-representation against Victorian imperialism, and the political implication of such narration for the aesthetic movement.

Curtis Marez notices that many Victorian critics liked to link Wilde with the Chinese and other 'primitive' peoples. For instance, when Wilde made his American tour in 1882, a newspaper of the new world pictured him as 'Chinaman' with a pigtail. In this grotesque cartoon, Wilde stands smugly between two Chinese vases, which contain a sunflower and a lily. The sunflower, however, has rats for petals. The caption reads 'No like to call me John, call me Oscar' (qtd. in Marez 273). This picture contains the implication of racism against the Chinese, who were stereotyped as 'yellow peril' during the late nineteenth century by the white supremacists. It is noticeable that the author of this sketch showed the same hostility to the arrival of Wilde as to the residence of the Chinese immigrants in

America. Similarly, British periodicals also connected Wilde with the Chinese. With the growing number of Chinese in East London in the 1890s, xenophobia began to increase. A drawing entitled 'A Voluptuary' in the magazine *Pick-Me-Up* (14 July 1894) pictured Wilde as stereotyped Chinese -- thin, slit-like eyes and prominent buckteeth -- smoking opium in the chair. A satirical review of a London Chinese restaurant in *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* (9 August 1894) was accompanied by a sketch 'Oscar in China', which depicts Wilde smoking a cigarette and taking a Chinese teacup in hand, as a pigtailed Chinese waiter watches aside (qtd. in Marez 274).

Since the late eighteenth century, China had gradually degenerated into a negative model for the British. Adam Smith quoted in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that 'the poverty of the lower ranks of people in China far surpasses that of the most beggarly nations in Europe' (45). In 1793, the British government sent a mission headed by Lord Macartney to Beijing to negotiate an agreement with the Chinese imperial court in order to expand commerce. However, the Chinese Emperor rejected Lord Macartney's request by saying 'we possess all things' (Hanes and Sanello 13-19). This diplomatic event reinforced the racial stereotype among the British elite that the Chinese were an arrogant and ignorant people. The Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century thoroughly proved, to the conservative viewpoint, the incompetence of the Chinese nation. Correspondingly, Chinese culture was identified with a rigid adherence to backward tradition, rather than a source of current knowledge; her people were widely regarded as a heathen yellow race inferior to the whites in most respects (Mungello 123).

As Richard Ellmann points out, Wilde's aestheticism could be traced to the impacts of many other great Victorian intellectuals. In 1871, when Wilde was sixteen years old, he enrolled in Trinity College Dublin and was tutored by J. P. Mahaffy, a professor of Classics whom Wilde called 'my first and my best teacher' (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 26). He travelled with Mahaffy to Italy in 1875

and Greece in 1877, and was considerably influenced by his former tutor's aesthetic perception. The contention of Mahaffy about Chinese civilisation is shown in *Twelve Lectures on Primitive Civilisation and Their Physical Conditions*, in which Mahaffy discussed the development of various civilisations in world history. Mahaffy believed that '[the Chinese are] marked by a materialistic character, their religion and poetry were not much developed [...] they were more disposed to material comfort than to ideal art, [...] their constitutions were despotic, and their lower classes slaves' (294).

At Oxford, John Ruskin was one of Wilde's most prominent spiritual influences. Wilde, having attended Ruskin's lectures, determined to participate in the practical beautification of the countryside. He joined Ruskin's efforts to dig a flower-edged road through a swamp separating the villages of Upper and Lower Hinskey. Like Mahaffy, Ruskin also assessed Chinese arts as generally inferior to Western arts. In *The Stones of Venice* (1853), when he discusses the forms of errors in arts, he argues that 'in the delight of inventing fantastic colour and form, the truths of nature are wilfully neglected, the intellect becomes comparatively decrepit, and that state of art results which we find among the Chinese' (185-86). In *Modern Painters* (1869), about the imagination, he says 'let not the jests of the fancy be confounded with that after serious work of the imagination [...] let not the monsters of Chinese earthenware be confounded with the Faun, Satyr, or Centaur' (186). In *The Queen of the Air: Being a Study of the Greek Myths of Cloud and Storm* (1869), Ruskin compares Greek and Chinese arts, claiming 'the design of Greek vases is as far above the designing of mere colourist nations like the Chinese, as men's thoughts are above children's' (97).

Influenced by the mindset of the time and his circle, Wilde seems to have harboured a bias against the Chinese people in his youth. When reading for 'Greats' at Oxford, he, perhaps subconsciously, evaluated the Chinese quite negatively in a throwaway remark. He sent a letter to William Ward in January

1877, saying ‘how can you, an aesthetic youth, dress yourself as a Chinaman and so exhibit yourself to some girl you are fond of?’ (CL 37) Wilde distinguished Ward and himself from the Chinese people whom he thought had an inferior taste in beauty.

However, five years later, Wilde’s attitude towards the Chinese developed into a more respectful stance. He demonstrated appreciation of the Chinese throughout some of his most representative essays and public lectures. The Chinese once being alienated by him because of their supposed inferior taste turned into a revered model of artistic lifestyle. This change in attitude took place after his visit to Chinatown in San Francisco in 1882. Escorted by the local mayor, Wilde watched operas in Chinese theatres and drank tea in Chinese restaurants (CW 935). He wrote a letter to Norman Forbes-Robertson on 27 March 1882 to share his excitement: ‘tonight I am escorted by the Mayor of the city through the Chinese quarter, to their theatre and joss houses and rooms, which will be most interesting’ (CL 159). The London newspaper *The Era* (14July1883) reported that ‘the lecturer (Oscar Wilde) dwelt upon the beauties and peculiarities of Chinese theatricals’. Richard Ellmann notes that Wilde even made a Chinese friend in San Francisco (*Oscar Wilde* 193). He was invited by some local young artists to drink tea in a studio. A Chinese friend of these artists came to the party especially to prepare and serve the tea for them. It seems that Wilde enjoyed the experience of visiting Chinatown in San Francisco, because he frequently mentioned it in his lectures. In ‘The Decorative Arts’, he said:

When I was in San Francisco, ...I saw rough Chinese navvies, who did work that the ordinary Californian rightly might be disgusted with and refuse to do, sitting there drinking their tea out of tiny porcelain cups, which might be mistaken for the petals of a white rose, and handling them with care, fully appreciating the influence of their beauty (CW 935).

In addition, there is a similar description in 'The House Beautiful':

In a restaurant in San Francisco, I saw a Chinese navy drinking his tea out of a most beautiful cup as delicate as the petal of a flower (CW 921).

Returning from the United States, Wilde wrote 'Impressions of America' (1883), in which he talked about his opinion of the Chinese whom he saw in San Francisco in more detail. He first complained that 'there is not so much beauty to be found in American cities', then he said 'perhaps the most beautiful part of America is the West', and 'San Francisco is a really beautiful city. China Town, peopled by Chinese labourers, is the most artistic town I have ever come across'. Wilde described the image of the Chinese people and their artistic lifestyle:

The people- strange, melancholy Orientals, whom many people would call common, and they are certainly very poor- have determined that they will have nothing about them that is not beautiful. [...] When the Chinese bill was presented, it was made out on rice paper, the account being done in Indian ink as fantastically as if an artist had been etching little birds on a fan (CW 939-40).

The visit to Chinatown gave Wilde a strong impression of what 'artistic life' should be. According to Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, after experiencing Chinatown in San Francisco, Wilde became interested in the Chinese people. He said 'I wish those people had a quarter in London; I should take pleasure in visiting it often' (qtd. in Lewis and Smith 2120).

Wilde's appreciation of the Chinese immigrants sounds eccentric in the heyday of British imperialism and the general Western condescension towards China. When Wilde made his tour in America in 1882, the 'Chinese Exclusion Act' was passed in Congress in the same year. The 1880s saw the hysterical

anti-Chinese movement in America, when the prejudice against the Chinese people sometimes culminated in violence.¹⁴ In California where Wilde visited, Chinese communities were often harassed, attacked or expelled. The conservative American politicians, from John Quincy Adams to Theodore Roosevelt, approved the exclusion of the Chinese, and denied to the Chinese people most of the characteristics and attributes essential to white Americans (Daniels 30). Although the Chinese population was small in London, less than four hundred in the 1880s, and most of them gathered along two narrow East End streets, to some English critics, the immigration of the Chinese to the UK appeared to constitute a serious threat to the white race. These Chinese labourers in London were a result or a 'new problem' of the expansion of the British Empire. The numerous colonial exploitations demanded more labour force, so the Chinese labourers, mainly through British Hong Kong, were recruited to work in the British Isles and the colonies of the Empire through the 'Chinese coolie trade'.¹⁵ However, Londoners worried about the presence of the Chinese in the East End. As Marek Kohn writes, the public feared the Chinese, who were perceived as opium eaters and an inferior race, would bring 'racial degeneracy' to the white Anglo-Saxons (12). They worried that the opium-induced racial contagion would move from the Chinese to the white working class before finally infecting the middle class. Contrasting with this popular hostility to the Chinese, and considering that Chinatowns in the nineteenth century were usually squalid urban slums, Wilde's enthusiastic admiration for the Chinese people and Chinatown was obviously out of tune with the statements of Victorian 'decent' and 'moral' classes on racial purity.

¹⁴ 'Chinese Exclusion Act', see <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/chinex.htm> [cited 7 April 2009].

¹⁵ In the nineteenth century, Britain recruited Asian workers to work in her colonies through 'colonial agents'. After the Opium Wars, Hong Kong was absorbed into the British Empire. The Chinese government was forced to abolish the law that forbade the Chinese people to work abroad. The Chinese labourers, mainly from the southeast provinces, were recruited to work in the Pacific islands, Australia, Canada, West Indian islands, and other British colonies. Some of the Chinese workers and sailors arrived and settled in Britain, who gathered in Liverpool and London's Limehouse district.

It is observed that there were also some public defenders of the Chinese in the late nineteenth century, most of whom were white Anglo-Saxon Protestant missionary clergy. However, their defence was based on the reason that 'compared with irredeemable, rowdy and prolific Roman-Catholic Irish, being Chinese is a lesser evil' (Daniels 30). Such so-called defence shows that English racism not only discriminates against coloured peoples but also makes distinctions within the white races in opposing those who are from different ethnic groups or religions.

In this context, it is worthwhile considering Wilde's bi-cultural identity. His family name was Anglo-Irish Protestant; many of his relatives lived in England; he had already known many talented English people since his childhood, who used to attend his mother's Saturday afternoons. On the other hand, he had a radical Irish nationalistic mother, who penned inflammatory articles and poems for nationalist journals and called herself 'Speranza'. His name 'Oscar Fingal O' Flahertie' contained a strong connotation of Irish identity. In his early years, it seems that Wilde determined to be both 'Irish' and 'English', and tried to disregard the distinction between the two. His poem 'To Milton' said that 'seeing this little isle on which we stand/ This England, this sea-lion of the sea, [...]/ When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!' (CW 774) Wilde eulogised Oliver Cromwell, who fought for democracy in English civil war but also invaded Ireland on behalf of the English Parliament. Wilde also annoyed the Reverend Mathew Russell SJ, editor of *The Irish Monthly*, by referring to 'our English land' in his sonnet 'The Grave of Keats'. He defended himself on the ground that 'it is a noble privilege to count oneself of the same race as Keats or Shakespeare' (Coakley 181). The poem 'Ave Imperatrix' by its very title promises a celebration of Britain's global rule. Wilde's pacifism in it, like the poem's xenophobia, depends almost entirely on the unquestioning assumption of an English point of view. This poem is written in an 'English' and imperial tone, and its commitments

to the British Empire are evident, especially in the second half, such as ‘where is our English chivalry?’ (CW 854)

Wilde’s poetry prior to 1881 represents an embrace of ‘Englishness’, which is represented in Ruskin’s ‘Conclusion to Inaugural Lecture’ (1870) that ‘we (English) are [...] a race mingled of the best northern blood [...] Britain must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men’ (17-18). Through analysing Wilde’s early poems, it seems that during his early literary career, he accepted ‘English’ identity as confidently as his inborn ‘Irishness’. It is also the period when Wilde considered the Chinese people inferior in aesthetic taste, as instanced in his letter to Ward.

The 1882 American tour seems to be a subtle turning point of the development of Wilde’s self-consciousness of dual-cultural identity, and at this moment, his essays suddenly embraced the Chinese coolie as a topic. When he just landed in New York on 2 January, he still referred to England as ‘our country’ in the lectures (CW 926), and at the beginning of his lecture tour, his topic was ‘the English Renaissance of Art’. This disappointed many Irish-Americans, as is evidenced from the Irish nationalist journal *Irish Nation*, which castigated Wilde for missing his national identity, saying ‘Speranza’s son had sadly misapplied his talent’ (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 195). Nevertheless, Wilde soon found his role as ‘Speranza’s son’. As Anne Varty notes, Irish citizens welcomed him in different cities and several Irish Americans hosted dinner parties for him. He was also invited to the St Patrick’s Day Celebrations at St Paul’s Hall. The local paper, *Daily Globe*, reported the speech he gave on that occasion, ‘the generous response you have given to the mention of the efforts of my mother in Ireland’s cause has filled me with pleasure and a pride that I cannot properly acknowledge’ (qtd. in Varty 22). Obviously, Wilde recognised that it was not ‘Englishness’ but ‘Irishness’ that brought himself such hospitality. His relationship with Irish

Americans gave him an opportunity to have a deeper insight into his own national identity.

The encounter with Irish Americans during his 1882 tour led Wilde to claim his Irish identity in a much louder voice than hitherto. Initially, Wilde tried to balance his English and Irish identities by saying 'I do not wish to see the empire dismembered, but only to see the Irish people free, and Ireland still as a willing and integral part of the British Empire' (McCormack 1). He preferred to be both 'English' and 'Irish' equally; however, various events in the late nineteenth century raised serious conflicts between the British Empire and Ireland. The Irish activists of the Land League movement in Ireland clashed with the British government over land ownership, and many Irish nationalistic leaders were arrested. These conflicts provided a stimulus and mobilisation of the Irish and the Irish Americans in the cause of Irish nationalism (Byrne, Coleman, and King 234, 332, 509-12). The crackdown fuelled anti-British feeling among the Irish community in America throughout the 1870s and the early 1880s. While Wilde toured in America, he realised he could not escape from the dispute between England and Ireland without making a choice, and after communicating with Irish immigrants in America, he chose to speak in the 'Irish' voice. He gave Irish nationalistic answers to reporters when he was interviewed about the relation between England and Ireland. For example, he told a reporter during his lecture tour that 'we in Ireland are fighting for the principle of autonomy against empire, for independence against centralisation' (qtd. in V. Mahaffey 55). On visiting Edmond de Goncourt, Wilde told the host that 'I am Irish by race, but the English have condemned me to speak the language of Shakespeare' (Kiberd, 'Oscar Wilde' 11). This attitude represented a revision of his previous standpoint. He also spoke in praise of the Fenians, the legendary band of Irish warriors and the nationalist organisations dedicated to the establishment of an Irish Republic independent of British rule, by force if necessary. On 6 May 1882, a group of Irish

radical nationalists kidnapped and murdered Lord Frederick Cavendish in Dublin. While condemning the violence, Wilde added that ‘we forget how much England is to blame [...] she is reaping the fruit of seven centuries of injustice’ (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 196). Moreover, Wilde began to talk about ‘Anglo-Saxon stupidity’. In San Francisco, he said to friends, ‘the Saxon took our lands from us and made them destitute, but we took their language and added new beauties to it’ (Kiberd, ‘Oscar Wilde’ 11). His speech of Irish nationalism won applause from many Irish-American friends, but also angered his English readers. The 1882 lecture tour of English aestheticism in America finally inspired Wilde’s deeper insight into ‘Irishness’, and accomplished the transformation of his bi-cultural identity from being both ‘English’ and ‘Irish’ to a more assertive identification of Irishness. In other words, Wilde confirmed his ‘true home’ from abroad during the American tour. It is also the period during which Wilde developed a more positive attitude to the Chinese people.

It appears that there is a positive correlation between Wilde’s evaluation of the Chinese people and his awareness of being Irish in his bi-cultural identity: the stronger Wilde’s Irishness grew, the better the impression of the Chinese he held. Is this interesting cultural phenomenon just a coincidence, then, or do some underlying causes contribute to such a relationship?

The newspapers in Britain and the US used to compare Wilde to the Chinese (Marez 273-74). His long hair might be one of the reasons that permitted his resemblance to Chinese males, who kept long pigtails. Both of their hairstyles were the objects of mockery by the Americans and the British. For example, a poem ‘John Chinaman’ in *Punch* (10 April 1858) depicted the image of the Chinese people as ‘little pig eyes and large pigtail’. A review of Wilton Jones’s pantomime ‘Aladdin or the Wonderful Lamp’ in *Liverpool Mercury etc* (‘Pantomime at the Rotunda’, 27 December 1887) admitted that ‘the English uniform with the Chinese pigtail is a laughable combination’. The theme of

'pigtail pulling' was often seen in cartoons that depicted Chinese men and even Chinese boys with their pigtails being pulled by white males.¹⁶ Similarly, Wilde's long hair also amused the mass media. The newspaper *The Sporting Times* (24 December 1881) joked that 'let us hope that he [Wilde] will continue to wear long hair for the convenience of those critics who will take his scalp'. To the Victorians, the pigtail was the external evidence for demonstrating the decadence and femininity of the 'semi-barbarous' Chinese race. Philippa Levine observes that nineteenth-century imperialism labelled the various colonised people as 'feminised effete, or oversexed and uncontrollable savages' (274). In the racial hierarchy defined by the British Empire, the Chinese were sexual perverts with characters of feminine passivity and corruption. In a similar way, the Irish people were also classified as 'feminine' within the race-gender hierarchy of British imperialism. Edward G. Lengel acknowledges that Victorian politicians often used the metaphor of marriage and gender to refer to the union of Great Britain and Ireland: the British represented the masculine side, and the Irish the feminine (147-50). This gendered conception was even accepted by Matthew Arnold, who also saw the Celtic psyche as essentially feminine. In *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), Arnold argued that 'the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy' (108). In the perspective of this sexualised racism, Wilde's long hair exactly demonstrated the 'Celtic feminine' against British masculinity. Victorian sexism saw the female as the weaker gender, and the feminised races such as the Chinese and the Irish were thus inferior to the masculine British in nature. Therefore, the mockery of comparing Wilde to the Chinese because both were 'feminine' reveals some implications of Victorian cultural imperialism, a race-gender hierarchy involving colonialism, male chauvinism, and racism.

¹⁶ Chan, http://www.chsa.org/research/ching_conference_excerpt.php [cited 15 April 2009]

Nineteenth-century ethnology and anthropology were fostered by prevailing imperialist attitudes towards 'lower' or 'inferior' races, and in turn, ethnology and anthropology confirmed the racism that authorised imperialist domination. In the 1860s and 1870s, social evolutionary theory codified and structured the hierarchy that bridged but distanced 'lower', 'primitive' cultures and 'higher', 'civilised' cultures, while providing for a number of both progressive and regressive gradations between the two (Jackson and Weidman 61-96). Among these theories and practices, such as ethnological exposition, 'ape-like' was the metaphor to be used frequently to describe the 'natural' or 'primitive' peoples who were placed in a continuum between apes and humans of European descent. Although the victims of such nineteenth-century scientific racism were Africans and Pacific islanders in particular, 'ape-like' was also employed to describe the Chinese and the Irish to emphasise the 'lowness' of the evolutionary stage occupied by both the Chinese and the Irish races. When the first Chinese ambassador arrived in Britain in February 1877, *Punch* pictured this diplomat as an ape watching Britain through telescope. The text reads 'you have to go, John Chinaman; to the land of the out-barbarian; an ambassador, though, John Chinaman!' (See fig. 1)



(Fig.1. 'John Chinaman', *Punch* 10 February 1877)

China was thought to be a semi-barbarous country, while the Irish people, as Ruth Fletcher notes, were portrayed in English newspapers and parliamentary debates in Westminster as animal-like and unable to operate self-government. In much of the pseudo-scientific literature of the day, the Irish were held to be inferior, an example of a lower evolutionary form, closer to the apes than their 'superiors', the Anglo-Saxons. Cartoons in *Punch* often portrayed the Irish as having long or projecting jaw, the stigma to the phrenologists of a lower evolutionary order, degeneracy, or criminality (Curtis 84). The idea that the Irish were less responsible than their English 'betters' was generally accepted (Doody 257). Declan Kiberd points out that 'the English, seeing themselves as secular, progressive and rational, had deemed the neighbouring islanders to be superstitious, backward and irrational' (*Inventing Ireland* 32). In popular plays like James Pilgrim's *Katty O' Sheal* (1854), the Irish were a 'coloured people', unsuitable for marriage to authentic whites (O'Toole 80). Even Matthew Arnold believed that the 'idle and imprudent' Irish could never properly govern themselves (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 31). Born in Ireland, Wilde was also depicted as a big 'ape'. For example, W. H. Beard's image 'The Aesthetic Monkey' published in *Harper's Weekly* (28 January 1882) drew the ape-like Wilde wearing his 'aesthetic clothes', gazing at a sunflower (See fig.2). *The Washington Post* (22 January 1882) also juxtaposed Wilde with an ape. In the cartoon named 'Mr. Wilde of Borneo', Wilde was compared to the 'wild man of Borneo'. The text reads 'How far is it from this (the ape-man) to this (Wilde)?'



(Fig.2 'The Aesthetic Monkey', *Harper's Weekly*, 28 January 1882)

In these pictures, Wilde's typical aesthetic gesture was mocked as a ridiculous action of an ape. The images implied that Wilde was just a clothed version of the ape representing 'a lower stage of evolution' in British sentiments and perceptions. 'Ape-like' was the malevolent cliché of Victorian racism against the Irish people; therefore, these cartoons contained the message of racial discrimination against Wilde and his Irish identity. A range of qualities other than skin colour may signify racial discrimination, such as accent, language, religion and geographical location. Wilde the Irishman belonged to one 'inferior' race under British colonialism, so his Irishness itself is the object that can be made fun of. In the hierarchy of the British Empire, both 'John Chinaman' and 'Wilde the

Irishman’ are members of ‘feminine and barbarous’ races lower than the Anglo-Saxon, the superior and masculine ruler. The Irish and the Chinese can merely ‘ape’ English civilisation. The following table (Table 1) shows this racial hierarchy of British imperialism involving the British, the Irish and the Chinese, which was analogised by the gender relationship. By comparing their race, quality, culture and identity, the English were thought as civilised white superiors of masculinity; the Chinese were classified as a yellow race, which was seen as inferior and dangerous to the whites; the Irish, though they were ethnically Caucasians, were considered as a coloured race by the English conquerors. As Edward Said points out in *Culture and Imperialism*, ‘the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them’ (xiii). Definition and description of the colonised constructed the narration of the empire; Englishness entitled the cultural meaning of being masculine and civilised, while the Chinese race, as one of those peoples being conquered, represented the oppositional cultural implication of Englishness. Although the Irish participated in the British Empire’s global expansion through serving in the military departments and immigrating to the empire’s colonies, because it was the English who possessed the power of imperial narration, the Irish and Irishness were also labelled with the cultural stigma of the ‘colonised’.

Table 1

	Englishman	Irishman	Chinaman
Race	Whites	White (ethnically speaking)/ Coloured (in Victorian racism)	Yellow Peril
Quality	Masculine	Feminine	Feminine

Culture	Civilised	Barbarous	Barbarous
Identity	Coloniser	Colonised (in British Empire)/ Coloniser (in rest of the world)	Colonised ¹⁷

Table One, which compares the different roles of English, the Irish and the Chinese in the British Empire, reflects the embarrassment of Irish identity. Ireland, after the 1800 Act of Union, was not formally a colony, but part of the British state itself. Wilde left his native Ireland to receive education in Oxford and seek career success in London. This movement describes the trajectory from the ‘Celtic fringe’ to the ‘English core’ in the empire, from the margins to the centre in culture. He duplicated many of the attributes of the colonisers, including trying to emulate the Oxford English accent. He claimed ‘my Irish accent was one of the many things I forgot at Oxford’, but actually no trace of it was audible (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 37). His throwaway negation of the Chinese people in Oxford days that excluded the ‘Chinaman’ from the possibility of being aesthetic is a manifestation of his imperialist attitude towards colonised and semi-colonised peoples.

¹⁷ As a traditional superpower in East Asia, in the late nineteenth century, China still possessed vast territories, and its inland was almost uninfluenced by the intrusion of the West. However, in its coastal cities, the changes brought by the West were significant, especially in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and other trading ports. Through forcing the Manchu government to sign “unequal treaties”, Britain obtained privileges to establish colonial administration in some districts of Shanghai, some cities in Canton and Shandong provinces, which were called ‘concession areas’, and Britain also formally colonised Hong Kong. In these areas, the Chinese were labelled as being colonised, and Shanghai, Canton and Hong Kong were the primary ports to export Chinese coolies. Moreover, because of what the British perceived as exotic customs, and especially, the torture of British diplomats in the second Opium war, the Chinese were seen not only as decadent but also as savages who were ignorant of international regulations.

However, in the British Empire, to be Irish entailed a double identity as being both the coloniser and the colonised. The Irish participated in the British Empire's colonisation of the world, but at the same time they were colonised by England. Fintan O'Toole argues that '[the Irish] are natives and conquerors, aboriginals and civilisers, a savage tribe in one context, a superior race in another' (77). These conflicting national identities, which were embodied as British imperialism and Irish nationalism respectively, made Wilde's self-narration complicated and paradoxical. Although Wilde narrated the story of himself as a civilised Englishman in his early poems, since he was born in Ireland, he was vulnerable to be read as a 'simian Irishman' and could not get rid of the 'otherness' imposed on him by the English. The negative criticism from the English public and newspapers on Wilde throughout his literary career, to some extent, was motivated by the feeling of Anglo-Saxon superiority towards a middle class Irishman who had no right to emulate English aristocracy. Insofar as the empire rests on the distinction between coloniser and colonised, there is no fundamental difference between being Irish and being Chinese. Both of the two cultural and racial identities were destined to suffer the humiliation of being the 'colonised' and the 'others' under the hierarchy of British imperialism.

The 1882 American lecture tour inspired Wilde's deeper insight into his Irish identity, since then, he no longer alienated the 'Chinaman' as he used to. Instead, he showed sympathy towards these 'common' and 'poor' Chinese labourers who were discriminated against and expelled, because he could see them as mirrors of the oppressed Irish under the British Empire's regime. The Chinese had once created a prosperous civilisation, many Western philosophers of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment found in China and the Chinese the model of a well-organised nation based on lofty reason and efficient conduct. However, as a result of its isolation from the outside world for more than two hundred years, the traditional Chinese agricultural civilisation seemed 'backward' and

'barbarous' compared with the industrialised European civilisations in the nineteenth century. The humiliating defeat in the Opium Wars destroyed the Chinese empire's confidence, and the incapability of the Chinese army seemed to support the idea that the Chinese race was 'inferior' and 'feminine'. However, from the experience of Chinatown in San Francisco, Wilde recognised that the humble Chinese people in poverty still possessed the aesthetic virtue of aristocracy that this old civilisation once had. His admiration for the Chinese labourers in the San Francisco slum appeared eccentric among the general pejorative view of the Chinese during the Victorian period. However, it was the poverty and humiliation that the Chinese people suffered, which formed a strong contrast with the glory that China used to have, which made the Chinese a convenient reference point for Wilde to advocate his Irish identity and the necessity of reviving Celtic culture. In Wilde's logic, the Chinese could be cleaned of their stigma caused by political, economical and military failures as long as they managed to keep their superiority in aesthetic taste. No matter how humble these Chinese navvies in San Francisco were, as they could appreciate the delicate teacups and enjoy the beautiful things in life, they were still worth admiring and praising. Similarly, the Irish, as Wilde argued, were 'a race once the most aristocratic in Europe', only 'with the coming of the English, art in Ireland came to an end'.¹⁸ According to Wilde's perception of the Chinese, it can be deduced that although the Irish were deprived of the political powers that they should have possessed within the empire, through reviving Irish aesthetics, the Irish people could regain their lost glory and superiority, and therefore improve the status of Ireland in the British state.

It needs to be pointed out that Wilde's Irishness is more appropriately understood as the cultural identification of 'Celtic' rather than a certain

¹⁸ Wilde made such a statement in a speech to the Irish Americans on the St Patrick's Day Celebration at St Paul's. The local paper *Daily Globe* (18 March 1882) reported this speech. See Varty, p.22, and Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.186.

party-political movement in Ireland. Defined by Matthew Arnold in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), the Celts include the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh, and the Cornish, namely embodying all the oppressed peoples in the United Kingdom who were alien and rejected by the Anglo-Saxons. As a protest against English racism and an endorsement of Irish nationalism, Wilde showed his pride in Irish heritage, and claimed that the Celts had superior talent to the English in aesthetics, arts and literature, to balance the English political superiority over the Irish. Matthew Arnold tried to prove that the Celt represents an alternative value: poetic, light-hearted, imaginative, emotional, playful, passionate, and sentimental, in contrast with English rationality and masculinity. Based on Arnold's arguments, Wilde attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Celtic characteristics through establishing a new judgment standard that was not based on one's political power but artistic talent. Kiberd has explained this strategy: 'instead of trying to redeem their masculinity by becoming counter-players of the rulers according to established rules, the colonised will discover an alternative frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak, degraded' (*Inventing Ireland* 45). This new strategy of self-narration also influenced Wilde's perception of the empire. Although Wilde was once proud of the successful expansion of the British Empire, as shown by his British patriotism in his early poems represented by 'Ave Imperatrix', he rejected aggressive imperialism established on oppression, particularly military and political imperialism in Ireland. Instead, Wilde articulated the ideology of an aesthetic empire, in which Irish or Celtic sub-ethnicity played an important role and showed superiority. In a letter to Bernard Shaw on 23 February 1893, Wilde said 'England is the land of intellectual fogs but you have done much to clear the air; we are both Celtic, and I like to think that we are friends' (*CL* 554). Writing from the Hotel d' Alsace to Georgina Weldon on 31 May 1898, Wilde denounced 'it is the lack of imagination

in the Anglo-Saxon race that makes the race so stupidly, harshly cruel, [...] (but) every Celtic has inborn imagination' (*CL* 1080).

As a result, the revaluation of the Chinese in terms of aesthetics functions as an analogy for the revaluation of 'aristocratic' Irish (Celtic) culture, which was thought to be occluded under English domination. Wilde used the Chinese 'simple' but 'aristocratic' lifestyle as the aesthetic weapon to rebel against the imperialist racial hierarchy. Since the Chinese could create the 'most artistic' place -- Chinatown in America, then why, by implication, could the Irish not revive their lost glorious culture? Wilde overturned the racial hierarchy defined by English imperialism by establishing a new system of evaluation based on aesthetic taste, and sought to rebuild Irishness through recognition of the value of Irish cultural identity.

Wilde's Irish consciousness in bi-cultural identity agitated his writing continuously, and contributed to his resourcefulness as a writer. Owen Dudley Edwards argues that Wilde's story 'The Star Child' (1891) explains his confirmation of Irish cultural identity through metaphor. The theme of this story is about one who missed his original identity at first but finally found his home. The star child can be seen as Wilde himself, the star child's real parents, beggar and leper, who turned out to be king and queen, would typify Wilde's Irish heritage. The wicked magician who enslaved the child and beat him for giving alms to the starving leper could be England (68). This story literarily represents Wilde's interpretation of his own Irish identity. However, as this chapter has argued, such sense was accomplished as early as during the 1882 American tour, accompanied by Wilde's revaluation of the Chinese people.

Through reviewing his critique of the Chinese, Wilde's own strategy of self-representation, or the development of his Irish cultural identity interacting with the racial and cultural attitudes of his time can be traced. The paradoxes of Wilde's bi-cultural identity were caused by the contradictions between the empire

and the sub-nationalisms of the British state. The empire established its sovereignty by defining its colonies as 'others', with all the accompanying significations of lesser, effeminate, savage, monstrous, expendable, which that concept bears, while it simultaneously created solid selfhood of the colonised within the empire which finally led to the generation of nationalism. Therefore, the formation of the British Empire and the vast expansion of British imperialism in the nineteenth century not only tend towards the confirmation of the identity of Greater Britain but also of the Irish, Welsh and Scottish elements that made it up. The Irish Wilde, to quote Neil Sammells, is 'defined both by and against the English Wilde' (369). The experience of visiting Chinatown indelibly influenced Wilde's ideas of life and aestheticism. The development of Wilde's literary career suggests that there was positive correlation between his change of attitude towards the Chinese labourers and his sense of Irish cultural identity. Through studying the racial relationship within the Empire, this chapter argues that such a positive correlation was not coincidence but an interactive process in identity politics. Because Wilde's Irish cultural identity, which mixed 'civilised' and 'barbarian', 'coloniser' and 'colonised', 'superior' and 'humble', shared the same 'otherness' with the Chinese in English imperialism, so the question of what 'Chinese' stands for might imply the answer to the question of what 'Irish' stands for, and the latter is addressed by Wilde after his 1882 lecture tour. The revaluation of the Chinese people reflects Wilde's bi-cultural understanding of otherness, in particular a revaluation of the otherness of Irish people in the British Empire. Postcolonial literature, rather than simply being the writing which came after empire, is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinises the colonial relationship (Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial* 3). In a sense, Wilde is a pioneer of postcolonialism, his appreciation of the Chinese labourers is a protest against the racial hierarchy of English imperialism, and his construction of Irish (Celtic) cultural identity is an attempt to deconstruct the theoretical foundation of

the colonisers' power -- the 'scientific' literature on race classifications and imagery of subordination. As Elleke Boehmer states, 'empire was in part a textual exercise' (*Empire Writings* 14), thus to balance the military, political and economic advantages of the English colonisers, Wilde used his pen to establish aestheticism as a cultural power for the colonised subaltern groups.

Chapter Two: Oscar Wilde's Japan

1. The Victorian Experience of Japan:

Japonisme in Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism

Japanese art and culture was one of the strongest external influences on the British aesthetic movement from the mid-1870s until the end of the nineteenth century. This chapter studies the 'discovery of Japan' by Britain's imperial expansion to the Far East, and analyses how the Victorian aesthetes sought inspiration from Japanese art to develop the style of Japonisme. Japanese art and culture supported Wilde's aesthetic practice and construction of aesthetic theory.

Now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flittered across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid jade-faced painters of Tokio who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion (*Dorian* 169).

Oscar Wilde opens *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the artist Basil Hallward's studio in central London, where the hero Dorian was first seduced by Lord Henry's aesthetic pronouncements, and the mysterious picture that mirrored Dorian's decadence was created. Wilde designs the composition of Basil's studio and garden based on the Japanese principles of house decoration to create a 'momentary Japanese effect'. The birds flittering across the silk curtains in front

of the window produced an aesthetic effect similar to Japanese bird-and-flower painting illustrated on hanging scroll and screen. This novel was considered as one of the representative works associated with the aesthetic movement, when Britain witnessed a widespread fashion for the taste of Japanese art. Japanese styles and designs were favoured and imitated by a number of Victorian aesthetes in interior furniture, painting, and decorative arts. This particular intercultural communication of the aesthetic movement is known as Japonisme, which was started by 'the discovery of Japan' in the 1850s.¹⁹

In 1853, American Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan with his squadron and a letter from President Millard Fillmore to the Mikado to negotiate a trading agreement with Japanese Tokugawa Shogun government, demanding that this country should open its ports to U.S. merchant ships and enter into trade with the United States. Upon seeing Perry's fleet anchoring at Tokyo Bay, the shocked Japanese realised that their country had no chance against such a Western power, and thus they had to accept all the demands. On 31 March 1854, representatives of Japan and the U.S. signed the Treaty of Kanagawa, which signalled the end of the self-imposed national isolation of Japan that had existed since the seventeenth century and the beginning of a new era in the relations between Japan and the Western world.²⁰ Following Perry's example, Russia, Britain, France and the Netherlands forced Japan to sign similar treaties that permitted trade and opening of Japanese ports (Auslin 211). The British naval commander in the China seas, Sir James Stirling, negotiated the first bilateral convention between Britain and Japan in October 1854, which entitled the British to the most-favoured-nation treatment. In order to gain more commercial and political interests in the Far East, Britain sent James Bruce, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine to China and Japan to

¹⁹ The term 'Japonisme' originally meant the study of Japanese art.

²⁰ See http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/treaty_of_kanagawa from the website of National Archives & Records Administration of the United States. [cited 25 July 2009]

demand treaty revisions in 1858. After bombarding Canton in South China, Lord Elgin successfully signed the Tianjin Treaty with the Chinese Manchu government, and then he headed towards the harbour of Nagasaki in Japan. Having recognised that Lord Elgin was representing the most powerful Western empire in the world, the Japanese made concessions and both sides reached the conclusion of 'the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce' on 26 August 1858. This treaty regulated that Japan should open more ports for British commerce, where British citizens were granted the rights to lease land and erect buildings; an ambassador of the British government would stay in Tokyo, and British citizens would be permitted to reside in Tokyo and Osaka to engage in free trade without intervention of Japanese authority.²¹

These Anglo-Japanese trade agreements during the 1850s were the products of the era of early globalisation when all Western powers were seeking to open new markets for their manufactured goods abroad, as well as establish new colonies to supply raw materials for industry. However, this colonial expansion of the British Empire also provided the Victorian public with an opportunity to appreciate and obtain Japanese commodities that were seldom seen before. For example, the pioneering British negotiators to Japan 'were greatly impressed by (Japanese) lacquer wares of the purest and rarest colours' (Watanabe 676). The series of treaties brought the result of an unprecedented flow of travellers and commodities between Japan and Britain. While Japanese shores were flooded with the wave of British manufactured goods, shiploads of objects from Japan also flowed into Britain and attracted the attention of both elite artists and the public. For instance, the newspaper *The Morning Chronicle* (London, 24 January 1854) reported an exhibition of Japanese arts and goods, the majority of which were for sale. It described that 'the porcelain is remarkable for the extreme thinness and transparency', and made an optimistic prediction that 'a good and

²¹ Auslin, pp. 21-23, 53-60, 75-86, 90-103, 109-21, 129-33

profitable market for Japanese manufactures may be created in this country'. Following Japan's exportation of its wares, the influence of Japanese aesthetics on Victorian taste correspondingly began to increase. The cargoes of Japanese ceramics, metalwork, textiles, lacquers, prints and paintings reached Britain; the fresh ideas of composition, colour and design began to be known by the Victorians. Various traders, diplomats and travellers who returned from their journeys to Japan also spread the knowledge of Japanese culture in Britain. For example, Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888), who served as personal secretary of Lord Elgin, edited the story of their adventure in *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan* (1860), which stimulated ordinary British people to learn more about Japanese culture (Brown 91-92). Sir Rutherford Alcock, the first British minister in Japan from 1858 to 1864, wrote a comprehensive account of Japanese arts with precise details of colour techniques in particular. His book *Art and Art Industries in Japan* (1878) set the mould for the majority of British opinions about Japanese arts in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In a sense, the opening of trade between Britain and Japan in 1854 represented the beginning of the cult of Japanese arts in Britain, and Lord Elgin's mission not only gained commercial opportunities for British merchants, but also inspired a remarkable era in art history of Japonisme in the West.

Before the 1850s, Japan had isolated itself from much of the rest of the world for around two hundred years. The Tokugawa Shogun believed that influences from abroad, such as international commerce, Christianity, and gunpowder-powered weapons could threaten the stability of Japanese domestic politics.²² No Westerners were allowed into Japanese ports except a handful of Dutch traders, who were also limited to operate from only one port, Nagasaki. On

²² From the twelfth century, the actual power was entrusted to a generalissimo of the Imperial forces, known as the *Shogun*. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, this office fell into the hands of the Tokugawa family, which continued until 1867, when the power of ruling Japan was returned to the Mikado.

the other hand, the most significant Western power, the British Empire, showed far less interest in trading with Japan than regarding commerce with China. In contrast to the view of China as a land of promise that seemed destined to become a huge market for British industries in the future, the British entrepreneurs in the eighteenth century only saw Japan as the end of a long line of commercial shipping. 'Japan's value as a potential market for Britain was never regarded highly by the British authorities, as China dominated their conception of the Far East' (Yokoyama xxii). As a result, for a long time, there was little knowledge about Japan in Britain. Hugh Honour notes that before 1854 Japanese art was often confused with the art of China because Japan seemed generally to have been regarded as a part, and a somewhat dim part, of the Chinese empire. He asserts that 'it was not until the early nineteenth century that the idea of Japan as an independent nation began to take shape in Europe' (208). Therefore, when Japan was opened to Britain for the first time, the articles that appeared in British magazines and newspapers to satisfy the public's curiosity about the country relied almost exclusively on pre-existing information or second-hand information from Chinese sources.

However, the ignorance of Japan brought more exoticism to the Victorian aesthetes when they encountered Japanese arts. Although the earliest art in Japan came from China in the fifth century and Chinese influence can be easily traced in the works of all the great periods of Japan, in the process of learning from their Chinese masters, the Japanese were to demonstrate their strong individual tastes and visual talents. Japanese art is not a mere imitation of Chinese art; instead, the Japanese artists have invested with a charm and expression peculiarly their own. For instance, the narrative painting originated in China, but in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Japanese created their own glorious tradition of narrative scrolls with illustrations, which combined a lyrical use of colour and brushwork

with sophisticated composition.²³ Chinese immigrants brought the lacquer techniques to Japan in the eighth century, but the Japanese improved it and developed a series of lacquer-ware from ‘sprinkled illustrations’ of gold filings to ‘speckled pear skin’ using metallic dust. The Japanese lacquer established its own characteristics, and to some extent it even surpassed Chinese lacquer in artisanship.²⁴ Therefore, with the opening of Japanese border, a ‘new style’ of Oriental arts different from the long-known chinoiserie attracted the eyeballs of the British aesthetes and the public.

One of the most important exhibitions for the popularisation of Japanese art was the collection brought to England for the Great London Exhibition of 1862, which provided the British public with an insight into the decorative arts of Japan in large quantities.²⁵ The majority of the displayed objects were assembled by Sir Rutherford Alcock. The collection covered a wide range of Japanese goods including lacquer ware, porcelain, textiles, paintings, prints and illustrated books.²⁶ Visited by hundreds of thousands of people, the Japanese arts on display fuelled the enthusiasm for ‘the era of Japonisme’ in Britain (Alcock 285). The Japanese exhibits attracted considerable comments. *The Leeds Mercury* (26 December 1862) praised the Japanese artistic merits ‘carried out with an ingenuity of workmanship and a genius of direct imitation rarely seen in Europe’. *The Newcastle Courant* (4 April 1862) valued Japanese arts as ‘the astonishment and envy of all European manufacturers’. The critics advocated Japanese tastes and

²³ See ‘Overview of Scroll Painting’, the website of The Virtual Museum of Japanese Arts, http://web-japan.org/museum/emaki/about_em.html [cited 10 August 2009]

²⁴ For more details, refer Sadao and Wada, *Discovering the Arts of Japan: A Historical Overview*

²⁵ There were a number of exhibitions before 1862, which also included some Japanese specimens. Such as the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, the Exhibition of Industrial Art of 1853 in Dublin, the Gallery of the Old Water Colour Society in Pall Mall East on 30 January 1854, and the Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 in Manchester, etc. Nevertheless, the 1862 London Exhibition was the most representative and most influential.

²⁶ The official catalogue of the exhibition recorded 623 Japanese items. See Sato and Watanabe, p.19.

urged Western designers to seek inspiration from Japanese art and design. As John B. Waring, one of the organisers of the Exhibition commented that ‘our own manufacturers would do well to study such Japanese works and improve their present system of decoration’.²⁷ Partly due to the influence of this exhibition, in the 1860s, institutions like the South Kensington Museum and the British Museum added large collections of Japanese arts to their holdings, which provided the public with more opportunities to get access to the culture of this ‘mysterious’ country.²⁸ By the early 1870s, London had become a centre for the vogue of Japan in Europe. Japanese arts were widely available to the public; there was a flood of articles in newspapers discussing Japanese arts for general readers. The cult of Japanese art became a distinct feature of the 1870s and 80s in England, as *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (London, Issue CXLVI, 1877) described, ‘Japanese art is already beginning to revolutionise modern decorative art, and is asserting its influence in almost every English household’.

i Japonisme and ‘Art for Art’s Sake’

The British aesthetic movement emerging in the 1870s echoed the contemporary enthusiasm for things Japanese. Sato Tomoko describes that ‘the aesthetic movement was hand in hand with the cult of Japan’ (Sato and Watanabe 28). Elisabeth Aslin even asserts, ‘Japonisme and the aesthetic movement were virtually synonymous’ (*Aesthetic Movement* 79). The Farmer and Rogers’ Oriental Warehouse dealt with the sale of the Japanese exhibits in the 1862 London Exhibition. In 1875, Arthur Lasenby Liberty opened Liberty & Co. in

²⁷ J. B. Waring, ‘Masterpieces of the International Exhibition’, London 1863, quoted from Sato and Watanabe, p.28.

²⁸ In 1877 the South Kensington Museum acquired a collection of 216 Japanese ceramics which had been exhibited the previous year at the International Exhibition, Philadelphia. This acquisition was an unusual one as the Museum did not select what it wanted from the exhibition display itself, as it had done at previous International Exhibitions, but arranged the selection even before the objects reached America. See Anna Jackson, p. 245

Regent Street in London. The Liberty & Co., which specialised in selling Oriental ornaments, fabric, furniture and objects, played a significant role in promoting Japanese taste in Britain. The company established a high reputation by introducing and popularising Japanese arts and crafts among the fashion circle, of particular note was its role in relation to the aesthetic movement and Art Nouveau. The British aesthetes purchased Japanese objects, and sought inspiration from Japanese arts.²⁹ In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the influence of Japonisme on British arts and designs was pervasive.³⁰

Wilde showed a persistent interest in Japanese taste. During his American lecture tour, he wrote a letter to J. M. Stoddart from Ohio on 3 May 1882, discussing the decoration of books:

To do two good woodblocks of delicate flower ornament, in treatment and in idea like a Japanese fan [...] all flowers would be delightful -- and out of any ordinary collection of Japanese fans or any book of

²⁹ For example, Ruskin took Japanese arts as reference in his Oxford lectures, see Ruskin, *The Art of England* (Elibron Classics, 2001), p.145, p.284; Pater talked about Japanese arts in his lecture *The Renaissance*, see Pater, *The Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), p.85; D. G. Rossetti and W. M. Rossetti discussed Japanese arts in their letters, see D. G. Rossetti & W. M. Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters* (Elibron Classics, 2001), p. xxiv, p.252, p.263, p.426. Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris and William Burges were among the earliest adopters of Japanese-style elements in British art, see Chiba, pp.1-20. Walter Crane was also influenced by Japanese prints and endeavoured to bring their definite block outlines and flat, brilliant, as well as delicate colours to children's books, see 'Japanese Influence', *The Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 160-61. Christopher Dresser was a passionate contributor to the Anglo-Japanese arts in Britain. In 1876, he became the first European designer to be commissioned to visit Japan in order to view craft and manufacturing techniques. He bought a large quantity of art objects in Japan. On his return he wrote *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures*, an early and well-illustrated account of Japan and Japanese craft techniques. Kevin Nute verifies that 'Edward Burne-Jones, D.G. Rossetti, Christopher Dresser, were amongst the many British artists and designers who began collecting Japanese art', see Nute, p.14. Liberty & Co. was patronized by Whistler, Rossetti, Frederick Leighton, William Morris, Burne-Jones, Albert Moore, Ruskin, Godwin, Ellen Terry, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, among others'. See Chiba.

³⁰ Alcock's *Art and Art Industries in Japan* (1878), Thomas Cutler's *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design, 1879-1880* (1880), G. A. Audsley's *The Ornamental Arts of Japan, 1882-1885* (1884), and Christopher Dresser's *Japan, its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures* (1882) were the most comprehensive surveys of Japanese arts during the period of the aesthetic movement in Britain.

Japanese art any young artist will get the most perfect models [...] Then the cover should be Japanese also, not grotesque, but beautiful (CL 167).

When he returned to London, he invited E. W. Godwin to decorate his house in Title Street, suggesting Godwin to make ‘a sort of Japanese arrangement of shelves’ (CL 252). He praised Japanese paper in a letter to W. A. S. Benson on 16 May 1885, saying ‘the only papers which I ever use now are the Japanese gold ones: they are exceedingly decorative, and no English paper can compete with them, either for beauty or for practical wear’ (CL 259). His admiration for Japanese art persisted when he exiled himself to the Continent after the imprisonment.

Wilde’s lifelong enthusiasm for Japanese arts and commodities owed much to Whistler and Godwin (Harbron 141). Whistler discovered Japanese prints in London in 1863 and became an emissary for Japonisme in Europe from then on. It is said that he slept in a Japanese bed, took his meals with chopsticks off Japanese porcelain, dressed in kimonos and amassed a substantial collection of Japanese dolls. His house on Tite Street was an Oriental space ornamented with Japanese-style tea tables and sideboards. The walls were lined with Hiroshige’s woodcuts and decorated with wallpapers of the motifs such as peacock, sparrow and bamboo. The Japanese woodcuts, namely *ukiyo-e* in Japanese language, made a profound impact on Whistler’s painting. *Ukiyo-e* is an artistic genre of Japanese woodblock printing originated in the metropolitan culture of Tokyo since the second half of the seventeenth century, which literally means ‘pictures of the floating world’.³¹ The motifs of *ukiyo-e* feature daily pleasures of mediaeval lifestyle and the beauty of Japanese landscapes. The greatest innovation of *ukiyo-e* in technique is in the use of rich colours. Through the assimilation of Japanese *ukiyo-e* style into his own methods, Whistler established his artistic identity as an

³¹ The Japanese spelling and corresponding English translation is: *uki* (floating) – *yo* (world) – *e* (picture). *Ukiyo-e* came to denote the frivolous, pleasure-seeking aspects of urban life.

Anglo-Japanese painter. One of his most illustrious works is *La Princesse du Pay de la Porcelaine* (The Princess from the Land of Porcelain, 1863-64, Figure3), depicting an exquisite English girl clothed in graceful Japanese robes. Wilde specially mentioned this painting in 'The Relation of Dress to Art: A Note in Black and White on Mr. Whistler's Lecture' published in *Pall Mall Gazette* XLI: 6230 (28 February 1885), saying 'have we not all seen, and most of us admired, a picture from his hand of exquisite English girls strolling by an opal sea in the fantastic dresses of Japan?'³²

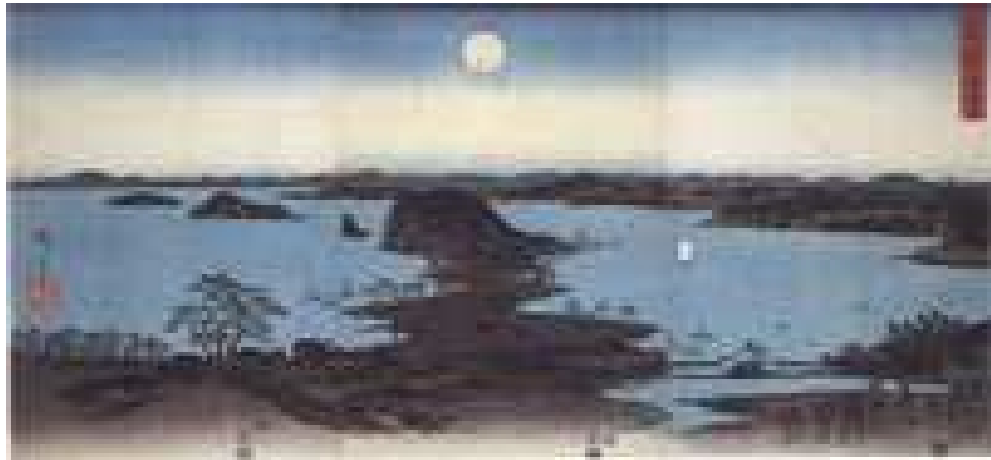
The series of night or evening scenes, from 1872 called *Nocturnes*, are Whistler's most significant accomplishments demonstrating the extent to which he was dedicated to the Japanese aesthetics of painting. Echoing *ukiyo-e* master Hiroshige's pieces *Night View of Kanazawa under the Full Moon* (1857), Whistler pictured copious quantities of English landscapes under the moonlights by using Japanese *ukiyo-e* scheme of binary colours and formal arrangement of simple lines (See fig.4 and fig.5).

With the inspiration of binary colour techniques, arrangement of forms and similar thematic elements from Japanese *ukiyo-e*, Whistler pursued the simplicity of pure colour and the beauty of exquisite form in his *Nocturne* paintings, in which nothing of 'high art' was traced. Japanese fine art was recommended for its pure, childlike acceptance of nature; it was believed that while the Westerners intellectualised, the Japanese experienced directly. Japanese paintings represented the intuitive and perceptual way of dealing with the world in opposition to the Western rational, introspective and abstract mode of comprehension. In a sense, Whistler's *ukiyo-e* style paintings *Nocturne* view the familiar contours of London in the defamiliarised Japanese perspective.

³² See Ellmann, ed., *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, p.18.



(Fig. 3 *La Princesse du Pay de la Porcelaine*)



(Fig. 4 *Night View of Kanazawa under the Full Moon* by Hiroshige, 1857)



(Fig. 5 *Nocturne in Blue and Silver – Chelsea* by Whistler, 1871)

Whistler was perhaps the artist most influential in shaping Wilde's aesthetic ideas in the early 1880s. Wilde once expressed his admiration for Whistler in his essay 'Lecture to Art Students' (1883),

There is a man living amongst us who unites in himself all the qualities of the noblest art, whose work is a joy

for all time, who is, himself, a master of all time. That man is Mr Whistler.³³

Lisa N. Peters's biography *James McNeill Whistler* notes that young Wilde often attended Whistler's dinners, hearing his host make some brilliant remark (57). In particular, Wilde eulogised Whistler's interior design of *Peacock Room* (See Fig. 6) as 'the finest thing in colour and art decoration that the world has ever known since Correggio painted that wonderful room in Italy' (CW 916). Whistler painted the Peacock Room in a rich and unified palette of brilliant blue-greens with over-glazing and metallic gold leaf. The gilded bamboo-like ribbing simulated the walls of a Japanese house or shrine and a collection of Oriental blue-and-white porcelain were displayed on the shelves. Through the comprehensive application of colours, motifs, decorations and composition, Whistler created an Anglo-Japanese taste.³⁴ Attracted by the arrangement of colours in the Peacock Room, Wilde saw 'each part so coloured with regard to the whole that the room, when lighted up, seems like a great peacock tail spread out' (CW 916).

Wilde emphasised the role of colour in artistic creation, claiming 'a designer must imagine in colour, must think in colour, and must see in colour' (CW 916). The influence of Japanese *ukiyo-e* on the visual arts of the British aesthetic movement was evidenced in Whistler's use of colour and composition of space in *Nocturnes* and *the Peacock Room*. As an artist working in the style of Japonisme in Britain, Whistler was obsessed by *ukiyo-e* and adapted this Oriental artistic scheme for his Anglo-Japanese drawings. Whistler's adoption of Japanese *ukiyo-e* technique of colour and form for his painting epitomised the aesthetic principle of 'art for art's sake'. In 'Ten O' Clock Lecture' (1885), he praised

³³ Wilde delivered this lecture to the Art students of the Royal Academy at their Club in Golden Square, Westminster, on 30 June 1883. See Jackson, ed., *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea*, p.129.

³⁴ This room contributed the stylised peacock motif (itself an emblem of aestheticism)

Japanese art, ‘the story of the beautiful is already complete – hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon, and broidered, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai – at the foot of *Fusiyama*’.³⁵ He saw Japanese art as the model of beauty and an aesthetic utopia equivalent to ancient Greece. He combined ancient glories with modern pagan art, that is, the pre-Christian Greek art with the Oriental art newly discovered in Japan, to encourage the refusal of moral preachment in art. Colour and form, or the decorative effects, should be the only things for the aesthetes to consider.



(Fig. 6 *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* by Whistler, 1876-1877)

Whistler’s Japonisme taste and relevant aesthetic ideas directly inspired Wilde, who analysed aestheticism in the essay ‘Mr. Whistler’s Ten O’ Clock’³⁶,

³⁵ *Fusiyama* (Japanese) means *Fushi* Mountain

³⁶ This lecture was first published in *Pall Mall Gazette* XLI: 6224 (21 February 1885), pp. 1-2

reconfirming the aesthetic perfection of Japanese art and its effect on the criticism emphasising 'art for art's sake'. He argued that real art meant 'the sense of beauty and form' with 'exquisite proportions' and 'Mr. Whistler concluded his lecture with a pretty passage about Fusiyama on a fan'.³⁷ Wilde and Whistler shared the identical position that the production of art should be unaffected by the moral conduct of individuals or societies.³⁸ The subjects of Japanese *ukiyo-e* painting are usually non-heroic everyday scenes, and the name of *ukiyo-e* means moments in a transient material world. Sir Rutherford Alcock saw it as a shortcoming, 'of high art, such as has been cultivated in Europe since the dark ages, the Japanese know nothing', which 'forms a fundamental ground of difference and inferiority' (Earle 15-17). However, in Wilde's perception, the ignorance of Christian morality contributed to the achievements of Japanese art in visual representation. The aesthetic movement sought the independence of art from non-artistic interference. Japanese art, which was not contaminated by Western moral imperative and religious didacticism, was presented to support the slogan 'art for art's sake' of aestheticism and thus became the Victorian aesthetes' ideal model.

Friends with Whistler and Wilde, E. W. Godwin was also an ardent collector of Japanese art and one of the most influential pioneers in Anglo-Japanese style of decoration and furnishing. Godwin began his practice in Bristol specialising in ecclesiastical and municipal architecture in the Gothic Revival style, but like many of his contemporaries, Godwin drew inspiration from Japanese wood construction from Hokusai and translated it into the design of interior decoration.³⁹ One example is his Dromore Castle for the Earl of Limerick. The interior decoration and furniture showed the influence of Japanese design on

³⁷ Ellmann, ed., *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, p. 13, 15

³⁸ The morality that Wilde and Whistler rejected primarily referred to Christian didacticism in the West.

³⁹ Godwin's keen interest in Japonisme and Japanese prints was evident in William Watt's catalogue, *Art Furniture Designed by Edward W Godwin FSA* (1877).

both colour and form (Aslin, *E. W. Godwin* 11). As he described the pieces of furniture himself, '[they were] more or less founded on Japanese principle' (Soros 235). Whilst living in Bristol, Godwin furnished the interior of his home in Portland Square in Japanese style. He used plain colours on the walls, simple rugs and matting on the bare floors, and hung Japanese prints as decoration (Madsen 188). Godwin also designed the interiors of 16 Tite Street for Wilde in 1885. Wilde corresponded with Godwin on the embellishment of his house and asked Godwin to take 'a sort of Japanese arrangement of shelves' (*CL* 252). According to Elisabeth Aslin, Godwin 'used different shades of white, ordering the workmen to paint the woodwork in enamel white and grey to a height of five feet six inches [...] the rest of the walls to be finished in lime white with a slight addition of black to give a greyish tone' (*Aesthetic Movement* 84). All the subtle gradations of pale, clear colour emulated the style of Japanese colour prints.

It is colour and form of Japanese arts that appealed to Whistler, Godwin and Wilde, among others. The importance of form in aestheticism was evidenced in Wilde's recommendation for lily and sunflower as the motifs of the aesthetic movement, 'these two lovely flowers are in England the two most perfect models of design, the most naturally adapted for decorative art'. The attitude of aestheticism to art and its role in society was deeply embedded in the belief of aesthetic autonomy, namely, the doctrine of 'art for art's sake'. Paraphrasing Gautier, Wilde declares in 'The Decay of Lying' that art never expresses anything but itself, 'this is the principle of my new aesthetics' (*CW* 1087). This promoted the idea that art was self-sufficient entity concerned with nothing but beauty. Art should be enjoyed for its own sake and art expressed nothing more than the purely sensuous beauty of its own existence. Wilde claimed in 'The English Renaissance of Art' that 'art has only one sentence to utter: there is for her only one high law, the law of form or harmony' (J. Jackson 4). The English Renaissance was alien from any political passion; it only involved the 'passionate cult of pure beauty,

flawless devotion to form, exclusive and sensitive nature' (J. Jackson 5). The aesthetes saw Japanese arts as one of the best examples to embody these principles of the aesthetic movement. The characteristics of Japanese art included the emphasis on the design of form and the usage of colours. For example, the illustrated books of Hokusai and the landscape prints of Hiroshige, both of which played an important role in the formation of Japonisme in the West through exhibitions, galleries and introductory books, were vivid in colouring, and served to accustom the eye to a free play of line and an asymmetrical composition of masses of colour.⁴⁰ In these drawings, as Mendelowitz describes, 'the lines are fluid and rhythmic, with slight variations in width accenting movements and providing visual variety' (210). Separated by the lines, the whole painting was essentially filled with areas of pure colour. Since the eighteenth century, *ukiyo-e* painting had developed the technique of polychrome printing. The variety of colours brought a dazzling effect to Japanese *ukiyo-e*.

The impressive application of colours and the unusual perspective of Japanese arts are very different to the traditional principles of Western art taught in European academies, thus have an effect of defamiliarisation. As John Ruskin points out, 'a marked distinction between the imaginations of the Western and Eastern races is [...] the Western, delighting most in the representation of facts, and the Eastern in the harmony of colours and forms'.⁴¹ The Japanese paintings did not adopt the classical rules of proportion; neither did their depiction of people look realistic. The use of large areas of pure colour did not have a narrative purpose but offered exclusively visual pleasure. As Michael Sullivan comments on Hokusai's famous painting *Thirty-six Views of Fuji*,

⁴⁰ The representative works were 'Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji' by Hokusai and 'The Fifty-Three Halting-Places on the To-Kai-Do' by Hiroshige.

⁴¹ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (2nd volume), London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853, p.182

Distorting the perspective and subordinating optical truth to flat decorative pattern making in colour [...] it restores purely Japanese qualities to the woodcut and represents the triumph of the print designer over the pictorial realist (34).

The cultural alienation of Japan and the outstanding achievement of Japanese arts launched a competition with the established models of Western neo-classicism and realism. Thomas W. Cutler believes that 'in their adaptations of natural forms to decoration, the Japanese have evidenced far greater originality of thought and boldness of conception than their early masters (the Chinese), and stands unrivalled in the world's history' (38). Japanese art introduced new formats of decoration to the Victorians, representing the freedom from imitative or photographic representation. It suggested new angles of vision and an entirely different treatment of perspective. The new design styles of colour and form introduced by Japanese arts were made to fit the demand of the aesthetic movement, which advocated 'the beauty of form'. In 'Art and the Handicraftsman', Wilde praised Japanese art as 'the best decorative art of the world'.⁴²

Meanwhile, the subjects of 'transient material world' in Japanese *ukiyo-e* painting echoed the theme of 'momentary acts of sight and passion and thought' in Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. In the 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*, Pater claims that arts 'give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake'.⁴³ As Pater's disciple, Wilde pointed out that art should focus on the wonder of its colour, the satisfying beauty of its design, rather than any non-artistic purpose, such as religion or morality. He specified Japanese art as the reference to defend this position. To admire and emulate the beauty of colour and form in Japanese art represents a

⁴² Wilde, 'Art and the Handicraftsman', *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea*, p.109

⁴³ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (1893), ed. Donald L. Hill. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980, p.187

rebellion against the Western religious or realistic tradition in arts and the intention to construct a new hierarchy between art and life. As Michael Rosenthal points out, 'a society's character will determine what painting, drawing or sculpture is produced' (9). While Michael Sullivan also explains that 'the most fruitful responses seem to have occurred when the alien art had helped to fulfil a need of which the artists at the receiving end were already fully aware, or, to put it another, when they were already searching in that particular direction' (275). The arrival of Japanese objects stimulated the aesthetic movement; meanwhile, the desire of the Victorian aesthetes to find an alternative artistic taste of 'pure art' encouraged the popularity of Japanese arts in Britain during the late nineteenth century.

In 'The English Renaissance of Art', Wilde revealed 'the influence which Eastern art is having on us in Europe' and the contemporary 'fascination of all Japanese work':

Modern intellectual spirit of ours is not receptive enough of the sensuous element of art; and so the real influence of the arts is hidden from many of us: only a few, escaping from the tyranny of the soul, have learned the secret of those high hours when thought is not. And this indeed is the reason of the influence which Eastern art is having on us in Europe, and of the fascination of all Japanese work. While the Western world has been laying on art the intolerable burden of its own intellectual doubts and the spiritual tragedy of its own sorrows, the East has always kept true to art's primary and pictorial conditions.⁴⁴

Through praising Japanese art, Wilde criticised the Western realism, which had too much burden of 'intellectual doubts'. The East, represented by Japanese art, provided the Victorians inspiration for the 'renaissance of art'. Wilde showed his

⁴⁴ *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea*, p.16

admiration for Japanese arts in which he projected the realisation of the aesthetic principles that he advocated.

ii Japan as Aesthetic Utopia

The Japanese approach to form -- expressive line, abstract graphic style, decorative colour, and asymmetrical composition -- greatly influenced the Victorian aesthetes' perception of beauty. The artistic implication of Japonisme corresponded to the spirit of the aesthetic movement. The cult of Japanese art stimulated many Victorian artists, designers and writers to idealise and romanticise Japan. For example, W. M. Rossetti was 'astonished and delighted with Japanese designs' for 'their instinct for whatever savours of life and movement' (276). William Burges was impressed with the Japanese art on display at the Exhibition of 1862, believing such art even surpassed some of European mediaeval art (254). Walter Pater expressed admiration for Japanese art in *Greek Studies: a Series of Essays* and compared it to ancient Greek art (130). Walter Crane was amazed at the 'extraordinary decorative daring', 'delicate colouring', and 'extraordinary precision of technique' of Japanese art. All these features, Crane said, 'took the artistic world by storm' (63-64). There were similar comments on Japan-mania in the writings of Wilde. In the letter to Mrs. George Lewis in 1882, Wilde said 'I feel an irresistible desire to wander, and go to Japan, where I will pass my youth' (CL 173). He expressed an enthusiastic yearning to personally experience this country eulogised in the aesthetic movement.

It is noticeable that Japanese art was often confused with Chinese art in Britain. Although there had been many books published and exhibitions held on Japonisme since the 1860s, the Victorians seemed still not very clear of the distinction between chinoiserie and Japonisme. This hybrid of these two Oriental cultures also existed in the remarkable Anglo-Japanese artists such as Godwin, Whistler, William Morris, Christopher Dresser and a number of other figures

associated with the aesthetic movement. For instance, Godwin was the leading exponent of Japonisme in Britain, but his Anglo-Japanese furniture designs suggested that he was also influenced by China, as Chinese motifs were used on his wallpapers together with the Japanese devices (Soros 76). Whistler's oil painting *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (See fig. 3), which depicted a European girl dressed in Japanese costume standing on a Chinese carpet, is an example of the combination of Japonisme and chinoiserie. His *Purple and Rose: the Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks* (fig. 7), as Linda Merrill argues, showed Whistler's long-standing enthusiasm for these two Oriental cultures. This picture depicted Japanese icons such as kimono, fan, screen, scroll, porcelain and stoneware, but the title *Lange Lijzen* is a Dutch collector's term for the tall and thin people painted on Chinese porcelain of the Kang-Xi era in the late seventeenth century, and in this painting 'Whistler had relished to the full the Chinese arrangements of colour' (Merrill 685). Wilde went to the International Health Exhibition, which opened on 8 May 1884 to see the Japanese objects. He wrote in a letter to Godwin, saying 'the Japanese court is exquisite', yet Merlin Holland notices that the sketch of Wilde at the start of this section showed Wilde eating in the Chinese pavilion, again suggesting the fusion of these two East Asian cultures (CL 257).



(Fig. 7: *Purple and Rose: The Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks*)

The hybrids of Chinese and Japanese cultures demonstrate that in Britain Japanese art was appreciated as part of Oriental culture and Japan was included in the blurred conception of 'the Oriental', something static and unchanging, alienated from the dynamic and progressive West. The Victorian reviewers did not distinguish precisely between the previous chinoiserie and the newly

discovered Japonisme in artistic characteristics. The attitude of the newspaper *Daily News* (London, 19 March 1869) is representative, which commented ‘we have not attempted to distinguish between Chinese and Japanese porcelain, simply because this is a point that would in many cases be a matter of doubt’. This is partly true because both China and Japan belong to East Asian cultural system, and Japanese art learnt from China at its earliest beginning. However, it is more primarily because the Victorians saw the aesthetic utopia of Japan as the renewal of the legend of Cathay.⁴⁵ As Hugh Honour argues, the Western view of Asia is characterised by the longing for ‘Cathay’, which romanticises the exoticism of the East (204). Chinese language was believed to be the metalanguage in Eden. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this utopian imagination was embodied in the enthusiasm for chinoiserie. For the British country gentlemen and rich bourgeois, ‘at least one room of their home was done up in chinoiserie’ (Ford 6:9). However, from the 1860s, China was degraded from utopia to a semi-colony producing tea and consuming opium. The poverty, muddle and corruption of China proved herself less worthy of the legend of Cathay, while Japan, more mysterious and obtained more achievements in modernisation, seemed suitable to inherit this honourable title. Furthermore, because Japan had previously remained sealed and hidden from the outside world until the 1860s, the Westerners were more curious about Japonisme. Michael Sullivan compares the images of China and Japan in the late nineteenth century:

Japan was exotic and remote, yet growing in power and importance, gratifyingly pro-Western, and an inspiration in all aesthetic matters; by contrast, China at this time was seen as weak and corrupt, helpless under the heel of the Western powers (213).

⁴⁵ Cathay is the poetic name of China

In the late nineteenth century, Japan satisfied the European desire for ‘Cathay’, the timeless Western imagination of an exotic paradise beyond the horizon. As the European aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created the taste for chinoiserie, the Victorian aesthetes in the nineteenth century generated the cult of Japonisme. The fashion for Japonisme superseded the vogue for chinoiserie in a sense of new narration by the old story of ‘Cathay’. From this perspective, both chinoiserie and Japonisme were in essence various embodiments of the romantic vision of the ‘Oriental’ in the West.

While the Victorians romanticised Japan, the fear of losing this aesthetic utopia began to grow. Although British impressions of Japan were formed mainly after 1860s, it was the legacy of the Edo era in the mediaeval period, the ‘Old Japan’ depicted by Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro, that captivated the imagination. There appeared to be a paradox: the British Empire tried to assimilate Japan into her global system, and the majority of British politicians and merchants applauded Japan’s efforts to become a modern nation-state, but the rapid and tremendous modernisation of Japan after the Meiji Reformation of 1868 aroused disappointment among the British enthusiasts for Japanese art. They accepted Japan as a pre-industrial earthly paradise, which should be preserved from the so-called ‘evil’ influences of modernisation (Lehmann 14). There was a myth that the Japanese culture remained unchanged since ancient times. Even Sir Rutherford Alcock thought that ‘with the Japanese we take a step backward some ten centuries to live again the feudal days’ (Yokohama 20). Such illusion of Japan attracted the Victorian aesthetes, who saw Japan as the romance of the past. Japanese art was found to be similar to such diverse types of art as Greek, Gothic and Rococo. In commenting on Japanese art, the British critics and artists entrusted their own aesthetic inclinations. However, in the increasing contact of Japan and the West, the aesthetes saw a depressing loss of exoticism. This feeling was mixed with the illusion of the harmonious pre-industrial England and the

hostility to industrialisation. As Japan adopted Western modes of production and political and economic organisation, the gap between fact and fantasy widened further. There was a popular idea that the inherent charm of Japanese art would be lost through the country's contact with the West. For example, Godwin complained 'the European market is ruining Japanese art' (Sato and Toshio 37); William Burges believed that the value of Oriental arts was embedded in that 'it had kept a domestic life-style that had changed little since the mediaeval period' (243). As a result, when Japan was changing towards the Western way of life, the Victorian aesthetes showed their concern that the superiority of Japanese art they attached to this aesthetic utopia would recede. Presenting as an attitude of anti-industrialism, it implied an allusion of reversed cultural imperialism. Britain found it increasingly difficult to define itself in contrast to the 'other'. Japan's rapid modernisation blurred the distinction between the dynamic, progressive Britain and the static, unchanging 'Orient'.

The knowledge in the West about Japan, as Elisa Evett explains, consisted of long-standing myth, often reinforced by biased travellers' reports but nurtured also by an escapist longing for the opposite of the advanced and complex Western civilisation (qtd. in Gruchy 17). It perpetuated a vision of the Japanese as a simple, innocent, primitive people living in blissful harmony with gentle benign nature. As an article in the magazine *Hearth and Home* (London, 28 June 1894, Issue 163) claimed,

Their (the Japanese people's) love of nature is also the child's love. It is not the reflective love of the Western races; it is an instinct- almost a sensation. Having no clear consciousness of their own personality, they hardly know how to distinguish themselves from the surrounding world.

Meanwhile, because the admiration for Japan was largely based on its artefacts and pictorial arts, which were less tied to linguistic and spiritual level of Japanese

culture, the impression of the Japanese people as ‘primitive’ and the fallacy that Japanese civilisation had been arrested in permanent infancy were reinforced. Few Victorian aesthetes, except Christopher Dresser, had any first-hand experience of visiting the real Japan.⁴⁶ The magazine *Punch* (London, 21 April 1888) noticed it and mocked,

By WHIST-LER, a great man, /
Who, as everyone knows, /
Holds the cult of the Fan, /
And is nothing if not Japanese-Though he has not been to Japan.

Knowing little about the reality of life in Japan, most of the British aesthetes comprehended Japan through its arts, therefore, to some extent, the ‘Japan’ they admired was an elusive exotic ideal that existed only in imagination. *Punch* (4 February 1888) published Edward Linley Sambourne’s wood engraving ‘The Japanese School at the Royal Academy’ (fig. 8) to satirise Japonisme or the Cult of Japan in the British aesthetic movement.

⁴⁶ Dresser organised the Japanese stand for the 1873 International Exhibition in London, and he was involved in the business of importing Japanese goods for Victoria & Albert museum in 1876. See Trilling, *Ornament: A Modern Perspective*, p. 214.



(Fig. 8: 'The Japanese School at the Royal Academy', the quotation from *Times* read 'Japanese art...is the only living Art in the world...In comparatively few years Japan will become the acknowledged centre and leader of the Fine Arts')

Wilde once determined to travel to Japan to see this aesthetic utopia in person. In a letter to Frances Richards on 16 May 1882, Wilde wrote 'I will be in Japan, sitting under an almond tree, drinking amber-coloured tea out of a blue and white cup, and contemplating a decorative landscape' (CL 171). In a letter to Norman Forbes Robertson on 25 May 1882 from Toronto, he wrote 'I must go to Japan, and live there with sweet little Japanese girls' (CL 172). In a letter to George Lewis on 3 June 1882 from Boston, he repeated 'I feel an irresistible desire to wander, and go to Japan, where I will pass my youth sitting under an almond tree in white blossom, drinking amber tea out of a blue cup, and looking at a landscape without perspective' (CL 173). Wilde invited Pater and Whistler to

go to Japan with him together. He wrote on 25 April 1882 in Nebraska, '[I] now think of going to Japan and wish Walter would come or could come with me' (*CL* 166), and asked Whistler 'When will you come to Japan?' in a letter in June 1882 (*CL* 174). In order to visit Japan, Wilde even asked Charles Eliot Norton to introduce him to Professor Edward S. Morse, who had held a professorship in Tokyo University, to get some advice on living in Japan.⁴⁷ In the letter, Wilde said:

As I am going to Japan myself it would be of great service to me to get any instructions or letters from him which would enable me to see their method of studying art, their school of design and the like [...] I am so anxious to see the artistic side of Japanese life that I have ventured to trespass on your courtesy. I have just returned from the South and have a three weeks holiday now before Japan, and so find it not unpleasant to be in this little island where idleness ranks among the virtues (*CL* 177).

Wilde intended to study the method and the education of Japanese artisans in Japan during his lecture tour in America.

However, throughout his lifetime, Wilde never fulfilled this visit. Moreover, almost ten years later, he claimed in 'The Decay of Lying' (1889), that 'if you desire to see a Japanese effect, you will not behave like a tourist and go to Tokio', on the contrary, 'you will stay at home, and steep yourself in the work of certain Japanese artists' (*CW* 1088). The 'Japanese effect', in other words, was one that could only be seen in Western museums, or in Oriental shops. Wilde indicated that 'Japan' was merely a new standard for the measure of Western aesthetic sensibility. He no longer limited his focus on the appreciation of any

⁴⁷ Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925) was American zoologist and museum director, who held a professorship in Tokyo University between 1877 and 1880. In July 1882, Wilde wrote a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, expressing the eagerness to get some advice from Professor Morse. See *Complete Letters*, p.177.

specific piece of Oriental art, as he did during the American lecture tour, but considered the 'Oriental' as a system of aesthetic signs including colour, motif and form in opposition to the Western mimetic realism. He described the relationship between European design traditions and Oriental models

The whole history of these arts in Europe is the record of the struggle between Orientalism, with its frank rejection of imitation, its love of artistic convention, its dislike to the actual representation of any object in Nature, and our own imitative spirit ('The Decay of Lying', *CW* 1080).

Wilde understood Orientalism as a kind of mental attitude, something rooted deeply in European consciousness. The 'Oriental' here represented an aesthetic standard. Wilde explained that the Japan of the European enthusiasts was to be discovered less on the other side of the globe than in a new way of looking at the world. As a result, to understand the beauty of Japan, one should not take reference from the reality but absorb the spirit of style, and catch imaginative manner of vision. Observing the Japanese fashion in Victorian Britain, Wilde declared his famous notion of Japan as a pure invention through the character Vivian,

The Japanese people are the deliberate self-conscious creation of certain individual artists [. ...] The actual people who live in Japan are not unlike the general run of English people; that is to say, they are extremely commonplace, and have nothing curious or extraordinary about them. In fact, the whole of Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people...the Japanese people are, simply a mode of style, an exquisite fancy of art (*CW* 1088).

The reality was substituted by imagination. The Victorians were captivated by the artistic world created by Japanese masters such as Hokusai, Hiroshige and

Utamaro. Wilde argued that what Japonisme embodied was the utopian Japan in art rather than the nation of Japan in reality. In proclaiming that Japan as represented in art and literature was a myth and fiction, Wilde dismantled the illusion of mimetic realism. Because Japan signalled an imaginary and ideological function, Wilde thus asserted, if you had absorbed the spirit of Japan from the Japanese arts, then ‘you will go some afternoon and sit in the Park or stroll down Piccadilly, and if you can not see an absolute Japanese effect there, you will not see it anywhere’(CW 1088). Wilde argued that Japanese art was not an accurate mirror of Japanese reality but a new standard for the measure of Western aesthetic sensibility. The British aestheticism of being ‘Japanese’ was constructed in London rather than in Tokyo. Therefore, Wilde was unable to make an actual journey to his ‘Japan’, because ‘Japan’, a land of aesthetic superiority and sensual sensitivity, was just a nonexistent fairyland and a system of abstract aesthetics in the artists’ minds. The ‘Japanese effect’, in other words, was one that could only be accessed through Western museums or Oriental shops associated with the West’s global expansion.

This imagined utopia also appeared in the description of Japanese jewels in Chapter Eleven in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dorian was addicted to collecting wonderful ‘rose-coloured pearls’, which Marco Polo had seen the inhabitants of Zipangu (Japan) place in the mouths of the dead.⁴⁸ Here, the fictional narration of the exotic custom in Japan was written in the same style of Jonathan Swift’s travel tale *Gulliver’s Travels*, which listed Japan in the same rank with the imaged countries Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa and the Country of

⁴⁸ Japan was first brought to the knowledge of the European world by Marco Polo. He called Japan ‘Zipangu’; it was the name which he had heard in China, while he didn’t really arrive there. The Japanese themselves call their country Nippon, signifying ‘origin of the sun’, in Chinese language, Nippon, by the change of pronunciation, becomes Jih-pun, which changed again as Zi-pan-gu on the lips of an European. See Hawks, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan* (1856), p.7. The European name ‘Zipangu’ lost the original meaning of Nippon in Japanese language, and sounds grotesque. Marco Polo’s exaggerated description of Japan’s magic, prosperity and wealth was largely based on his imagination.

Houyhnhnms. That Japan was seen as a pure invention highlighted the distinction between the world of reality and the world of art. When Japan was 'a mode of style', 'an exquisite fancy of art', as Wilde described in 'The Decay of Lying', it would be impossible to get access to this aesthetic utopia through visiting the real land and such attempt showed ignorance of the essence of art. 'Japan' in the aesthetic movement was produced by art and artistic criticism. The model of 'Japan' was a series of symbols and aesthetic rules, which only existed in art and only through art was able to be realised.

In conclusion, an important stimulus to the rise of the aesthetic movement was the arrival in Europe of Japanese objects, made possible by the new trade agreements with Japan. The Victorians' encounter with Japan was a direct consequence of the expansion of the British Empire. Japan was largely admired for its artefacts and pictorial arts, which had a widespread effect on the domestic ornamentation in the latter part of the Victorian period. Japanese shapes, surface treatments, materials, and techniques were interpreted in the British decorative arts of the aesthetic period. The study of Japanese models promoted the debates over principles of decorative design, and Japanese examples were frequently included in the late nineteenth century publications on the applied arts. Japanese style in colour and form supported the slogan 'art for art's sake' of aestheticism. The signifier 'Japan' as an artistic fashion, a new kind of specificity, did not refer to a proper geographic origin, but embodied a difference, an alternative, and a utopia. Such romanticisation of Japan was firmly embedded in the traditional Western mind of Orientalism. As Wilde pointed out, Japan was not so much a real country as a myth that inspired the aesthetic movement in Britain.

2. Marketing Utopia:

Commodification of Japan in the Aesthetic Movement

Although Japanese utopia provided late nineteenth-century aesthetes with a means of imagining a world without the capitalist system of commodification, in the practice of the aesthetic movement, far from being opposed to the economy of production and consumption, the conception of Japan as an aesthetic utopia was thoroughly assimilated into the commercial operation in the capitalist market. This chapter examines the mutual dependence between aesthetes and consumerism, as well as Wilde's transformation of aesthetic utopia to the fetishism of Japanese commodity. The aesthetic gospel of the autonomy of art, which was intended to liberate art from the force of morality, was finally incorporated into the consumerist ethos. Japan was both a representation of artistic idealism and an object of popular culture consumption.

The construction of aesthetic utopia, for example, the romanticisation of Japan, could be seen as the efforts by the Victorian aesthetes to establish an alternative paradise for the material world experiencing 'the death of God'.⁴⁹ As Karl Beckson points out, 'the religion of art was a significant theme of the aesthetic movement' (Religion of Art 5). Wilde's assertion of Japan as a pure invention in 'The Decay of Lying' shows how such an aesthetic paradise, which exists in imagination only, was constructed in the nineteenth-century aesthetic movement.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche's phrase in *The Gay Science*, 'God is dead! God remains dead!' Trans. Josetine Nauckhoff. Ed. Bernard Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, p.120.

Japan was a source of exotic commodities consumed by the bourgeoisie at the same time it represented 'pure beauty' adored by the aesthetes. The utopian Japan implied several binary oppositions: populism and elitism, objectivity and subjectivity, materialism and spiritualism, emulation and creation.

These paradoxes were reflected in Wilde's aestheticism. In 'The English Renaissance of Art' (1882), Wilde claimed that 'I have no reverence for the public, nor for anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the memory of great men and the principle of Beauty'.⁵⁰ Wilde believed this was the principle guiding and underlying the English Renaissance. He showed disapproval of commercialism in this essay. He complained that 'there can be no great sculpture without a beautiful national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that; no great drama without a noble national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that too.'⁵¹ However, in another essay 'Art and the Handicraftsman' (also 1882) Wilde turned to support commercialism. He argued that the commercial spirit was no barrier to art, saying 'do not think that the commercial spirit which is the basis of your life and cities here is opposed to art. Who built the beautiful cities of the world but commercial men and commercial men only?'⁵² It appears as if Wilde was self-contradictory in his attitude towards commercialism. Surely the topics of these two essays were different, as in 'The English Renaissance of Art', Wilde primarily talked about aesthetic principles, while in 'Art and the Handicraftsman' he focused more on artistic practice. Even so, Wilde's paradoxical attitudes suggested that the Victorian aesthetes might find themselves in a dilemma to distinguish their superior aesthetic ideal from everyday commercialism. Then what is the relationship between the aesthetic utopia and Japanese artistic commodities exported to Britain? How do those binary oppositions mentioned above coexist in the aesthetic movement?

⁵⁰ *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea*, p.18

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.* p.107

The narration of Japan as an aesthetic utopia began from the stunning spectacle of the 1862 London International Exhibition. The visitors were attracted by the colour and form of Japanese arts; that is to say, they were focusing on the visual enjoyment. This angle of observing the outside world could be perceived as sharing the identical perspective of aestheticism, which viewed the world through colour, form, structure and composition. Meanwhile, the Great Exhibition of 1862 was a celebration of the successful expansion of the British Empire's commercialism, which brought almost every corner of the world under its global business network. The Japanese arts displayed in the Exhibition, such as chairs, cabinets, tables, textiles, wallpapers, silverware, porcelains, lacquer wares, and paintings of geisha, birds, butterflies and flowers, were quickly put into the market for consumption when the Exhibition was over. They were commoditised because there were effective demands for their use-values of decoration, pleasure or identity sign. The artists, connoisseurs, retailers, advertisers and consumers form the industrial chain of the artistic market. One of the advocates of Japanese taste, Liberty & Co. of London that remained closely associated with the aesthetic movement, was completely commercial in the name of fashion. It commissioned work from designers under the policy of anonymity, which thus reduced the significance of individuality of the designers in the trade of arts, and it revolutionised the techniques, introducing machine production to meet the growing demands from middle class clients in quantity (Ono 27). Meanwhile, the Japanese government encouraged their artisans at home to manufacture masses of cheap export ware such as porcelain, lacquer ware, fan, folding screen, art paper and furniture to make foreign exchange earnings (Checkland, *Japan and Britain* xii). Japanese objects and Japanese-inspired objects became widespread in Victorian domestic decoration. As Elisabeth Aslin points out, 'a fashion was hastily created, for commercial reasons [...] art was becoming a profitable business' (*Aesthetic Movement* 128). The exchange value of commercialised

Japanese artistic goods exported to Britain surged over the years. Take lacquer and porcelain for example, Table Two below shows that the total value of these two artistic commodities imported by Britain increased more than 50% from the year 1882 to the year 1897.

(Table2: British imports of Artistic Commodities from Japan, in Yen) ⁵³

Year	Porcelain	Lacquer ware	Total
1882	¥165,741	¥144,283	¥310,024
1887	¥259,056	¥144,683	¥403,739
1892	¥242,988	¥138,029	¥381,017
1897	¥237,347	¥230,945	¥468,292

British commercialism transformed the taste for Japanese arts into a form of public fashion, or a category of the cultural industry. The consumption of Japanese commodities was part of the capitalist market in the name of art.

In 1884, Wilde bought a house on Tite Street, Chelsea, close to Whistler and had it altered, decorated and furnished by their mutual friend, E. W. Godwin in Anglo-Japanese style. Seven years later, Wilde created an imaginary studio that had a ‘Japanese effect’ for the literary figure, artist Basil, in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Both houses were spaces of the ‘Oriental’ style. The former was a typical Victorian middle class home in real life; the latter existed as ‘a pure invention’ in literature. In Wilde’s Tite Street home, the refurbishments followed Wilde’s recommendation to his audience in ‘The House Beautiful’, ‘large, noble Japanese dishes could be suspended on the wall [...] a good permanent dinner set have Japanese or blue and white china’ (CW 921). Japanese prints, paintings, fans, blue-and-white, and other Oriental decorative arts formed Wilde’s collection in

⁵³ ‘chronological tables of Japan’s Exports and Imports’, Ministry of Finance, Japan, 1928, quoted in Checkland, *Japan and Britain*, p.53

this house. The accumulation of Japanese goods, which were the essential ingredients of the fashionable interior defined by the aesthetic movement, ensured that Wilde's home was an aesthetic space. While in Basil's Japanese studio, 'the dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ' (*Dorian* 169), this space isolated itself from the noises of London's metropolitan life. Everything in it created an impressionistic painting where 'the sunlight slipped over the polished leaves, in the grass, white daisies were tremulous' (*Dorian* 172). The superior aesthetic taste purified Basil's 'Japanese' studio where the artist was able to create the 'abstract sense of beauty' (*Dorian* 178).

A comparison of the decoration in Wilde's two houses -- one his personal domestic interior, the other a fictional description-- suggests that his conception of aestheticism turns ambiguous when it encounters commercialism, that is, the signified of aestheticism shifts between the pure beauty of Japanese utopia (Basil's room) and the concrete Japanese commodities (Wilde's room), both of which are interchangeable. This interpretative process might be most clearly seen if we rely on a semiotic approach. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics argues that a sign is a recognisable combination of a signifier (the form that the sign takes) with a particular signified (the concept it represents), and the same signifier can stand for a different signified and thus be a different sign.⁵⁴ In this model, when 'aestheticism' represents the pure beauty created by artists as well as the goods purchased from the market, each of them forms a separate sign. In the latter situation, aestheticism is translated into a set of Japanese commodities and aesthetic utopia obtains its materialisation -- utopia was concretised and realised in commodities. Therefore, when the sign of 'aestheticism' was encoded by the aesthetes to pass the message of 'pure beauty' or 'aesthetic utopia' to the public, it appeared in the semiotic object as Japanese commodities, and when the message

⁵⁴ Signifier means a word with a definable meaning, a definition of some object, process, or practice.

was decoded by the receivers (the public), the interpretation of the object transmuted the commodities and their use-values into abstract aesthetics. Yet Saussure's model suggests they were different signs. The commercial characteristic of Japanese commodities became obscure during Wilde's interpretive process of aestheticism; these commodities could be interpreted as the incarnation of 'aesthetic utopia'. Admiration for the aesthetic utopia resulted in the fetishisation of Japanese commodities, which in turn accounted for the paradoxical attitudes towards commercialism in Wilde's writings.

Japanese paper, which enjoyed high popularity in Victorian Britain, is an example of this semiotic process of substituting commodity fetishism for 'pure beauty' as the signified of aestheticism. In the letter to Benson on 16 May 1885, Wilde wrote:

My eye requires in a room a resting-place of pure colour, [...] the only papers which I ever use now are the Japanese gold ones [...] no English paper can compete with them (CL 259).

Japanese paper encoded the message of 'pure colour' while it remained in the form of a commodity. When *The Importance of Being Earnest* was published, there were twelve copies printed on Japanese vellum for presentation (CL 1121). Wilde offered Frances Forbes Robertson one copy as his congratulation on her marriage, saying:

Its dress is pretty: it wears Japanese vellum, and belongs to a limited family of *nine*: it is not on speaking terms with the popular edition: it refuses to recognize the poor relations whose value is only seven and six pence.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This copy on Japanese vellum is inscribed: 'To Frankie on her happy marriage from her old friend and comrade the Author. June, 99.' See CL, p.1144.

It seems that Japanese vellum that differentiated the British aesthetes from the general market was alienated from commercialism, yet at the same time it was consumed as a piece of use-value. In Wilde's narration, the superiority of the users of Japanese golden paper over the public who use English paper was based on the exquisite use-value of this imported Oriental product.

The preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* claimed some Kantian principles, 'it is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors, [...] all art is quite useless' (*Dorian* 168). It implies that art is unrelated to utilities and belongs to spiritual level exclusively, sounding cognate with Immanuel Kant's definition of beauty in *The Critique of Judgment*, 'taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest'.⁵⁶ Thus, when creating a semiotic object to convey the sign of 'aestheticism', it should use empty-objects, which did not have material signified in reality; in other words, it should not rely on specific goods. However, Wilde's private collection of Japanese goods in his Tite Street House, the public show of Japanese arts in 1862 London Exhibition, and the samples in shop windows of Liberty & Co., were all displays of commodities.

The displacement of utopia by Japanese commodities in the translation of the sign of 'aestheticism' is neither because Wilde had no clear idea of the distinction between the two nor because of the opaqueness of his linguistic expression. It is an inevitable result of the commercialisation of 'beauty' in a highly developed capitalist society. The British aesthetic movement had close relationships with the progress of industrialisation, the prosperity of middle classes, the booming of mass consumption and the expansion of a global empire during the Victorian period. Regenia Gagnier argues that 'the engagement of aestheticism as we are presenting it in the 1890s was grounded in the beginnings

⁵⁶ See <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16j/index.html> [Cited 20 October 2009]

of modern spectacular and mass society and depended upon image and advertising' (*Idylls of the Marketplace* 8). In this sense, not only the aesthetes and artists, but also businesspersons, consumers, market and mass media created British aestheticism together. The extension and consolidation of capitalism is the matrix of culture industries, which commercialises 'beauty' as a product for trading and consuming. Western enthusiasm for Japanese decorative arts was fed by exposure through art dealers, import shops, museum exhibitions, art academies, published reports, and mass media. The brand of 'Japan' was one of the various products for the symbolic value market. 'Aesthetic utopia' was the advertisement; fans, paintings, porcelain, lacquer ware were the use-values waiting to realise their exchange values in the market. A poem in *Punch* (30 July 1881) described this fashion for Japan and satirised how cheap it was to achieve such an identity in the age of mass consumption:

Two pence I gave for my sunshade /
A penny I gave for my fan /
Three pence I paid my straw- foreign made/
I'm a Japan-Aesthetic young man!

The adoration of fashionable icons is an important characteristic of modern consumerism. Japanese goods not only represented a popular design style, but also entitled their users a certain social reputation and relevant cultural powers.

Jean Baudrillard argues in *The System of Objects, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981) that there are four logics of consumption -- functional value, exchange value, symbolic value and sign value. The final one only gets its meaning within a system of objects; for instance, a diamond ring may suggest particular social values, such as taste or class (66). Taste, pleasure, and luxury are inseparable from the concept of use yet ideally separate from necessity. Thus, through the acquisition of goods that have symbolic values such as rich,

romantic, trendy, avant-garde, etc, the consumers break into a symbol of social existence and complete their self-confirmation of cultural identity. In other words, they are being materialised in a passive state. For the Victorians, the consumption of Japanese goods and owning things labelled 'Japan' were the necessary conditions to obtain the fashionable identity of 'aesthetic young man', as *Punch* satirised. When consuming the affordable Japanese goods, which were produced in large quantities for the market profits, the consumers were simultaneously consuming the brand of 'Japan'. Taking *ukiyo-e* paintings for example, the possibility of reproducing a large amount of copies from one set of blocks enabled the prints to be sold at a very reasonable price. Thus, considering its real effects, the promotion of Japanese taste by the aesthetes was part of the capitalist producing process of the commodity of 'Japan' in the culture industries. Certainly, this combination of aesthetes and capitalism did not result in the independence of art from commercial society but in the assimilation of art into the capitalist operation. As Jonathan Freedman argues, 'the capacity of a consumer society is to incorporate and ultimately to profit from challenges to its own ethos' (2).

In this way, more than through literary and artistic thought, the aesthetic movement formed part of late nineteenth-century consumerist society, in which consumption began to become a culture and gradually dominated the centre of social activities. In a pre-modern market, a seller provided commodity or service, and the buyer determined whether to purchase it or not. The traditional demands focused on usefulness and reliability of a product. However, modern consumerism distorted the relationship between a seller and a buyer, that is, the demand was not decided by the consumers but created by the capitalists. The capitalists as producers control the market and constantly manufacture new markets in order to gain more profits. Through the mass media, capitalists stimulate the demands of the public and educate them in how to consume. As Herbert Marcuse analyses in *The End of Utopia* (1967), 'advertising performed the social service of informing

the buyer about the market'.⁵⁷ To meet one's survival needs no longer occupies the central purpose of buying. The consumption of everyday use-value becomes less and less significant in total commercial activities. Instead, people are encouraged to indulge in the pursuit of something in which one has 'no interest', such as fashion, luxury and novelty. Consumerism exerts an enormous influence on the establishment of values in modern society. In its propaganda of the so-called consumer awareness, the appreciation of beauty has been summarised as a sub-industry of commercial activities, while unrestrained pursuit of sensual pleasure and entertainment in order to achieve personal satisfaction became the ultimate purpose and value of life. In this sense, commercialism is destined to have a necessary relation with hedonism, and the latter is mixed with aestheticism in some of Wilde's most significant writings during the 1890s.

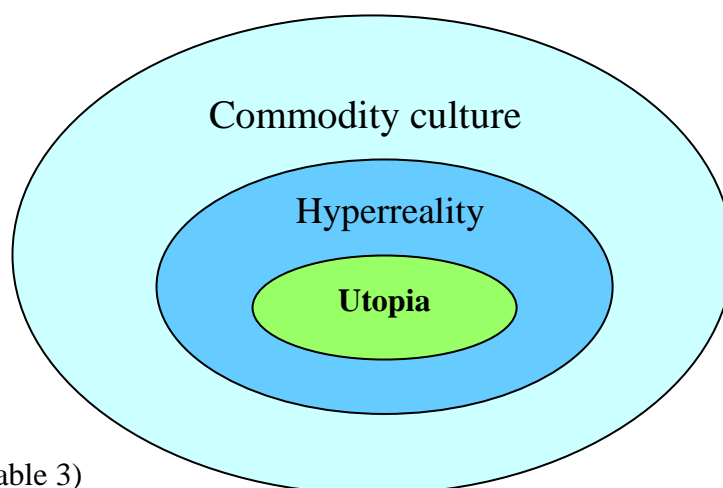
In 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young' (1894), Wilde claimed 'pleasure is the only thing one should live for. Nothing ages like happiness' (CW 1244). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he declared through the character Lord Henry that 'one should sympathise with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life' (*Dorian* 203). Wilde's hedonism pointed to the ultimate purpose of life, which saw 'pleasure' as the way of individual's self-realisation. The essay 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891) represented Wilde's hedonistic viewpoint on the relationship between pleasure, beauty and individuality. Wilde argued that there were two ways to realise one's individualism, one was the message of Christ, 'the realisation of men through suffering', but this mode 'had no scheme for the reconstruction of society' (CW 1196-7). The other was pleasure, 'the modern world has schemes [...] what it aims at is an Individualism expressing itself through joy' (CW 1197). Wilde rejected the ideal of self-sacrifice and pain in favour of joy as the passage to perfection. As a summary, Wilde eulogised that

⁵⁷ <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/1967/end-utopia.htm> [Cited 10 October 2009]

'pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval', establishing hedonism as the new religion of the modern world. The attitude of hedonism towards time was reflected in Wilde's conception of 'moments', which he had inherited from Walter Pater. In Wilde's hedonism, the present moment became the focus of attention. To enjoy the 'moments' is advocated in Pater's 'Conclusion to *The Renaissance*' (1868), but also reflects the ethos of commercialism -- the commodity market gathers goods of different histories, places, nations and cultures together into one isolated space. This isolation in turn greatly strengthens the depth, width and intensity of the subject's sensuous experience of these various 'moments'. Jonathan Freedman calls aestheticism 'the poetry of the culture of consumption' partly because its emphasis on the experience of art as an end in itself places art within the sphere of consumption by denying the value of art for anything but satisfying the eager, appropriative gaze of the spectator (59). Because pleasure was largely dwelling on sensuous enjoyments, the pursuit of hedonism overlapped with commercial consumption of artistic products.

In 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', Wilde claimed that 'a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at', and 'progress is the realisation of Utopias' (CW 1184). In 'The Critic as Artist', he wrote, 'England will never be civilised till she added Utopia to her dominions' (CW 1140). Wilde saw Japan as an aesthetic utopia, and showed great admiration for it, yet the Japanese arts were assimilated into Victorian commercialism. Furthermore, they became an icon to represent the consumerist society. Meanwhile, the utopia of 'Japan' seems still to keep some distance from the market because although it has been transformed into a commercial brand, theoretically speaking, utopia is always impossible to realise, thus inaccessible to the philistine world. Whereas, in the context of modern consumerism, as Jean Baudrillard argues, 'cultures do not relate to the "reality" of the world but to the world and cosmos in narrative illusion' (qtd. in Gane 34), and 'the distinctions between object and representation,

thing and idea are no longer valid' (qtd. in Poster 6). The commodity culture created hyperreality, which was constructed by models or simulacra that did not necessarily have referent or ground in 'reality'. The hyperreality not only presents an absence as a presence, the imaginary as the real, it also undermines any contrast to the real, absorbing the real within itself. Therefore, the original hierarchy in pre-modern society, which takes 'reality' as the link between utopia and commodity, has been deconstructed. Instead, because the simulation has evolved from reflecting reality into simulating another simulation, as Baudrillard analyses in *Simulacra and Simulation*, 'the procession of simulacra'-- representing objective truth, masking reality, masking the absence of reality, and signs becoming simulacra, namely, they have no relation to reality (simulate a simulation) -- division between 'real' and simulation has collapsed. Representations of things come to replace the things being represented in a consumerist society. Japan as a utopia is a world of self-referential signs, and 'Japan' can be seen as a creation of hyperreality. Table 3 shows the relationship between utopia and commodity culture in a consumerist society:



(Table 3)

From this model, it can be seen that ‘reality’ is no longer a contributing factor in the construction of utopia. To comprehend the aesthetic Japanese utopia, one does not need to consider its connection with the real Japanese country, because the latter has been proved unnecessary and cancelled in this new relationship of consumerism. The utopia does not rely on the reality to gain its meaning, it is a self-evidenced product of hyperreality and hence an integral component of commodity culture. In other words, the binary opposition of reality and utopia, or the paradox of consumerist fetishism and superior aesthetics, does not necessarily exist, because both can be assimilated into consumerism, which abolishes the distinction between the artistic world and the philistine world.

As a result, Japan in the culture industries could be understood through a series of hyperreality texts, from Du Maurier’s cartoons in *Punch*, Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas, to the career of Oscar Wilde, and then of Art Nouveau, ‘a pure invention’ by the Victorian cultural and entertainment markets. This might also explain the reason for the discrepancy between the absurd images of the Japanese people in Victorian perception and high admiration for Japanese arts. The hyperreality also created the products of ‘funny Japanese’ and ‘jolly Japanese’ for Victorian entertainment. For example, in Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera *Patience* (1881), the ‘fleshly poet’ Reginald Bunthorne admires Japanese commodities, and acknowledges himself to be ‘a Japanese young man/ a blue-and-white young man’.⁵⁸ Gilbert and Sullivan’s another famous drama, *The Mikado* (1885) created the singularly happy Japanese images to parallel the cult for Japanese taste in Britain in the 1880s, and had unprecedented success with a record of 672 successive performances. The opening chorus of *The Mikado* sings:

We are gentlemen of Japan/
On many a vase and jar/
On many a screen and fan, /

⁵⁸ This comedy intensely mocked aestheticism and Wilde,

We figure in lively paint; /
Our attitude's queer and quaint.⁵⁹

Everything Japanese in *The Mikado* seems ludicrous and absurd, including the Japanese Emperor. The popularity of *The Mikado* spread all over Britain, and it was produced repeatedly throughout the next half-century and beyond. This slightly offensive image of Japan persisted in the Victorian minds. The view of Japan in *The Mikado* was based on the belief of British superiority. It seems as though the aesthetes harvested a result contrary to their expectation. They tried to educate the public about their views of Japan as utopia. In order to do this, they used the mass media to advocate the purely aesthetic Japan. However, as the picture (fig. 9) in *Punch* shows, the mass media not only presented Japan as what the aesthetes expected, but also created the quaint Japan, or even 'funny Jap' in comic operas like *The Mikado* to entertain the public. Both images of Japan reflected the powers of the mass media and the consumerist market. The commercial operation in the cultural industries successfully made Japan as both a representation of artistic idealism and an object of consumption in popular culture. Japan in aestheticism moved from elite artistic circles to the realms of fashion, satire and popular press.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Checkland, *Britain's Encounter*, p.159



(Fig.9 'Funny Jap', *Punch*, 27 February 1886)

The fantasy about Japanese women was also commoditised. Many Victorian males adored Japanese women. An article in *The Times* (27 September 1860) entitled 'A Japanese Damsel Described' commented that 'Japanese ladies are very accomplished, very beautiful, and bear high characteristics in all that constitutes charming women'. The English M.P. Henry Norman described Japanese women as possessing 'an inborn gentleness and tenderness and sympathy, the most womanly of all qualities' (qtd. in Yokoyama 88). Wilde also expressed a liking for Japanese women, telling his friend Norman Forbes-Robertson in a letter on 25 May 1882 from Toronto that 'I must go to Japan, and live there with sweet little Japanese girls' (CL 172). However, such admiration was largely based on illusions or bias of Orientalism. For example, Alfred Noyes enthused on Japanese girls in 'A Japanese Love Song' that 'your small feet are white / though your wide eyes are blue' (qtd. in Yokoyama 87).

Obviously, no Japanese person was born with blue eyes. The magazine *Preston Guardian* (27 March 1869, Issue 3013) said that ‘every Japanese girl, of no matter what class in society, appears inspired with an innate love of coquetry’. Such comments were of course based on a racial stereotype. The Japanese women were seen as the opposition to the British New Women, who manifested independence and self-reliance in their social, educational and career options. The Victorian perception of Japanese women served as inspiration for a series of cultural products of entertainment industry. The plays with the theme of Japanese women included *The Geisha* (1896), *A Japanese Girl/A Japanese Idyll/A Japanese Lamp* (1897), *The Moonlight Blossom* (1899), *The White Chrysanthemum* (1905), *The Little Japanese Girl* (1907), to name but a few. The image of Japanese women was exploited commercially by British theatre, the genre of cultural industries that is oriented to the mass audience.

In summary, by creating the utopian space of Japan, the Victorian aesthetes intended to set themselves in opposition to the market, and particularly to the commodification of art. However, the semiotic analysis of Wilde’s writings reveals that the adoration of Japanese arts might be also assimilated into a type of commodity fetishism. The aesthetes participated in the process of commodification of arts, which they sometimes claimed to oppose. Consumerism played as a prerequisite for social recognition and a mode of self-definition. The important ideas in Wilde’s aestheticism, such as pleasure and individuality, were rooted in Victorian consumerist society. Moreover, in the context of hyperreality, the aesthetic utopia of Japan was finally colonised by consumerism as well, and the fantasy about Japanese people became another object of entertainment for the British public to consume.

Chapter Three: Oscar Wilde's Interpretation of *Zhuangzi*

This chapter examines Oscar Wilde's interpretation of *Zhuangzi*, an antique Oriental philosophical text of Taoism around 2400 years ago, exploring the aesthetic and ideological affinities between Wilde's aestheticism and ancient Chinese Taoism.⁶⁰

On 17 December 1889, Wilde's friend Thomas W. Reid held a dinner at the Reform Club for contributors to his newly founded journal, *The Speaker*. Wilde joined this event and rewarded Reid with a review under the title of 'A Chinese Sage' (CL 417), which was published in the issue of 8 February 1890. In this article, Wilde commented on Herbert A. Giles's English translation of *Chuang Tsu: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (London, 1889), the first complete English translation of the classic Chinese Taoist text *Zhuangzi*.⁶¹

The translator Herbert A. Giles (1845-1935) served as British consul in various Chinese cities for twenty-five years, and then held the position of professor of Chinese Studies at Cambridge University from 1897 until 1932. He was one of the most erudite Sinologists of his day, writing and translating a long list of works to introduce Chinese history, literature, culture and philosophy to British readers. His translation of *Zhuangzi* was one of the milestones of Taoist studies in Britain. For a long time Confucianism attracted most of the attention of

⁶⁰ *Zhuangzi* was an influential Chinese philosopher around 2400 years ago, whose ideas were collected by his students in the book named *Zhuangzi*. He is seen as the pioneer of Chinese Taoism. This chapter adopts pinyin system to Romanise Chinese names.

⁶¹ This review was published in *The Speaker* (1:6) on 8 February 1890. The thesis adopts the version collected in *The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde* edited by Ellmann, pp.221-28. Hereafter cited in parentheses as 'Sage' with the page number from the Ellmann collection. 'Chuang Tsu' is the Wade-Giles spelling of 'Zhuangzi'.

Western Sinologists, while Taoism, although as significant as Confucianism in Chinese culture, was relatively ignored in Britain. Giles's translation, together with James Legge's *The Texts of Taoism 2 volumes*, were the foremost studies of Chinese Taoism in Britain in the nineteenth century.⁶²

Before writing the review of *Zhuangzi*, Wilde already had a great interest in East Asian cultures. However, as the previous chapters show, in the 1870s and 80s, his knowledge of China and Japan was primarily limited to Chinese and Japanese decorative arts and commodities. So why did Wilde come to review Giles's *Chuang Tsu*? What made Wilde become interested in the thoughts of this Oriental philosopher who lived more than two thousand years ago? Of course, Zhuangzi (369-286 BC) was a great ancient Chinese sage, but in late Victorian Britain, he and his ideas were almost unknown, few Sinologists had ever taken on serious research on him before Giles and Legge's translations. Wilde was presumably asked by Reid to write an article for the journal *The Speaker*, but Reid left the choice of book to Wilde. It was Wilde's own decision to write this review of *Chuang Tsu* for British readers (CL 416). Then, what was the motivation of Wilde for introducing Zhuangzi to the public? With these questions, this chapter investigates the reasons for Wilde's interest in Zhuangzi, who is seemingly unrelated to the British aesthetic movement, and tries to trace Zhuangzi's influence on Wilde's perception of various social and cultural issues.

i Wilde's Review of *Chuang Tsu*

Giles's translation of *Zhuangzi* follows the version edited by the Chinese Taoist Guo Xiang (252-312AD). It is a collection of thirty-three essays, which are separated into three sections: Inner Chapters, Outer Chapters and Miscellaneous

⁶² James Legge was the first professor of Chinese Studies at Oxford University (1876–1897). He edited *The Texts of Taoism*, which was collected in the compilation *Sacred Books of the East* (vol. 39 & 40) published by Oxford University Press in 1891. His translations of Chinese classic texts are still used as a standard reference today.

Chapters.⁶³ The contents are as the following: I. Inner Chapters: ‘Transcendental Bliss’, ‘The Identity of Contraries’, ‘Nourishment of the Soul’, ‘Man among Men’, ‘The Evidence of Virtue Complete’, ‘The Great Supreme’, ‘How to Govern’; II. Outer Chapters: ‘Joined Toes’, ‘Horses Hoofs’, ‘Opening Trunks’, ‘On Letting Alone’, ‘The Universe’, ‘The Tao of God’, ‘The Circling Sky’, ‘Self Conceit’, ‘Exercise of Faculties’, ‘Autumn Floods’, ‘Perfect Happiness’, ‘The Secret of Life’, ‘Mountain Trees’, ‘Tien-Tzu-Fang’, ‘Knowledge Travels North’; III. Miscellaneous Chapters: ‘Keng-Sang-Chu’, ‘Hsu-Wu-Kuei’, ‘Tse-Yang’, ‘Contingencies’, ‘Language’, ‘On Declining Power’, ‘Robber Che’, ‘On Swords’, ‘The Old Fisherman’, ‘Lieh-Tzu’, ‘The Empire’. These essays are usually full of epigrams, which emerge as paradox, parable or parody to illustrate intellectual stances.

The main ideas of *Zhuangzi* can be explained that people have an inborn connection to the harmonious cosmos, however, people confine themselves with social roles, personal ambitions, material indulgence, and general preconceptions of value, such as true/false, good/evil, rich/poor, useful/useless, success/failure, happy/unhappy, etc, which actually have no distinctions. To attain harmony of body and mind, people should recognise these acquired bondages and get rid of them; by retreating from the anxieties of social life to the peace of natural life, people can reconstitute themselves and regain their divine connection to the cosmos. *Zhuangzi* called the return to the original state of absolute freedom as *Tao*, which literally means ‘the way’. The unnamed *Tao* is the highest order of both nature and society.⁶⁴ The method for realising this return, or the proper relationship between an individual and the universe, is *Wu Wei*, which literally

⁶³ Guo Xiang (252-312) is a Chinese Taoist philosopher. Giles’s translation of *Zhuangzi* is accompanied by Index, Errata and Addenda. It is widely believed that only Inner Chapters were written by *Zhuangzi* himself, while the rest were authored by his disciples.

⁶⁴ *Tao* also means the fundamental principle of the cosmos, as Giles emphasised, this word should be understood metaphorically (ix).

means 'Inaction' or 'Do Nothing'. *Wu Wei* is an inactive action that transcends the limitations of social and linguistic worlds to identify the primal source of nature. Therefore, the 'useful' regulations and knowledge in society become 'useless' for people to know *Tao*, while 'uselessness' has a use in preserving people's inborn harmonious nature. Applying to politics, *Wu Wei* means that rulers should become adept at 'inner cultivation' so that they can govern impartially and humanely according to the greater patterns of the cosmos, upon which they design their social and political institutions. With these institutions and orders established, rulers can govern by taking no action while making everything done. To a certain extent, Zhuangzi could be seen as the antithesis of Confucius who encouraged responsibility and devotion, preaching social justice and moral training. Herbert A. Giles argues that Zhuangzi is 'a heterodox writer', and 'his work was an effort of reaction against the materialism of Confucian teachings' (xv). In contrast to Confucius's lifelong struggle to establish a socially-conforming standard, Zhuangzi claimed that all attempts at social reforms were unnecessary because people's perfection consisted in following his nature, rather than obeying external authoritative dogmas.

In his review, Wilde appraises *Chuang Tsu* as 'the most caustic criticism of modern life' (Sage 221). He was fascinated by the idea of *Wu Wei* (Inaction), which he paraphrased as 'do nothing, and everything will be done' (Sage 222). He notes 'The great creed of Inaction was the doctrine which he [Zhuangzi] inherited from his great master Lao Tsu' (Sage 222).⁶⁵ Wilde first compares Zhuangzi with Western philosophers from the ancient Greek sages to the German idealist G. W. F. Hegel:

Like the obscure philosopher of early Greek speculation, he [Zhuangzi] believed in the identity of

⁶⁵ Lao Tsu was a Chinese philosopher about sixth century BC, who was considered to be the person who began Taoism, and who wrote the philosophical work *Tao-Te-Ching*. The ideas of *Tao* and *Wu Wei* were first ascribed to Lao Tsu, and developed by Zhuangzi.

contraries; like Plato, he was an idealist, and had all the idealist's contempt for utilitarian systems; he was a mystic like Dionysius, and Scotus Erigena, and Jacob Bohme, and held, with them and with Philo, that the object of life was to get rid of self-consciousness, and to become the unconscious vehicle of a higher illumination. In fact, Chuang Tsu may be said to have summed up in himself almost every mood of European metaphysical or mystical thought, from Herakleitus down to Hegel. There was something in him of the Quietist also; and in his worship of 'nothing' he may be said to have in some measure anticipated those strange dreamers of mediaeval days who, like Tauler and Master Eckhart, adored the *purum* until and the Abyss.

Wilde's reading of Zhuangzi as Heraclitus, Plato, Dionysius, Erigena, Bohme, Tauler, Eckhart and Hegel was possibly inspired by Aubrey Moore's 'Note on the Philosophy of Chaps' in the supplement to Giles's translation, in which Moore states:

It is here that we reach what properly constitutes the mysticism of Chuang Tsu. Heraclitus is not a mystic, though he is the founder of a long line, which through Plato, and Dionysius the Areopagite and John the Scot in the ninth century, and Meister Eckhart in the thirteenth and Jacob Bohme in the sixteenth, reaches down to Hegel (xxiii).

To some extent, Wilde's comparison is not unreasonable. For example, both Zhuangzi and the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus applied dialectics in their theoretical arguments. As Aubrey Moore notices, 'it is impossible in reading the chapter "the identity of contraries" not to be reminded of Heraclitus' (xx). Zhuangzi perceives *Yin* and *Yang* as the two basic contrary energies which constructed the world's movement.⁶⁶ Heraclitus assumes that everything was

⁶⁶ *Yin* literally means 'dark'; *Yang* literally means 'light'. They represent all the contrary

continually in a state of change and that the mechanism behind such unremitting change was the constant tension between contraries or opposites.⁶⁷ Zhuangzi and Heraclitus share the belief that the world was a unity of opposing but co-existent forces.

Moreover, Wilde believes that Zhuangzi's philosophy can be associated with European mediaeval mysticism, such as the Irish theologian Erigena's theories (c.815-c.877). Erigena developed a Neo-platonic cosmology according to which the infinite, transcendent and unknown God, through a process of self-articulation or self-creation, proceeded from divine darkness or non-being into the light of being, while simultaneously bringing forth the Primary Causes of all creation. According to Erigena, the first and highest cosmic principle is called 'nature' and is said to include both God and creation. God is 'nothingness', as Erigena argues, 'God does not know evil, and, in a genuine sense, God may be said not to know anything; his ignorance is the highest wisdom'.⁶⁸ In Chinese Taoism represented by Lao Tsu and Zhuangzi's works, *Tao* is unnamable, described only in negatives, the ultimate essence, and the impulse of all definite things. *Tao* is the highest principle before the cosmos came into being, and *Tao* provides the basis of all existence and the movements of the world, but *Tao* itself is 'nothingness'. *Tao* has no emotions, missions, morality or holiness. It is everywhere but can not be seen or touched. Although *Tao* does not equal the Christian 'First Cause of God', there are some similarities between Zhuangzi and Erigena in ontology.

However, on other occasions, Wilde's comparison seems exaggerated or arbitrary. For example, he called Zhuangzi as 'one of the Darwinians before Darwin [...] traces man from the germ' (Sage 227). He also associated the Chinese sage with Herbert Spencer because both of them opposed governmental

powers in the cosmos.

⁶⁷ See Heraclitus, *On Nature*

⁶⁸ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scottus-erigena/>[cited 5 December 2009]

intervention.⁶⁹ Spencer argues that state intervention will block the natural struggle of life, and to interfere with this process will be harmful to the eugenics of the British race. A government should do as little as possible because social welfare prevents people from adapting to their environment.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Zhuangzi's refusal of governmental intervention is based on the belief that the nature of humankind is innately good; society will be essentially wholesome, simple and ordered of its own impulse. There are different presuppositions and motivations behind the anti-intervention position between Zhuangzi's Taoism and Spencer's Social Darwinism.

After introducing Zhuangzi's arguments and comparing Taoism with Western philosophies, Wilde turned to appropriate the idea of *Wu Wei* (Inaction) to criticise contemporary issues in Britain. It is known *Chuang Tsu* was written in a specific historical background called 'Warring States Age' (403-221BC). As Herbert A. Giles explains, 'Zhuangzi lived in the feudal age, when China was split up into a number of states owning a nominal allegiance to the royal, and weakly, House of Zhou' (vii). The Chinese kingdoms fought each other for land, power, wealth and population. The intellectuals of that time offered various methods of restoring social order and realising eternal peace, thus forming different academic schools such as Confucianism, Legalism, Moism, Agricultural-Fundamentalism, Militarism, and Taoism, among others. In the review of *Chuang Tsu*, Wilde replaced the ancient Chinese background with the socio-historical context of Victorian Britain, and used *Wu Wei* to deconstruct the meanings of the British Empire's achievements. He presented his negation of educational systems, established churches and philanthropy by quoting 'Golden Age' -- the utopia described by Zhuangzi -- in the following paragraph:

⁶⁹ Wilde stated, 'he combines with the passionate eloquence of a Rousseau the scientific reasoning of a Herbert Spencer' (Sage 223).

⁷⁰ See Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1864.

[In Golden Age] there were no competitive examinations, no wearisome educational systems, no missionaries, no penny dinners for the people, no Established Churches, no Humanitarian Societies, no dull lectures about one's duty to one's neighbour, and no tedious sermons about any subject at all [...] people loved each other without being conscious of charity, or writing to the newspapers about it. They were upright, and yet they never publish books upon Altruism. As every man kept his knowledge to himself, the world escaped the curse of scepticism; and as every man kept his virtues to himself, nobody meddled in other people's business. (Sage 223)⁷¹

Wilde listed the inventory of hot-debated social issues in Victorian Britain, and made comments in the tone of Zhuangzi.

With regard to modern education, although after the Education Act of 1870, 'England for the first time became a schooled society' (Tucker 194), the compulsory moral training and religious learning occupied an important position on the schedule of educational institutions. Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge maintained essentially religious colour as quasi-seminaries of the Church of England, and trained the clergy of the Church and social elites in Anglican morality (Tucker 200). Wilde argued that people should not be forced to study the designed moral training programmes because the enforced courses would destroy people's inborn virtue, as a result, people became 'blind to have a definite purpose in life' (Sage 223). Wilde borrowed Zhuangzi's ideas, claiming 'true wisdom can neither be learnt nor taught. It is a spiritual state, to which he who lived in harmony with nature attains' (Sage 224).

Concerning the established church, in the late nineteenth century, with the

⁷¹ Wilde also made a full quotation about Chinese emperors *Yao* and *Shun* from *Chuang Tsu* to launch his own anarchistic criticism. Zhuangzi opposed external intervention, and saw such interfere as the symbols of losing the original harmony. One of his most representative statements is 'Were TAO not abandoned, who could introduce charity and duty to one's neighbour? Were man's natural instincts his guide, what need for music and ceremonies?' (Giles 108, Chapter ix)

expansion of the British Empire, the Church of England became a global organisation. The Victorian missionaries had enthusiasm for converting the conquered heathen peoples to Christians, especially the Indians, the Africans and the Chinese. Wilde compared the missionaries to mosquitoes, because according to Zhuangzi, people should 'keep the world to its own original simplicity and let Virtue establish itself' (Sage 227). The analogy of mosquitoes and negation of missions echoed the story in Chapter Fourteen 'the circling sky' in *Chuang Tsu*.

孔子見老聃而語仁義。老聃曰：“夫播糖眯目，則天地四方易位矣；蚊虻嚼膚，則通昔不寐矣。
(*Chuang Tsu* in original Chinese text)

Confucius visited Lao Tzu, and spoke of charity and duty to one's neighbour. Lao Tzu said, 'mosquitoes will keep a man awake all night with their biting. And just in the same way this talk of charity and duty to one's neighbour drives me nearly crazy. [...] let Virtue establish itself' (Giles's translation 184).

Besides, for the Victorians, discussing charities was a privilege of the social elites. As Brian Harrison points out, the numerous charity balls, philanthropic dinners, the pretentious central offices, the elegant membership cards were the brands of the organisation of the philanthropic world. All ensured that such redistribution of the national income gave pleasure to and even financially profited many of the 'not-so-poor' before it finally filtered down to those in real need; annual meetings provided opportunities for charity officials to praise each other's self-sacrifice and zeal (363-65). Wilde was unsatisfied with those armchair philanthropists, and sought references from *Chuang Tsu*. In 'Joined Toes' (Chapter Eight) of *Chuang Tsu*, there is an eloquent criticism against charity:

仁義又奚連連如膠漆纏索而游乎道德之間為哉，使

天下惑也！ [...] 自虞氏招仁義以撓天下也，天下莫不奔命于仁義，是非以仁義易其性與 (*Chuang Tsu* in original Chinese text)

Why should charity and duty to one's neighbour be as it were glued or corded on, and introduced into the domain of *Tao*, to give rise to doubt among mankind? [...] Ever since the time when *Shun* bid for charity and duty to one's neighbour in order to secure the empire, men have devoted their lives to the pursuit thereof. Is it not then charity and duty to one's neighbour which change the nature of man? (Giles's translation 102)⁷²

Wilde interpreted Zhuangzi's criticism into his own words, 'in those ideal days, people loved each other without being conscious of charity, or writing to the newspapers about it' (Sage 223). He labelled Victorian philanthropists as 'a set of aggressive busybodies who caused confusion wherever they went' (Sage 226).

Furthermore, Wilde questions the validity of the hierarchical and paternalistic form of social organisations, calling both philanthropists and government as 'pest of the age' (Sage 225). He sees the interference from governments as the greatest enemy of people's nature and the source of all the troubles.

They [governments] are unscientific, because they seek to alter the natural environment of man; they are immoral, because, by interfering with the individual, they produce the most aggressive forms of egotism; they are ignorant, because they try to spread education; they are self-destructive, because they engender anarchy (Sage 224).

It needs to be pointed out that there is a subtle distinction between Zhuangzi and Wilde in the attitude towards government. Zhuangzi does not oppose 'good

⁷² *Shun* is a famous Chinese emperor in legend who advocates morality and charity, who is quoted in Confucianism as the perfect model for rulers.

government' which rulers can manage the country according to *Tao* and the principle of *Wu Wei*. In a sense, Taoism can be interpreted into a political theory about the art of governance. However, in the review of Giles's translation, Wilde's anarchism denies all kinds of government, claiming 'all modes of government are wrong' (Sage 223); either people should withdraw from political affairs, or all the forms of government should be abolished. Wilde radicalised Zhuangzi's criticism of government. His anarchism was mixed with Irish nationalism. He complained Britain's rule over Ireland but in a witty manner, 'were he [Zhuangzi] to come back to earth and visit us, he might have something to say to Mr Balfour about his coercion and active misgovernment in Ireland' (Sage 226). As chief secretary of Ireland from 1887 to 1891, Arthur J. Balfour was perceived by Irish nationalists to 'measure everything by an Anglo-Saxon yardstick'.⁷³ They complained that Balfour's national and class prejudices blinded him to the political realities of Irish life. As this thesis has argued, Wilde reinforced the awareness of his Irish identity after encountering the Chinese people in the U.S.⁷⁴ It seems that eight years later, in the review of a Chinese sage, he did not forget to defend Irish national interests even in a seemingly throwaway utterance.

In addition, Wilde noticed that economic questions were discussed by Zhuangzi at great length. To Zhuangzi, 'the accumulation of wealth is the origin of evil' (Sage 225). Wilde cited in *Chuang Tsu* 'the richer this society gets, the more thoroughly bankrupt it really is' (Sage 225), pointing out that the Victorians were so indulged in the imperial glory and prosperity that 'the age is rotten with its worship of success' (Sage 225). In this review, Wilde rebukes the endless pursuit for wealth and deconstructs the meaning of imperial success, speaking in Zhuangzi's voice to predict the unlimited expansion of the British Empire will lead to its collapse in the end. He develops into supporting the abolition of private

⁷³ Catherine B. Shannon, *Arthur J. Balfour and Ireland, 1874-1922* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988) 70

⁷⁴ See the chapter 'Mirror of Self-Consciousness'

property in his later famous critical essay 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'.

Through reviewing and interpreting *Chuang Tsu*, Wilde finally proposes the important idea of 'self-culture and self-development' (Sage 227), which leads to 'the perfect man'. Wilde quotes the last chapter 'The Empire' in *Chuang Tsu* to describe 'the perfect man':⁷⁵

The perfect man does nothing beyond gazing at the universe. He adopts no absolute position [...] He lets externals take care of themselves. Nothing material injures him; nothing spiritual punishes him. His mental equilibrium gives him the empire of the world. He is never the slave of objective existences [...] He rests in inactivity, and sees the world become virtuous of itself [...] He is not troubled about moral distinctions. He knows that things are what they are, and that their consequences will be what they will be. (Sage 226)

The ideal of 'perfect man' has a substantial influence on Wilde's later writings. His denial of education, church, charity and government is based on the belief that people has an inborn ability of 'self-culture and self-development', which is an essential principle of Taoism.

Wilde praises Herbert A. Giles's translation of *Chuang Tsu* as 'a most fascinating and delightful volume' (Sage 227). His understanding of Zhuangzi is partly shaped by Giles's assessment, which claims 'Chuang Tsu is an idealist and a mystic, with all idealists' hatred of a utilitarian system, and the mystic's contempt for a life of mere external activity' (Giles xx). Wilde predicts that Zhuangzi's philosophy of *Wu Wei* can be used to challenge the mainstream of Victorian values, and believes Zhuangzi's 'self-culture and self-development' is the ideal needed in Victorian Britain (Sage 228). He concludes the review with the

⁷⁵ See *Chuang Tsu*, pp.447-54.

quotation from the first chapter ‘Transcendental Bliss’ of *Chuang Tsu*, ‘the perfect man ignores self; the divine man ignores action; the true sage ignores reputation’ (Sage 228).⁷⁶ Nonetheless, Wilde’s review of *Chuang Tsu* is a mixture of different inspirations; he understands Chinese Taoism impressionistically and interprets Zhuangzi’s ideas according to his own purposes. It is noticed that ‘Wilde’s review of Zhuangzi occurred at the very moment when his own philosophy was beginning to take shape’ (McCormack, ‘Zhuangzi and Wilde’ 303).

ii The Echoes of Zhuangzi in Wilde’s Writings

George Woodcock notes that Wilde came to agree in many respects with Chinese Taoism: ‘the reading of Zhuangzi’s writings had a decisive influence on Wilde’s own philosophy, confirming his natural tendencies towards non-action and philosophic anarchism’ (152). Zhuangzi’s profound influence on Wilde was evidenced by the numerous echoes of Taoism in his works during the 1890s -- occasionally given as direct quotations or as ideas attributed to ‘Chuang Tsu’ or ‘a wise man’-- but more frequently appropriated into the criticism as his own. Jerusha McCormack describes ‘what Zhuangzi’s text provided was a catalyst, in the sense that he helped to crystallise Wilde’s thought into something clearly radical’ (‘Zhuangzi and Wilde’ 306). Edouard Roditi argues that the reading of Zhuangzi contributed to Wilde’s transformation from ‘an ardent Ruskin Socialist, with all the naivety of Romantic idealism’ to ‘the sophisticated thinker of “The Soul of Man under Socialism” and “The Critic as Artist”’ (102).

Written shortly after his review of *Chuang Tsu*, Wilde’s famous essay ‘The Critic as Artist’ (July/Sept. 1890) appropriated Zhuangzi’s thoughts of *Wu Wei*, bridging the aesthetic movement with this Oriental wisdom. Wilde’s regard for Zhuangzi is inscribed into the subtitles of the two parts -- ‘some remarks upon the importance of doing nothing’ and ‘some remarks upon the importance of

⁷⁶ See Giles’s translation, p.5. The original Chinese text is “至人無己, 神人無功, 聖人無名”

discussing everything' -- which are paraphrased from Zhuangzi's creed 'do nothing and everything will be done'. Wilde used dialogue as the polemical device. Through the conversation between Gilbert and Ernest, Wilde inverted the general acknowledgement of the relationship between artists and critics, and cancelled the distinction between creativity and criticism. Gilbert represents Wilde's own perception of art and artistic criticism, whose presentations systematically deconstructed orthodox values; much of Gilbert's aesthetic ideas echoed Zhuangzi's *Wu Wei* philosophy. Ernest, as his name indicates, personifies the values of sincerity, naturalism, and conventional morality. Ernest was designed as the opposite of Gilbert, playing the similar role of Hui Shi in *Chuang Tsu*. Hui Shi was Zhuangzi's contemporary Confucian philosopher and politician. Some of the essays in *Chuang Tsu* were written in the form of the dialogue between Zhuangzi and Hui Shi.

A number of core arguments in 'The Critic as Artist' could be seen as the developments of Wilde's review on *Chuang Tsu*. For example, in the first part of 'the importance of doing nothing', Wilde claims, 'don't talk about action, it is a blind thing dependent on external influences' (CW 1121), which clearly chimes with Zhuangzi's idea of *Wu Wei* (inaction). Wilde rejects a list of utilitarian bourgeois virtues through the character Gilbert: chastity (it is 'unnatural'), charity (it is the beginning of 'a multitude of evils'), self-denial (a stumbling-block to progress), self-sacrifice (a survival of the mutilation of the savage).⁷⁷ The negation of virtues in common sense inherited his negation of charity, education and government in the review of *Chuang Tsu*. In the second part of 'the importance of discussing everything', Wilde argues that the Critical Spirit is Doing Nothing, because action is limited and relative, while unlimited and absolute is the vision of one who sits at ease and watches (CW 1136), again echoing his review of *Chuang Tsu*: 'the perfect man does nothing beyond gazing

⁷⁷ See *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (1994), p.1122

at the universe' (Sage 226). His statement 'the sure way of knowing nothing about life is to try to make oneself useful' (CW 1139) was paraphrased from Zhuangzi's remark 'the uselessness of all useful things'. Wilde combined Walter Pater and Zhuangzi's conceptions of contemplation, and created his own aesthetic statement, 'the contemplative life, the life that has for its aim not doing but being, and not being merely, but becoming' (CW 1139). Pater claimed that the goal of life 'is not action, but contemplation -- being as distinct from doing -- a certain disposition of mind' (qtd. in Freedman 33). In the fourth chapter 'Man among Men' of *Chuang Tsu*, Zhuangzi stated the sage's virtue should be passive, not active; he should be rather than do. Influenced by Pater and Zhuangzi, Wilde developed the idea that being and becoming rather than doing was the premise of personal realisation. In arts, 'non-productive' critics become the most creative artists and the true ideal of man, who are dedicated to self-culture and love art for its own sake.⁷⁸ Moreover, there is a direct citation of Zhuangzi to criticise philanthropists:

GILBERT. say no more about the wicked philanthropists, who, indeed, may well be left to the mercy of the almond-eyed sage of the Yellow River Chuang Tsu the wise, who has proved that such well-meaning and offensive busybodies have destroyed the simple and spontaneous virtue that there is in man (CW 1141).

In summary, although Wilde quoted Matthew Arnold to discuss the use of criticism, 'it is Criticism, as Arnold points out, that creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age' (CW 1151), he borrowed ideas from Zhuangzi to dismiss Arnold's attempt to put cultural criticism on a scientific basis. Zhuangzi's Taoism denies the existence of objective knowledge -- judgments are relative, there are no standpoints from which anything can be known to be objectively true.⁷⁹ Wilde

⁷⁸ Wilde claims that 'self-culture is the true ideal of man' (CW 1140)

⁷⁹ See the second chapter of *Chuang Tsu*, 'The Identity of Contraries'

also claims that ‘to see the object as in itself it really is’ is both impossible and unnecessary, because the highest criticism is to ‘reveal in the work of Art what the artist had not put there’ (CW 1154). He held the same standpoint with Zhuangzi that conventional moral duty was the obstacle to self-realisation. However, it needs to notice that there is an obvious distinction in the method of realising self-perfection. For example, Zhuangzi cites a story about a carpenter admired by the Emperor for his superior skill to argue that in order to reach self-perfection, one must be without self-consciousness (無我).

The Emperor summoned the carpenter and put this question to him: ‘What mystery is there in your art?’ To which the man replied: ‘No mystery [...] I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence [...] I become oblivious of any reward to be gained, of any fame to be acquired, unconscious of my physical frame. Then, with no thought of the court present to my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone’ (Giles’s translation, 240).

Zhuangzi’s Taoism thinks that to understand *Tao* (the fundamental principle of the universe) and obtain perfection, one should get rid of consciousness, forgetting oneself, and the method is meditation. Instead, Wilde emphasises that man’s self-perfection should be relied upon being highly self-conscious, and the method of fulfilling the perfection is within the realm of art, as he claims ‘beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing [...] it is through Art, and through Art only, that we can realise our perfection’ (CW 1135). Wilde tailored Zhuangzi’s Taoism according to his own aesthetic stance.

The impact of Zhunagzi also appeared immediate and traceable in ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ published in *Fortnightly Review* in February 1891, a year after his review on *Chuang Tsu*. In this essay, Wilde describes the ideal society in his mind in which the aesthetic aristocracy becomes universalised. The

state is to be an association that organises labour and manufactures and distributes commodities. It is to be the province of use; its sole purpose is to make what is useful. The individual, on the other hand, is to make what is beautiful and cultivate leisure. In Wilde's logic, if people love beauty, they will naturally prefer things which are graceful, charming, and harmonious, and since nothing beautiful can be bad, a truly aesthetic world will be harmonious. The core idea of Wilde's argument can be interpreted as New Individualism. Wilde's position is that individualism is not the antithesis of socialism, but that socialism is a stage on the road towards an ideal society in which individualism will flourish. Therefore, his socialism is in essence a paean to individualism. As Anne Varty points out, 'Wilde set out to dismantle the dichotomy between "socialism" and "individualism"' (52).

Wilde possibly borrowed ideas from his contemporary writers in this essay. For example, John Sloan suggests that Wilde's essay was possibly prompted by Grant Allen's 'Individualism and Socialism' published in *Contemporary Review* in May 1889 (103). It can be noticed that there are a number of similarities between Wilde's essay and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Wilde's idea that societies improve themselves through culture can be attributed to Matthew Arnold or John Ruskin.⁸⁰ Herbert Spencer's dream of a civilisation which can realise both the 'entire satisfaction of every desire' and the 'perfect fulfilment of individual life' anticipates some key features of Wilde's essay (Doylen 559). To some extent, Wilde shares several ideas with Karl Marx's analysis of private property in the 1844 early Paris manuscripts. Both of them highlight the alienated labour. Additionally, Wilde might be influenced by his colleague in *Pall Mall Gazette*, Henry Hyndman, who was a famous political activist and talented writer of the socialist movements in Britain.⁸¹ As Wilde's review of *Chuang Tsu* wittily

⁸⁰ Matthew Arnold claimed each individual could cultivate his own 'best self' through 'reading, observing and thinking'. Ruskin insisted on the moral and social benefits of disseminating art in his lectures at Oxford.

⁸¹ Henry Hyndman established Britain's first socialist political party --The Social Democratic

mentioned, '[Zhuangzi] writes about the curse of capital as eloquently as Mr. Hyndman' (Sage 224).

However, Zhuangzi's Taoism contributed to the most fundamental and the most provocative arguments in Wilde's 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'. Wilde is concerned above all with the 'self-culture and self-development', a condition which he identifies with the experience of art. He first raised this conception in his review of *Chuang Tsu*,

It may be true that the ideal of self-culture and self-development, which is the aim of his scheme of life, and the basis of his scheme of philosophy, is an ideal somewhat needed by an age like ours (Sage 228).

In order to fulfil the ideal of 'self-culture and self-development', Wilde proposes the liberation of people from the absolute necessity to work under the force of what he calls 'tyranny of want'. People should be free to choose the sphere of activity they enjoy and thus which gives them pleasure. The 'socialist' society can supply its members with the freedom to create beauty in their lives. As Regenia Gagnier points out,

[Wilde's] insistence on the possibility of the progress of all humanity's faculties -- intellectual, moral and sensuous -- once humankind was liberated from necessity went back to the Enlightenment and continued through the Frankfurt School ('Wilde and the Victorians' 22).

Of course it is true. Wilde shares the similar position with Marxists that estranged and alienated labour under capitalism should be changed into unalienated labour

Federation (SDF) in 1881, and wrote a series of books, e.g. *England for All* (1881), *Socialism Made Plain* (1883) to promote Marxism.

under socialism, a form of human activity driven neither by compulsion nor necessity but only for self-realisation. Nonetheless, there is a significant distance between Wilde and the traditional Marxists. Whereas Classical Marxism emphasises the progress of productivity and promotes class struggle, Wilde believes in ‘doing nothing’ or *Wu Wei* (‘inaction’) to reach the world of perfection. Here, Wilde’s ‘socialism’ is mixed with an essential Taoist view: people can attain harmony of body and mind, and realise their inborn connection to *Tao* and the entire cosmos through the training of *Wu Wei* (do nothing).

Meanwhile, Wilde opposes the imposition of external authority on the Taoist presupposition that, without it, the innate good nature of people would emerge and society would spontaneously become harmonious. For Wilde, as for Zhuangzi, the greatest obstacle to one’s ‘self-culture and self-development’ is the interference from governments. In the review of *Chuang Tsu*, Wilde approvingly quoted Zhuangzi’s criticism of government: “‘There is such a thing”, says Chuang Tsu, “as leaving mankind alone: there has never been such a thing as governing mankind”” (Sage 223). In ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’, Wilde acknowledged the influence of Zhuangzi:

As a natural result the state must give up all idea of government. It must give it up because, as a wise man once said many centuries before Christ, there is such a thing as leaving mankind alone; there is no such thing as governing mankind. All modes of government are failures (CW 1181).

Here, the ‘wise man’ refers to Zhuangzi. Wilde describes a utopia in which all members can fulfil, and exert absolute sovereignty over their own lives. To be liberated from the confines of public conformity, one can assert a spiritual freedom.

To obtain a true individualism which leads to ‘self perfection’, Wilde

supports the abolition of private property, claiming property would crush the true individualism of its possessors: ‘private property has crushed true Individualism, and set up an individualism that is false’ (CW 1178). With the abolition of private property, man would have true, beautiful, healthy individualism. Wilde’s reading of the degraded lives and distorted values produced by private property shares much with Zhuangzi’s analysis. For example, Wilde says mankind ‘goes on wearily and tediously accumulating it [wealth] long after he has got far more than he wants, or can use, or enjoy, or perhaps even know of’ (CW 1178), echoing Zhuangzi’s observation of how the rich man, ‘having no use for the money he has collected, [...] still hugs it to him and cannot bear to part with it’ (*Chuang Tsu*, Chapter 29). While Wilde notes how ‘an enormously wealthy merchant may be [...] at every moment of his life at the mercy of things that are not under his control’ (CW 1178), Zhuangzi describes ‘At home, he dreads the pest of the pilfering thief. Abroad, the danger of bandit and highwayman [...] Then, with his ambitions gratified, his natural powers exhausted, and nothing but wealth remaining, he would gladly obtain one day’s peace, but cannot do so’ (*Chuang Tsu*, Chapter 29).⁸² Both Wilde and Zhuangzi highlight the importance of recognising what people truly need and value to fully realise themselves and thus become what Wilde refers to as the ‘perfect personality’, or in Zhuangzi’s terms, the ‘Perfect Man’. As Wilde concludes, ‘What a man really has is what is in him. What is outside of him should be a matter of no importance’ (CW 1178).

Moreover, Wilde argues that ‘selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live’, and ‘unselfishness is letting other people’s lives alone, not interfering with them’ (CW 1194). There are similar paragraphs in Chapter Two ‘identity of contraries’ of *Chuang Tsu*:

辯也者，有不辯也。曰：何也？聖人懷之，眾人辯

⁸² These two examples are indirectly quoted from McCormack, ‘Zhuangzi and Wilde’, p. 308

之以相示也。故曰辯也者有不見也 (*Chuang Tsu* in original Chinese text)

The true sage keeps his knowledge within him, while men in general set forth theirs in argument, in order to convince each other. [...] it is said that in argument he does not manifest himself (Giles's translation 25).

Zhuangzi intends to prove that while others try to establish their own subjective view, the true sage remains passive, aiming only at the annihilation of contraries. Wilde paraphrases Zhuangzi's thought to support his doctrine of 'self-culture and self-development'. Through demonstrating the parallels between *Chuang Tsu* and 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' which 'turns aestheticism into a subversive political force, anarchic in function and aim' (Varty 53), it shows Zhuangzi's Taoism was crucial in shaping Wilde's political utopia of 'socialism'.

Zhuangzi's influence on Wilde was substantial and persistent. For example, Wilde listed aphorisms on the nature of art in the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (April 1891). The doctrines of aestheticism not only show Wilde inherited the ideas from Théophile Gautier and Walter Pater, but also indicate he absorbed Chinese Taoist thoughts. The statements, such as 'all art is quite useless', 'we can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it' (CW 17), echo Zhuangzi's creed 'uselessness of all useful things' (Sage 222). The statement in the same Preface that 'the artist can express everything' suggests the theme of the second part of 'The Critic as Artist', which investigates 'discussing everything'. In Chapter Three of this novel, there is a conversation between Lord Henry and his uncle. Henry said: 'What I want is information, not useful information, of course, useless information', and his uncle answered, 'I can tell you anything that is in an English Blue-book'. This is Wilde's mockery of British government, as he did in the review of *Chuang Tsu*. Henry replied 'Dorian does not belong to Blue Book', which denied the comprehension of 'uselessness' in

general meaning, instead, he classified Dorian into a dandy's 'useless' aesthetics. However, when Dorian abandoned the principle of 'doing nothing' but began to pursue 'everything', his picture correspondingly began to decay. *Wu Wei* (do nothing) reserved Dorian's inborn innocence and eternal beauty, while the betrayal of this principle led to the final destruction of Dorian and the beauty represented by him.

Wilde denounced the hypocrisy of Victorian upper classes' morality in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892). Lady Windermere has to discover that in all her Puritanism she is capable, like other people, of doing something utterly adverse to her principles, while Mrs. Erlynne, who is deserted by the so-called moral and decent upper classes, has the courage of self-sacrifice when acting on her own nature. Wilde shows the relativism of all moral values, and suggests that the phenomenon is no more than the perceptual mode with which one constructs it. This conception of relativism is an essential Taoist idea. The first chapter 'Transcendental Bliss' of *Chuang Tsu* points out the worthlessness of ordinary judgements (Giles xix). The second chapter 'The Identity of Contraries' furthers the argument that knowledge, judgements and standards are all relative; there is no perspective from which a thing is always 'so' or always true; fixed cognition misleads people's understanding of their inborn nature. In *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), an innocent woman received punishment for being lured by a male; while in *An Ideal Husband* (1895), Sir Chilton got a high position in parliament by selling national secrets. Wilde's criticism against the social and moral injustice gained an eloquent reference in *Chuang Tsu*: 'it creates the petty thief, and puts him in a bamboo cage; it creates the big thief, and sets him on a throne of white jade' (Sage 224).⁸³ In *An Ideal Husband*, Wilde claimed through the character Lady Markby, 'now that the House of Commons is trying to become useful, it does a great deal of harm' (CW 518), which clearly followed the

⁸³ See Chapter Ten 'Opening Trunks' of *Chuang Tsu*, '竊鉤者誅, 竊國者諸侯'

negation of governmental intervention in his previous critical essays such as the review of *Chuang Tsu* and 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'. In his most comical play *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895), Wilde showed how embarrassment happened when people did not follow their original nature. Jack produced for himself many troubles because he vacillated between an external social role of serious guardian Uncle Jack and the frivolous dandy Ernest.

In the poem of prose 'The Doer of Good', Wilde rewrote Jesus as a misguided philanthropist. The man raised from the dead by Jesus spends his days weeping.

The young man looked up and recognized Him and made answer,
'But I was dead once and you raised me from the dead. What else
should I do but weep?' (CW 901)

There is a similar plot in the eighteenth chapter 'Perfect Happiness' of *Chuang Tsu*. Zhuangzi talked with a skeleton, and tried to revive it, but the skeleton cried out and refused Zhuangzi's offer, saying 'I am happy to be dead and obtain peace, I don't need you to bring me back to the hard human being's world'.⁸⁴ Both Zhuangzi and Wilde used the imagined dialogue with a dead (or once dead) to show that it is unnecessary to attempt to transform the lives of others even if in the name of 'doing good'. Wilde's 'A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated' published in *Saturday Review* in November 1894 inherited his opposition to educational system presented in his review of *Chuang Tsu*. He mocked

Education is an admirable thing. But it is well to remember from
time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught [...]
it is a very sad thing that nowadays there is so little useless

⁸⁴ Chapter Eighteen of *Chuang Tsu*, “骷髏深顰蹙頰曰： “吾安能棄南面王樂，而複為人間之勞乎？”

information (CW 1242).

Through comparing and contrasting Wilde and Zhuangzi's writings, the influence of Zhuangzi can be traced in a number of Wilde's most representative works during the 1890s before his trial.

When Wilde wrote a letter to his friend William Ward claiming 'my two great gods are "Money and Ambition"' on 3 March 1877 (CL 39), he might not be able to expect himself that one day he would admire the principle of 'doing nothing'. In conclusion, after reviewing Herbert A. Giles's translation of *Chuang Tsu*, Chinese Taoism helped to formulate some of Wilde's most revolutionary ideas, and had a substantial influence on his aesthetic theories and socio-cultural criticism. Jerusha McCormack points out 'through reviewing *Chuang Tsu*, Wilde discovered a fellow spirit, one who would validate some of his boldest thoughts' ('Zhuangzi and Wilde' 302). Wilde's aestheticism embodies both Occidental and Oriental theoretical resources. To examine the cultural relationship between Wilde and Zhuangzi affords a more comprehensive understanding of Wilde's writings. His interpretation and appropriation of Chinese Zhuangzi's Taoism for Victorian aestheticism shows a productive case of cross-cultural assimilation in the context of globalised culture.

Summary:

Orientalism in the Aesthetic Movement of the British Empire

The aesthetic movement involved many facets of life: art, literature, dress, furniture, and interior decoration. Its complexity has been addressed by Ruth Livesey, as she points out,

I have found it useful for the sake of clarity to thus differentiate between two sorts of developments that emerged from aesthetic criticism in the 1850s. The first-which I term aestheticism-is that critical pursuit of 'art for art's sake' associated with the work of Walter Pater. The second is the commodification of such aesthetic concepts into desirable consumer goods (blue and white china, craft furniture), which I collect under the more general category of the aesthetic movement (22).

Livesey separates the concept of aestheticism used in general sense into two specific aspects: artistic critique and economic activity. On the basis of Livesey's analysis, this thesis will add the third dimension of aestheticism, that is, aestheticism as political dissent.

The series of three chapters of the First Part have studied the influences of the Far East (China and Japan) on the development of Wilde's aestheticism and the prosperity of the aesthetic movement in late Victorian Britain.

On the aspect of artistic critique, East Asian arts represented by chinoiserie and Japonisme provided a fresh artistic style for the Victorian aesthetes to free their minds from realism and establish the theory of 'art for art's sake'. The 'Oriental' art represented a competing aesthetic standard worthy of comparison to classical and renaissance norms; the 'Orient', as an outsider to Western civilisation, was perceived by the Victorian aesthetes as an artistic utopia

where life could be experienced to the full without religious and ethical restraints. It was widely accepted in the aesthetic circle that the decoration and patterns of Oriental art were independent of social and utilitarian considerations: beauty itself is a religion; art possesses its own autonomy. 'The East' appears to be antithetical to traditional Western artistic principle: asymmetry, irregularity of the composition, decorativeness, empty space, lack of perspective, light with no shadows, large areas of brilliant colours on flat surface. Throughout his life, Wilde exhibited an intense interest in various forms of Oriental ornamentation. Influenced by Whistler, who was crucial in establishing the priority of technical effects over moral concerns, Wilde considered the history of decorative arts in Europe as 'the record of the struggle between Orientalism [...] and our own imitative spirit' (CW 1080).⁸⁵ The aesthetic movement promoted handicrafts to the public, revived the aristocratic vogue of chinoiserie of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the model for Victorian middle classes' domestic decoration, and extolled the newly-discovered Japanese art as an example of aesthetic utopia.

On the aspect of economic activity, East Asian commodities, including blue and white china, tea, textiles, ceramics, paintings, wallpapers, lacquer ware and furniture, enjoyed great popularity in the British market. They were important goods in the market of fashion and were produced for business purposes. Through exhibitions, museums, galleries, operas, advertisements, comments of newspapers, critiques in fashion periodicals, window display by shops, Chinese and Japanese goods linked the aesthetic ideal with consumerism, playing as the mediation to dissolve the contradictions in the relationship between the utopia of art and the reality of consumerist society. Regenia Gagnier points out that 'Wilde lived through an economic transition from industrial production to high mass consumption that would have global effects' (*Wilde and the Victorians* 20). Wilde

⁸⁵ 'The Decay of Lying' in *Intentions*

did not reject wealth and commerce; instead, he saw them as a means for upgrading individual talents and aesthetic tastes. For example, he claimed ‘no one appreciates more fully than I do the value and importance of Dress, in its relation to good taste and good health’ (CL 297). He concentrated on self-realisation through the consumption of arts. The capitalist market helped arts to obtain a large-scale social influence. In a sense, the aesthetic movement can be seen as the marketing of an aesthetic lifestyle, an economic result of urbanisation, industrialisation, the accelerated movement of peoples and goods across national borders within the Empire. Dorian Gray’s indulgence in Oriental goods symbolised the heavy dependence of the Empire on the colonies, and his abuse of Chinese opium mirrored the decadent fate of commodity fetishism. The aesthetes participated in the process of commodification of Japanese art, in which consumerism played as a prerequisite for social recognition and a mode of self-definition. Nevertheless, the commodification of illusions about Japanese people, especially the Mikado and Japanese women, complicates the boundary between publicising beauty and the abuse of the cultural brand of ‘Japan’. Through commercialising China and Japan, British aestheticism as a commodity culture demonstrated the efficient and powerful ability of the Empire to absorb, assimilate and commoditise alien cultures into its art and fashion industry.

On the aspect of politics, Wilde appropriated the otherness of East Asia to reshape the hierarchical relations in the Empire. As Leela Gandhi argues, ‘because London was an imperial metropolis it was cosmopolitan and because it was cosmopolitan it contained anti-imperialists and critics of empire’ (1). The aesthetic movement based in London was not just about a taste of painting or a style of consumption, it also represented a political ideology covering the highly debated topics of democracy, labourer questions, colonialism, and the socialist movement. First, Wilde advocated the democratisation of aristocratic rights for the common people. In his first play *Vera*, Wilde stated through Prince Paul, ‘in a

good democracy, every man should be an aristocrat' (CW 698). This aristocracy here referred to an aesthetic and graceful lifestyle rather than social privilege. The popularity of affordable Chinese goods minimised the economic condition for the middle classes to obtain the cultural reputation for having a good taste in arts. Meanwhile, the aesthetic movement used Japanese decorative arts to embody the 'nobility of the workman' (CW 931). Wilde mentioned in his lecture 'The Decorative Arts' that to visit the South Kensington Museum in London, which displayed 'the best decorative art to be found in Europe and Asia' (CW 931), could enhance British workers' sense of beauty. Wilde told his American audiences that he went to the South Kensington Museum every Saturday night to 'see the workmen whom we so much want to reach, and whom it is often so difficult to reach', hoping such a visit could heighten British workmen's sense of nobility of their calling (CW 931). The exhibitions and museums of Japanese arts supplied spaces for the encounter between aesthetic elites and professional artisans, in Wilde's words, 'the man of refinement and culture comes face to face with the workman who ministers to his joy' (CW 931). Second, Wilde discussed labourer questions. In his lectures, Wilde quoted Chinese coolies, one of the lowest-paid labourers, as a model for the British white working classes to learn from because he thought the Chinese labourers spent an aesthetic lifestyle.⁸⁶ There was some interdependence between British aestheticism and late-Victorian social reform movements. For example, William Morris tried to use art as a vehicle to reform society. In his lecture on 'The Decorative Arts' (1877), Morris argued that designers and painters should enhance the taste of the general public.⁸⁷ John Ruskin argued that social conditions influenced art and design, and

⁸⁶ Wilde's judgment has echoes. 'The Chinese way of looking at life was not primarily through religion, or philosophy, or science, but through art. Excepting Japan, art enjoyed a special place in China that it had nowhere else.' See George Rowley, *Principles of Chinese Painting* (Princeton, 1947), p. 3

⁸⁷ 'The Decorative Arts, Their Relation to Modern Life and Progress', an address delivered before the trades' guild of learning (4 December 1877), by William Morris, originally

believed in art's power to civilise the poor. He promulgated 'a Religion of Beauty', and launched campaigns to improve standards of design in England (Warner and Hough 224). James Whistler contended that the duty of an artist was to uphold good taste and impose it on others (Aslin, *Aesthetic Movement* 34). As Diana Maltz points out, 'a desire to teach the poor an appreciation of beauty pervaded the literature of even the most practical late Victorian middle and upper classes [...] employing both the rhetoric of aestheticism and actual manifestations of aesthetic style as remedies for urban degradation' (2). Wilde's aestheticism was also 'socially oriented' (Gagnier, *Wilde and the Victorians* 32), and he held the same standpoint of William Morris and other socialist aesthetes against alienated labour, as claimed in 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'. Nonetheless, his unique theoretical contribution to British aestheticism was that, with the inspiration from Chinese Taoism, he successfully negotiated the paradox between the missionary aspect of aestheticism and 'the uselessness of art'. Third, Wilde questioned the hierarchy of the Empire and the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon male elites. In his condemnation of the Empire, Wilde revaluated the 'superiority' defined by the imperialists and replaced the political, military and economic powers with the power of beauty. He deconstructed the basis of theories of racial superiority which justified colonialism. He compared the Irish with the Chinese, both of whom were alienated in the Empire. He constructed Irish (Celtic) cultural identity in part through discussing the question of what 'Chinese' stood for. Wilde's revaluation of the Chinese people was a protest against Anglo-Saxon imperialism. More broadly, Wilde could be seen as a defender of subaltern groups in the Empire. His career in journalism and the emphasis on decoration, in effect echoed the movements which aimed at raising women's social position. He worked as the editor for the magazine *Women's World*, and invited a number of female

published in London: Ellis and White, 29 New Bond Street,
see <http://www.burrows.com/dec.html> [cited 30 December 2009]

contributors to make a real woman's voice. His recommendation for decoration attached importance to domesticity, which was usually attributed to women. He confronted Victorian orthodox values with decadent epigrams in *Intentions*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', and society comedies through appropriating Chinese Taoist thoughts. He drew two utopias: an artistic utopia of Japan inspired by Japonisme and a political utopia of 'socialism' inspired by Zhuangzi. As Leela Gandhi argues, 'the promise of ideal community, a utopian order of things, can be regarded as varieties of anti-imperialism' (8). Wilde's aestheticism and writings contained the power of dissidence in politics.

To study the relationship between Wilde and the Far East affords a fuller interpretation of Wilde's aestheticism and the British aesthetic movement. The Movement was accompanied by the process of domestic modernisation and overseas colonisation. Imperial trade and zones of influence, together with industrial development, opened up a greatly expanded world of commodities, supplying the material conditions for the aesthetic movement. 'By 1880, the Aesthetic Movement in the arts was a well-established fact and the name itself part of everyday speech' (Aslin, *Aesthetic Movement* 14). The British aesthetic movement was in a sense an imperial experience both culturally and economically. Therefore, although the aesthetes claimed 'art for art's sake', they were not marginalised in the reality of the Empire. However, the Far East, as 'the ultimate other' of the West⁸⁸, helped the Victorian aesthetes to set up a highly self-conscious critique of previous cultures, thus building their own special cultural identity.

The British aesthetic movement was associated with the British Empire's political and economic expansion to the Far East, and Wilde's aestheticism obtained its modernity through such globalisation. Conversely, it may be asked how Britain as the exporter of culture introduced aestheticism to the Far East in

⁸⁸ Zhang Longxi, 'The Myth of the Other' *Critical Inquiry* (15:1), p.110.

the context of the global circulation of English literature and ideologies, and how the Far East as the recipient of modernisation comprehended Wilde's theory of aestheticism, and translated, imitated or adapted his writings. In a broader sense, what is the mechanism of the cultural interaction between Britain and the Far East during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when both sides were in transition? The second part of the thesis, 'Oscar Wilde in East Asia: Aestheticism and National Modernisation', will focus on these questions.

Part Two

Oscar Wilde in East Asia: Aestheticism and National Modernisation

Before the second half of the nineteenth century, the major countries in East Asia, China and Japan were generally impervious to the influences of English culture.⁸⁹ In 1793, the British government sent a mission headed by Lord Macartney to Beijing to negotiate an agreement with the Chinese imperial court in order to expand commerce and establish a diplomatic relationship. Yet, the British envoys were misunderstood as ‘bearers of tribute’ by the Chinese mandarins, who thought the British Empire was a remote tribe hoping to become a vassal of China.⁹⁰ Although the embassy received a courteous reception, none of the requests were granted. Similarly, a second British embassy led by Lord Amherst in 1816 also ended in failure.

However, such self-isolation could not last forever. While Britain increasingly imported tea, porcelain and silk from China, the Chinese showed little interest in British manufactured goods and technologies.⁹¹ Therefore, the British merchants had to traffic in opium to balance the trade deficit. During the 1830s, the sharp growth of the opium trade raised the tension between the British businessmen and the Chinese Manchu government, which resulted in the outbreak of the First Opium War (1840-42). China was humiliatingly defeated and was compelled to open coastal ports to British trade, limit tariffs on imported British

⁸⁹ Since the seventeenth century, China and Japan had been almost inaccessible to the rest of the world because of their national policy of self-isolation.

⁹⁰ See ‘An Imperial Edict to the King of England’, *Western Civilisation: Volume B: 1300 to 1815*, Volume 1, p.430

⁹¹ The Chinese Emperor rejected Lord Macartney’s request for expanding commerce by saying ‘We possess all things. I set no value on strange or ingenious objects and have no use for your country’s manufactures’. See Hanes and Sanello, p.13, p.19.

goods, grant extraterritoriality to British citizens, and cede the island of Hong Kong. The United States and France soon followed the example of Britain to force the Chinese government to sign similar treaties (Duiker 50). Two decades later, Britain decided to send another expeditionary navy with the French under Napoleon III to the Far East to obtain greater trade privileges. After the Royal Summer Palace being looted and burned, China signed the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) and the Treaty of Beijing (1860), paying a heavy indemnity, legalising the opium trade, and opening more ports to the Westerners (Scott 35-43).

When China experienced a painful history of colonialism during the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan also faced serious challenges from the Western powers. The Japanese were alarmed by the defeats of China in the Opium Wars. After recognising the failure of the traditional superpower of eastern Asia and the overwhelming victories of the West, a strong sense of crisis spread rapidly and widely among elite circles of Japanese society. When the U.S. and Britain threatened to use gunboat diplomacy to open the Japanese market as they did in China, Japan made concessions and accepted all the demands of the Western powers without resistance, signing 'unequal treaties' with Britain, France, the U.S., Russia and the Netherlands respectively to open trade ports, reduce tariffs, give the Westerners extraterritoriality and unilateral most-favoured-nation treatment (Masuda 43-48).

These confrontations were part of the imperialist expansion of the Western powers into the non-European world driven by mercantilism theorised by Adam Smith and supported by the technological superiority of industrial civilisation. The British Empire, as the largest colonial power of the nineteenth century, played a significant role in opening China and Japan by force. However, these events and 'unequal treaties' of the Western intrusion stimulated the new era of modernisation of East Asia. For example, that Sir Robert Hart was appointed as the Minister of Chinese Customs was the result of one clause in the Treaty of

Beijing, but Customs became the most efficient and least corrupt department in the Manchu governmental system.⁹² Some points in the treaties, such as opening ports for trade, benefited Chinese economy, especially those industries involving international commerce. Shanghai gradually grew from an unnoticed town into an international commercial and financial centre of the Far East.

In the 1860s, witnessing Britain's stunning modern civilisation, the Chinese Manchu government launched a series of 'Self-Strengthening Movements'. These efforts of reform more or less realised some degree of modernisation, but the traditional Chinese ideologies and systems remained unchallengeable, as the governmental policy 'Western learning for use, Chinese learning for essence' of the 1870s shows.⁹³ Even though the reform primarily focused on technology, it still encountered great resentment from traditional Confucian intellectuals. The government opened foreign language schools, but could hardly find students; the construction of railways and telegraph lines were fiercely boycotted by local peasants.⁹⁴

Almost simultaneously with China's 'Self-Strengthening Movements', the Japanese Meiji government launched much more rapid and resolute movements of modernisation to transform Japan from a feudal agricultural society into a modern industrial state with the slogans 'Civilisation and Enlightenment', 'Foster Industry and Promote Enterprise', and 'Learn Knowledge Throughout the World' (Wakabayashi 47-64). The Japanese intellectuals of reformation attached great importance to the importation and assimilation of Western ideas and institutions. The government sent delegations and numerous students to the West to learn politics, education, social sciences, philosophy, cultures, arts and literature as well

⁹² Robert Hart (1835-1911), graduated from Queen's University Belfast, and served in Chinese Customs from 1863 to 1908. He actively participated in China's politics, reform, diplomacy and modern education.

⁹³ "中学为体、西学为用", all the English translation of Chinese texts quoted in this thesis is done by myself.

⁹⁴ See Li and Wu, *Yangwuyongdong*, 2007 (洋务运动)

as natural sciences, technologies and engineering. Meanwhile, Japan paid high salaries to employ more than three thousand experts from the West to train its troops, teach in universities, build factories, construct railways, and supervise its economic reforms (Wakabayashi 65-70). Among these foreign governmental employees, the British were most numerous as educators and engineers (Jansen 468). The Japanese tried to grasp not only technologies but also the social aspects of Western civilisation. For example, Western clothing became compulsory for government officials and the employees of public agencies, the solar calendar replaced the traditional Chinese calendar, and Sunday holiday was adopted (Jansen 471). Through studying abroad and obtaining advice from foreign specialists, Japan chose to assimilate the best that each particular Western nation could offer. English, French, and German were the primary foreign languages learnt in Japanese schools. 'The Japanese modeled themselves after England for industrial and naval development; Prussia provided a model for military organisation; France offered the model of its centralised police system and educational and legal patterns' (Jansen 465). Japan made significant progress of modernisation and industrialisation during the Meiji Reformation. She successfully adapted to the Western challenges and established the institutional framework of modern capitalism in the late nineteenth century. In 1894, after a half-century of effort, the unequal treaties which had been signed with the Western powers with their humiliating provisions of extraterritoriality, limitations on tariff autonomy, and unilateral most-favoured-nation clause were revised.

Japan's efforts to modernise during the Meiji Period were almost synonymous with Westernisation, as Fukuzawa Yukichi's influential article 'Leaving Asia' (*Datsu-A-Ron*) in 1885 suggested.⁹⁵ In this article, Fukuzawa stated that Japan should leave behind the backward Asia, and join the group of the

⁹⁵ In China and Japan, surname precedes given name. For example, in the name *Fukuzawa Yukichi* (1835-1901), *Fukuzawa* is the surname, and *Yukichi* is the given name. In this thesis, Chinese and Japanese personal names follow their native form.

civilised West. He argued that no country could escape ‘the Wind of Western Civilisation’ (*Seiyo-Bunmei-No-Kaze*), those who refused to reform would be conquered by external forces. He wrote:

China and Korea cannot survive as independent nations with the advancement of Western civilisation to the East, these two countries will be definitely colonised by the Western powers in the following several years [...] we (the Japanese) do not have time to wait for the enlightenment of our neighbours to work together towards the development of Asia. We shall leave the rank of Asian countries and become one member of the civilised nations of the West [...] because a man who has bad friends is also regarded badly, so Japan must cut off the relationship with those bad Asian friends from heart.⁹⁶

Fukuzawa is regarded as one of the most important Japanese theorists of modernisation. His political and social theories exerted significant influence over Japanese modern history. The article ‘Leaving Asia’ pioneered Japan’s national strategy of modernisation through Westernisation, and laid the theoretical foundation to justify Japanese imperialism in the Far East.

Since the 1870s, the Japanese emulated the West’s aggressive approach to foreign affairs, and began to use gunboat diplomacy to impose ‘unequal treaties’ on Korea. These treaties were similar to those that Japan had been forced to accept during the 1850s (Chiang 145-46). Japan’s colonialism in Korea sparked fierce tensions with China, the traditional suzerain of Korea. In July 1894, the Japanese navy assaulted a Chinese fleet in the Yellow Sea without warning and provoked the First Sino-Japanese War over the control of the Korean peninsula. As a

⁹⁶ See the Japanese text from <http://homepage3.nifty.com/seung/korea/dataron.html>, 「この二国を視れば、今の文明東漸の風潮に際して独立を維持するの道あるべからず。今より数年を出でずして亡国と為り、その国土は世界文明諸国の分割に帰すべきこと一点の疑あることなし...我国は隣国の開明を待て共に亜細亜を興すの猶予あるべからず、むしろ、その伍を脱して西洋の文明国と進退を共にし...悪友を親しむ者は共に悪名をまぬかるべからず。我れは心に於て亜細亜東方の悪友を謝絶するものなり」, all the English translation of Japanese texts quoted in this thesis is done by myself.

modern nation-state, Japan successfully mobilised its military machine through universal conscription, efficient infrastructure, administratively effective organisation of the powerful centralised government, and the modern media which quickly stimulated nationalism of the entire population. In sharp contrast to Japan's modern national system, the backwardness and inefficiency of Chinese society was exposed both to the world and its own people. China's military technology should have been a match for Japan's, but the Chinese army faced serious problems of corruption with funds embezzled by the mandarins even during the war. The government was powerless to unite different factions of the military force, and the common people in China seemed to have no conception of modern patriotism (Paine 165-244). China was disastrously defeated by Japan, which surprised the majority of Western observers. In the conclusion of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (April 1895), China lost the centuries-old suzerainty over Korea, ceded Taiwan to Japan, and paid Japan 230 million taels of silver as reparation (Paine 247-95).

This War proved to have profound consequences for both China and Japan. First of all, the traditional Chinese hegemony in East Asia formally collapsed, which shattered China's belief in Confucianism and Cultural Sinocentrism. The Chinese once developed practices of conducting foreign affairs referred to as the tributary system. This system was an extension of the hierarchical Confucian social and political order in international relationships. Confucianism offers the ideological basis for the framework: China is the sole source of civilisation; China occupies the pinnacle of a pyramid of international relations because of the universality and superiority of Chinese civilisation; the Chinese emperor, 'the Son of Heaven' (*Tian Zi*), is not only the ruler of the Middle Kingdom (*Zhong Guo*), but the guarantor of peace, harmony, justice and hierarchy of the world (Gao 34-37). Thus, on the moral ground, all countries ought to recognise and accept Chinese suzerainty as long as they want to be civilised. In practice, through

sending periodic tributary missions to the Chinese court and paying homage to the Chinese emperor, a country would become a nominal vassal of China. As rewards, they obtained Chinese goods and treasures, the protection from China against their enemies, and most important, the acceptance of these countries into the Sinocentric international community. This system developed towards fruition in the Ming Dynasty (1368A.D.-1644A.D.), when more than a hundred countries and tribes in Asia, such as Korea, Japan, Bengal, Sri Lanka, Siam, Vietnam, Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Java, Sumatra, Sikkim, Ryukyu, Myanmar, Malacca, the Maldives, etc. were included (Tsai 119-21). The Sinocentric ideology and the Confucian theory of the tributary system remained stubborn even though most of the nominal Chinese vassals had been colonised by the British Empire and other Western powers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Chinese Manchu government, although humiliated by the defeat of the Opium Wars, still considered itself as a great power and the cultural centre of East Asia. However, the loss of Korea, 'the earliest and most loyal vassal of China' (Myers 13), and the defeats at the hands of the Japanese, a former member of Sinocentric Confucian cultural group, shattered China's self-confidence as 'Celestial Kingdom', giving the Chinese much bitterness. The victory of Westernised Japan buried the ancient Confucian international order in East Asia and marked the triumph of the modern order of global politics regulated by the West. The disintegration of the Sinocentric system weakened China's domestic Confucian social structure. Confucianism and its once unshakable principles were for the first time widely questioned by the Chinese intelligentsia. There was general recognition that China desperately needed radical reforms, not only in technology, but economic, social and cultural revolutions. China had to experience what the West had experienced: the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. 'The hegemonic centre of the universe' (*Tian Xia*), as China self-claimed, must be transformed into a modern

nation-state based on civil society.⁹⁷ Since the 1890s, China witnessed intellectual changes of ‘the discovery of the West’, seeing the West not merely as a source of external aggression, but as an advanced civilisation that should be learnt (Twitchett and Fairbank 323). China’s humiliation at the hands of foreign powers and subsequent national crises came to be seen by many Chinese intellectuals as a result of an irredeemably backward Confucian cultural legacy. Therefore, to rupture the traditions and modernise Chinese culture based on Western standards could be a passage to national revival. During the early twentieth century, the Chinese intellectuals who studied abroad or were inspired by the Western cultures launched the New Culture Movement (新文化运动). They eulogised science, democracy, freedom, and human rights to establish a new national identity. The leaders of this movement, many of whom clustered in Beijing University, shared pro-democratic, pro-scientific, and anti-Confucian sentiments. They focused on a range of topics with the intention of transforming society and promoting national independence, individual freedom, women’s liberation, the spirit of science and democracy through rebuilding Chinese literature and culture.

Secondly, Japan’s victory over China demonstrated the marvellous success of its efforts of modernisation, and brought with it membership of the imperialist club. Before this war, the most popular image of Japan in the West was either ‘the funny Japanese’ portrayed by Gilbert and Sullivan in their comedy *The Mikado*, or the utopia of beauty imagined by the Victorian aesthetes such as Whistler, E. W. Godwin and Wilde. After defeating China, Japan was accepted as one of the dominant powers in the Far East on equal terms with Britain, Russia and France. In 1902, Japan formed an alliance with Britain to counter the expansion of Russia, which led to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Japan emerged victorious from

⁹⁷ The Chinese revolutionists abolished the monarchy and established Republican China in 1912.

this war and dramatically changed the balance of powers in East Asia, becoming a potential challenger to the British Empire and the U.S. in this region. As a result, Japan began to be seen as a strong competitor by the West. The term ‘Yellow Peril’ was applied to describe the imagined Japanese threat in the Western press and political debates. As O’Brien notices, ‘the 1900s and early 1910s saw widespread discussion in British circles of the idea of the Yellow Peril [...] the long-term incompatibility of British and Japanese interests in Asia’ (237). Japan found itself facing a dilemma that ‘the West’ as a total civilisation was the object of admiration, but also the hostile rival in the Far East. Although Japan was in the rank of the imperial powers, it is culturally and racially alienated from other empires. Such feelings of alienation partly led to the social collective anxiety reflected in the debates between ‘Joining the West’ and ‘Returning to Asia’ among Japanese intellectuals in the early twentieth century.

The history of China and Japan’s modernisation supplies the socio-cultural context of reading Oscar Wilde in East Asia. To both China and Japan, modernisation contains collision and negotiation of civilisations: the clash and assimilation of native traditions and external cultural influences from the West. Because Britain and her empire dominated the political, economic and social affairs of the Far East before the Second World War, British culture exerted a substantial impact upon the modern history of China and Japan, and English literature was crucial to the shape of modern Chinese and Japanese literature and modernity.⁹⁸ The translation of English literature in China and Japan, from its beginning, has a definite political purpose: reading English literature was a strategy to learn the culture of the most powerful Western empire, and hence to help modernise and civilise the Chinese and Japanese nations.

⁹⁸ For example, of the 643 foreign firms in Shanghai in 1911, 40 per cent (258) were British. See *The Cambridge History of China, Republican China 1912-1949* (vol.12), New York: Cambridge UP, 1983, p.149.

The dissemination of British aestheticism to China and Japan was part of the global circulation of English literature in the heyday of the British Empire. The cultural identity of Oscar Wilde acknowledged by Chinese and Japanese readers in the early twentieth century was an Anglophone writer from the advanced Western civilisation. The enthusiasm for Wilde in China and Japan was in the context of the approbation for Western cultures among the Oriental intelligentsia. Although Wilde was subjected to silence in Britain after the scandal of his conviction for homosexuality, he was highly admired in the Far East. His texts commanded a wide readership and his plays were performed in Chinese and Japanese theatres. He became a cultural icon that migrated across borders and genres. The reading of Wilde in China and Japan as part of a national cultural transformation was entangled with the complex social trends of popular education, class mobility, economic development, women's liberation, and democratic movements in the Far East.

This thesis explores the reception of and reader-response to Wilde in East Asia approximately during the early twentieth century. Wilde was first translated to Japan in 1891 when he was alive, but the flourishing of introduction, translation, criticism and theatrical production of his works in Japan and China began only after the renowned Japanese writer Mori Ogai's translation of *Salome* in 1907.⁹⁹ The outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (part of the Pacific War of World War II) in 1937 temporarily halted the debates over modernity in both countries, because during the War, cultural modernisation was overshadowed by military exigency, and literature was reduced to a position subservient to realistic politics. In such a macro-context, the enthusiasm for Wilde and aestheticism in both China and Japan receded.

The following chapters in Part Two primarily study the translation, interpretation and transformation of Wilde's writings and British aestheticism in

⁹⁹ Mori Ogai (1862 - 1922), a Japanese translator, novelist and poet

China and Japan in the three decades (1907-1937) from the perspectives of sociology, history and cultural studies as well as literary analysis. Because Wilde was introduced to Japan earlier than to China, and during the early twentieth century, Japan played as an important medium for Chinese students to obtain knowledge about Western cultures and sciences, Part Two first investigates the reception and influence of Wilde in Japan, and then in China. Specifically, Chapter Four 'Oscar Wilde in Japan' provides an overview of Japanese reception and adaptation of Wilde, covering translations, introductory and critical reviews, publication, academic monographs, theatrical productions, together with emulation, transformation and literary adaptation of this aesthetic author. It consists of two sections-- the first includes Wilde's non-dramatic works, namely his critical essays, poems and prose, fairy tales, stories, essays and letters; the second focuses on Wilde's dramatic works, namely his society comedies, the tragedy *Salome*, and other plays. Chapter Five, 'Oscar Wilde in China' contains three sections-- the first outlines the reception of Wilde's non-dramatic writings in China, including his poems, prose, stories, essays, and especially, the introduction, translation, criticism and adaptation of his fairy tales; the second examines the reception of, and reader-response to his society comedies, particularly *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), and his influence on the development of Chinese modern drama; the third focuses on the translation, criticism and performance of *Salome* in early twentieth-century China, arguing the adaptations of the play contributed to the movements of modern Chinese women's liberation.

Chapter Four: Oscar Wilde in Japan

1. The Reception of Wilde in Japan:

Introduction, Translation, Criticism and Adaptation

This chapter mainly investigates the reception of Wilde's non-dramatic works in Japan from the late Meiji period to the eve of Second World War, to examine the different readings of Wilde, the causes of the diverse readings, and the relevant Japanese adaptations -- Wilde as a dangerous socialist, as a 'new' poet and essayist, as an imaginative fairy tale writer for children, as a decadent aesthete, as a martyr to beauty, and as a witty and insightful artistic theorist.¹⁰⁰

Wilde's name had already been introduced to Japan in his lifetime. After Lord Elgin's fleet opened up Japan to the British Empire through threatening to use force in 1858, Charles Wirgman (1832-1891), a British journalist, arrived in Japan as a correspondent for *Illustrated London News* in 1861. He founded *The Japan Punch* in Yokohama a year later.¹⁰¹ It was a monthly cartoon periodical modelled after the popular satirical magazine *Punch* in Britain. *The Japan Punch* was perhaps the first modern publication in the English language issued in Japan. In March 1883, *The Japan Punch* reported Wilde's lecture tour in America and his plan to visit Japan, and commented 'Oscar Wilde not having been able to come to

¹⁰⁰ The Meiji period is the era in Japanese history from 1868 to 1912 under the rule of Emperor Mutsuhito.

¹⁰¹ Yokohama is now the second largest city in Japan, which lies on Tokyo Bay, south of Tokyo. It was a major trading port and residence area of the Westerners in the Meiji period.

Japan his envoy arrives instead' (qtd. in Hirata 245). 'His envoy' referred to Wilde's plan to visit Japan revealed in an interview. This message was directed at the British residents of Yokohama who were apparently familiar with Wilde's name, yet it was the earliest known information about Wilde in a mass publication in Japan.

The introduction and circulation of Wilde's work in Japan started in the 1890s when the author was still alive. Masuda Tonosuke (1865–1942), a scholar of English language and literature, translated the abridged version of 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' and published it in the magazine *Freedom (Ji-Yuu)*, a publication connected to the Liberal Party in the Japanese parliament, on 28 May 1891. The title was changed into 'the aesthetic individualism-- an abridged translation of Mr. Oscar Wilde's article'.¹⁰² Masuda's article was the first introduction of Wilde's works in the Japanese language. He focused on Wilde's arguments on art and individualism while he avoided mentioning the sensitive sociological terms such as 'socialism', 'communism', and 'the abolition of private property'. In October 1892, the writer, translator and critic Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1935) contributed the article on British drama titled 'The Motherland of Shakespeare' (「シェークスピアの故國」) to the literary magazine *Waseda Literature* (vol. 25), which was edited and issued by the faculty of arts, literature and humanities at Waseda University in Tokyo.¹⁰³ In the article, Tsubouchi discussed the works of the Scottish dramatist and novelist J. M. Barrie, Oscar Wilde and the London-based American writer Henry James. The article for the first time introduced Wilde as a playwright to Japanese readers.

However, in Japan, the flourishing of introduction, translation, criticism and theatrical production of Wilde's works began after the author's death in 1900.

¹⁰² The title in Japanese is 「美術の個人主義— フスカル、ワイルド氏の論文抄譯」. Following Japanese titles are cited in the text in parentheses after their English translations.

¹⁰³ Founded in 1882, Waseda University is one of the most prestigious private universities in Japan.

The timeline below aims to cover all the major translations of Wilde’s works (excluding plays) in Japan from the late nineteenth century to the eve of Second World War. Under ‘Translator’, the timeline chronologically records the Japanese translators of Wilde’s works. Under ‘Publisher’, it lists the corresponding journals or publishing houses in which the translations were published and issued. The names of journals are italicised. The table will not list the locations of the publishers as most of the publishing companies were based in Tokyo, the Japanese capital.

i Timeline of Japanese Translations of Wilde’s Works

(1891-1936, excluding plays)

Date	Work	Translator	Publisher
May 1891	An abridged translation of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ under the title ‘the aesthetic individualism’	Masuda Tonosuke	<i>Freedom</i>
Aug. 1908	Translation of ‘Oscar Wilde’s Seven Poems’	Kobayashi Aiyuu	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
May 1909	‘Oscar Wilde’s Aphorisms’	Kuriyagawa Hakuson	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Feb. 1910	‘The Nightingale and the Rose’	Kusuyama Masao	<i>Sun</i>
Feb. 1910	‘The Nightingale and the Rose’	Satomi Ton	<i>White Birch</i>
Jul. 1910	‘The Selfish Giant’	Tanami Mishiro	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Oct. 1910	‘The Devoted Friend’	Tanami Mishiro	<i>The Light of East Asia</i>
Oct. 1910	<i>Oscar Wilde’s Prose</i>	Tanami Mishiro	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Oct. 1910	‘The Sphinx Without a Secret’	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Jan. 1911	The Preface to <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Aug. 1911	‘The Nightingale and the Rose’ NB The title was revised as ‘the pain of love’ (恋の創傷)	Amanuma Hoson	<i>The Flower of Heart</i>

Oct. 1911	<i>De Profundis</i> NB The title was revised as Honma translated <i>De Profundis</i> as 'Writing in Prison' (獄中記)	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Jan.- Feb. 1912	'The Collection of Oscar Wilde's Epigrams'	Ubukata Toshirou	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Apr. 1912	'Oscar Wilde's Words'	Shimazaki Touson	Supplement to <i>Yomiuri News</i>
Jun. 1912	'Translation of Oscar Wilde's Three Poems'	Kimura Akio	<i>Mi-Ta Literature</i>
Aug. 1912	'The Sphinx'	Yamamura Bocho	<i>Poetry</i>
Oct. 1912	'The Sphinx Without a Secret'	Ozawa Yoshikuni	<i>Black-Shine (Kokuyou)</i>
Nov.-Dec. 1912	'Wilde's Episodes'	Wake Ritsujirou	<i>Modern Thoughts</i>
Dec. 1912	'The Sphinx Without a Secret'	Hayashi Kaneo	<i>Pleiades (Subaru)</i>
Dec. 1912	<i>The Collection of Modern Ornate Diction</i> (『近代詞華集』)	Kobayashi Aiyuu	Shunyo-Do Press
Feb. 1913	An introduction of 'The Soul of Man' NB The title is 'Wilde's Conception of Society' (『ワイルドの社会観』)	Yamamoto Shinzan	<i>Modern Thoughts</i>
Mar. 1913	'The Sphinx Without a Secret'	Kitazawa Teizou	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Mar. 1913	'The Sphinx Without a Secret' NB The title was revised as 'Mysterious Woman'; it was collected in the anthology <i>Japanese Translation of Modern Literature</i> (『邦訳近代文学』)	Nogami Kyuusen	Shobun-Do Press
Apr. 1913	'The collection of Oscar Wilde's Epigrams'	Ubukata Toshirou	New Trends Press
Apr. 1913	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> NB The title was revised as 'A Young Man of Wandering'	Honma Hisao	New Trends Press
Jun. 1913	'Impressions of America'	anonymous	<i>Articles World</i>

Jul. 1913	‘The Artist’, ‘The Doer of Good’	Honma Hisao	<i>Drama and Poems</i>
Sep. 1913	‘The Teacher of Wisdom’	Honma Hisao	<i>Creation</i>
Dec. 1913	‘Wilde’s Analects’	Araki Syuuiti	Great Japanese Books Press
Feb. 1914	An abridged translation of ‘The Soul of Man’ with the revised title ‘Wilde’s Philosophy’	Arahata Kanson	<i>Modern Thoughts</i>
May- Jun. 1914	‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ NB The translation of the article was titled ‘On Socialism’ (社会主義論)	Konoe Fumimaro	<i>New Trend of Thoughts</i>
Jun. 1914	‘The Nightingale and the Rose’	Nagagan Seigo	<i>Pioneer</i>
Jul. 1914	‘The Decorative Arts’	Moriguchi Tari	<i>Masks</i>
Nov. 1914	<i>Wilde’s Masterpieces</i> (a collection of Wilde’s fairy tales)	Horiguti Kumaji	Sakae-Bun-Kan Publisher
Jan. 1915	‘Pen, Pencil and Poison’	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Mar. 1915	‘Magdalen Walks’	anonymous	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
May 1915	‘The House of Judgment’	Honma Hisao	<i>New Trends</i>
Aug. 1915	‘The Birthday of the Infanta’	Okaei Itirou	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Sep.- Oct. 1915	‘The Young King’ 1, 2	Okaei Itirou	<i>Water Pot</i>
Dec. 1915	‘The Fisherman and his Soul’	Okaei Itirou	<i>Imperial Literature</i>
Dec. 1915	<i>Wilde’s Prose</i>	Yamanouchi Shuusei	<i>The Pioneer</i>
Feb. 1916	‘The Sphinx Without a Secret’	Kiyomi Rokuro	<i>Virgin</i>
Sep. 1916- Jan. 1917	<i>De Profundis</i> : Translation and Annotation ¹⁰⁴	Isobe Yaitirou	<i>Chugai English Newspaper</i>
Oct. 1916	‘The Star-Child’	Honma Hisao	<i>New Fiction</i>
Dec. 1916	<i>A House of Pomegranates</i>	Honma Hisao	Shunyo-do Press

¹⁰⁴ Isobe Yaitirou’s Japanese translation of *De Profundis* follows Honma Hisao’s title ‘Writing in Prison’.

Feb.-Jun. 1917	‘The Fisherman and his Soul’	Yoshii Naka	<i>National Literature</i>
Jul. 1918	‘The Selfish Giant’	Hanazono Kanesada	Home and Abroad New Theories Press
May 1919	‘The Sphinx Without a Secret’ NB It was collected in <i>The Review of Modern British Literature</i>	Yaguchi Tatsu	Kei-Bun-Do Press
Sep. 1919	<i>De Profundis- Another Name Writing in Prison</i> (『ド・プロファ ンデス一名獄中記』)	Tsuijun	Koshi-Yama- Dou Publisher
Jan. 1920	‘Anthology of Wilde’s Poems’ (「ワイルド詩抄」)	Hinatsu Kounosuke	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Mar.-Sep. 1920	<i>The Complete Works of Wilde</i>	Yaguchi Tatsu	Ten-Yuu-Sya Press
Jul. 1920	<i>De Profundis</i> (‘from the depth’) ¹⁰⁵	Kamitika Itiko	Ten-Yuu-Sya Press
Sep. 1920	<i>The Collection of Wilde’s Poems</i>	Hinatsu Kounosuke	Ten-Yuu-Sya Press
Nov. 1920 and Jan. 1922	<i>De Profundis</i> (‘New Life’)	Hirata Tokuboku	Alice Series of English Literature
Mar. 1921	<i>The Collection of Wilde’s Poems</i>	Hinatsu Kounosuke	New Trends Press
Mar. 1922	‘Wilde’s Words’	anonymous	Articles Club
c. 1923	<i>Wilde’s Poems</i>	Hinatsu Kounosuke	New Trends Press
c. 1923	<i>The Collection of Oscar Wilde’s Epigrams</i>	Ubukata Toshiro	New Trends Press
c. 1924	‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’	Honma Hisao	Transformati on Association Press
Jul. 1924	‘Men and Women- From Oscar Wilde’s Epigrams’	Watanabe Kiyoshi	<i>Women Public Opinion</i>
Dec. 1924	‘The Young King’	Ashiya Roson	Kei-Sei-Sya

¹⁰⁵ Kamitika Itiko literally translated *De Profundis* in Japanese: 深き底より (‘from the depth’)

			Publisher
May-Jul. 1925	'The Happy Prince' (Swallow and Prince)	Arishima Takeo	New Trends Press
Aug. 1925	<i>De Profundis</i> ('From Prison')	Hirata Tokuboku	National Library Publication Society
Sep. 1925-Feb. 1926	<i>De Profundis</i> ('Writing in Prison')	Sugiyama Sannana	<i>Banquet</i>
Jan. 1926	'The Nightingale and the Rose'	Yasuda Hadakahana	Imperial Education Studies Association
Mar.- Jun. 1926	<i>De Profundis</i> ('Writing in Prison', translated from German)	Miki Tadashi	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Aug. 1931	'The Ballard of Reading Gaol' (in an anthology)	Hagawa Kenkiti	Syun-You-Dou Press
c. 1935	<i>De Profundis</i> ('Writing in Prison')	Abe Tomoji	Iwanami Press
c. 1936	<i>Wilde's Poems</i>	Hinatsu Kounosuke	New Trends Press
c. 1936	<i>De Profundis</i> ('Writing in Prison')	Tanabe Juji	New Trends Press
Sep. 1936	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Nishimura Koji	Iwanami Press

In the following paragraphs, the chapter investigates the reception of Wilde's non-dramatic works in Japan during the early twentieth century by each genre, specifically speaking, to study the Japanese translation, comprehension and adaptation of 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', poems and prose, fairy tales, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and other stories, *De Profundis*, and critical essays.

ii Translation, Criticism and Adaptation of Wilde

1. 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891)

As aforementioned, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' was the earliest of Wilde's works to be introduced and translated into Japanese. After Masuda

Tonosuke's abridged version in 1891, there appeared several other noticeable translations and criticism of this essay. In December 1909, Honma Hisao (1886-1981), who just graduated from English Department at Waseda University, contributed an essay on aestheticism to *Waseda Literature* (volume 49); the title was 'Arts and Literature Irrelevant to Reality' (「現実を離れんとする文藝」). In this essay, he mainly introduced Wilde's *De Profundis*, yet he also noticed that 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' was an important critical article for readers to comprehensively understand Wilde's aesthetic ideas (Honma, 'irrelevant' 27-30).

However, the early Japanese reception of this essay was usually mixed with misreading. For example, in December 1910, an anonymous review 'Introduction to Modern Economics' published in the financial magazine *National Economics* (9:6) issued in Tokyo classified 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' as economic research and listed this article in the recommended bibliography of modern economics.¹⁰⁶

More frequently, Wilde's 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' was given political reading associated with the socialist and nihilist movements in modern Japan of the 1910s and 1920s. This article became politically sensitive in Japan after the High Treason Incident in 1911. Japanese socialists and anarchists were charged with assassination of the Japanese Meiji Emperor. A mass arrest of leftist intellectuals occurred, and twelve of the alleged conspirators were executed. The most famous victim was Kotoku Shusui, who had not been involved in the assassination, yet he was still executed for his writings on socialism. This incident reinforced the censorship of publications in Japan, and for a long time, 'socialism' turned into a taboo in Japanese political affairs.

The tense anti-socialist political atmosphere partly explained why most of the Japanese introduction or translations of 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' in

¹⁰⁶ 'Introduction to Modern Economics' in Japanese is「最近ノ経済学界」, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' was listed on page 176 in this journal.

the 1910s omitted the word ‘socialism’. For example, in February 1913, the magazine *Modern Thoughts* edited by Osugi Sakae (1885-1923) published Yamamoto Shinzan’s introduction of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’, and the title of the article was changed into ambiguous ‘Wilde’s Conception of Society’. Yamamoto (1890-1913) was a nihilist himself. He committed suicide at twenty-four years old after witnessing the Japanese government’s crackdown on socialists and the socialist movements during the High Treason Incident. Arahata Kanson (1887-1981), who was a pro-socialist theorist and politician, contributed an abridged translation of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ to the same magazine *Modern Thoughts* in February 1914, but he revised the title as ‘Wilde’s Philosophy’. The editor Nitta Tasukui published a critique of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ in the literary periodical *New Trends (Shin-Cho)*, 20:5 in May 1914. He used the title ‘The Ideas Expressed in Wilde’s “The Soul of Man”’ (「ワイルドの The Soul of Man にあらわれたる思想」), consciously omitting the last word ‘Socialism’.

The most noticeable and politically controversial Japanese translator of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ was Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945), the would-be Japanese prime minister in the Sino-Japanese War and the Second World War.¹⁰⁷ He was born in an influential Japanese noble family. In his early days, he admired Western culture, but held a strong anti-Western political attitude. When he translated the full text of ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ in 1914, he was only twenty-three years old. His translation was published in the periodical *New Trend of Thoughts (Shin-Shi-Cho)* with the title ‘On Socialism’. Being a member of an aristocratic family and a potential governmental leader in the future, Konoe’s public interest in the theories of European socialism angered the Japanese imperialist government. Due to the publication of Konoe’s article, the

¹⁰⁷ Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945) was the 34th, 38th and 39th prime minister of Japan (1937-39, 1940-41). When he was in the position of Japanese prime minister, Japan invaded China in 1937, which finally led to the Pacific war with the U.S.

following issue of *New Trend of Thoughts* was banned by the Japanese governmental censorship as a punishment. It seems that the Japanese authority who issued the order of banning did not read 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' carefully, or at least did not fully understand its arguments. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, socialism did enjoy a high public profile in Britain, but Wilde's 'socialism' was not Marxist revolutionary theory. Instead, it had allusions to the works of numerous figures such as George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, William Morris, Chuang Tsu and Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as, to a lesser extent, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Ernest Renan, Friedrich Engels, Balzac, John Ruskin, Walter Pater, Matthew Arnold, and Edmund Burke (Bristow 66). Wilde's 'socialism' was associated more with aestheticism rather than Russian Marxist-Leninism feared by the Japanese government. It seems that the Japanese police applied the anti-socialist clause of the censorship solely based on the word 'socialism' in the title.

Although political historians view Konoe's translation as influential, the full-text Japanese version of 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' most frequently referenced in academic circles today was Honma Hisao's translation in 1920, when the Japanese government loosened the censorship of publications and the suppression of political dissent. For Honma, *The Soul of Man under Socialism* was part of Wilde's strategy for defending his aestheticism in the aftermath of the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Honma's translation was later collected in *The Complete Works of Wilde, volume 5* edited by Yaguchi Tatsu (1889-1936).

2. Poems and Prose

The first translation of Wilde's poems appeared in August 1908. Kobayashi Aiyuu (1881-1945) translated Wilde's poems in the magazine *Imperial Literature* (14:8), including 'Impression du Matin', 'By the Arno', 'Impression de

Voyage', 'Chanson', 'A Vision', 'Requiescat', and 'Sonnet on Approaching Italy'.¹⁰⁸ In June 1912, Kimura Akio contributed 'Translation of Oscar Wilde's Three Poems' to the journal *Mi-Ta Literature* (3:6). It was a leading publication of Japanese aesthetic literature founded in 1910 at Keio University. Kimura translated 'Theocritus', 'Impression de Voyage', and 'Magdalen Walks'. In August 1912, the Japanese poet and writer of children's literature Yamamura Bocho translated 'The Sphinx' and published it in the magazine *Poetry* (2:8). The journal *Imperial Literature* published the poem 'Magdalen Walks' translated by an anonymous author in March 1915. In August 1931, Tokyo Syun-You-Dou Press published the ninth volume of *The Series of Modern British and American Literature*, which collected 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' translated and annotated by Hagawa Kenkiti.

The symbolist poet and scholar of British literature Hinatsu Kounosuke (1890-1971) made the most significant contribution to the translation of Wilde's poems into Japanese. Hinatsu established the literary magazine *Holy Cup* when he was an undergraduate student. He graduated from Department of English at Waseda University in 1914, and obtained his PhD degree in literature from the same university in 1939. In January 1920 Hinatsu translated fourteen poems by Wilde and published them in *Waseda Literature* (no.170) under the title 'Anthology of Wilde's Poems' (「ワイルド詩抄」). It included 'Ravenna', 'Hélas!', 'The Garden of Eros', 'The Burden of Itys', 'Charmides', 'Impressions', 'Panthea', 'Humanitad', 'The Sphinx', 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol', 'Sonnet to Liberty', 'Ave Imperatrix', 'To Milton', and 'Louis Napoleon'. Hinatsu's translation was later collected into the fourth volume of *The Complete Works of Wilde* published by Ten-Yuu-Sya Press in September 1920. New Trends Press issued the translation as a separate volume in 1921 and reprinted it in 1923 and

¹⁰⁸ The title of Kobayashi's essay is 'Oscar Wilde's Talent for poetry' (「オスカー・ワイルド詞華」)

1936.

During the early twentieth century, there were several representative Japanese critics of Wilde's poems, such as Iwano Houmei (1873-1920), Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880-1923), and Hirata Tokuboku (1873-1943). Iwano studied English in Meiji University in Tokyo. He became interested in nineteenth-century English and French literature. He published the essay 'New Poems of Naturalism' (「自然主義的表象詩論」) in the magazine *Imperial Literature* (13:4) at Tokyo Imperial University on 10 April 1907. Although the essay primarily discussed late nineteenth-century European poems, it introduced the British aesthetic movement and its literary roots in the Continent. He stated that in the late nineteenth century, various kinds of literary schools appeared almost at the same time in France, including naturalism, scepticism, impressionism, and decadence; decadent literature was introduced to Britain, and influenced Wilde's aestheticism.¹⁰⁹ He discussed Wilde in detail in the essay 'The Poet Oscar Wilde' (「詩人オスカーワイルド」) serialised in the literary periodical *Sun (Tai-You)*, 14:12 & 14:13) in September and October 1908. He first introduced the slogan 'art for art's sake', and then traced Wilde's aestheticism to French Parnassians, Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire. He showed admiration for Wilde's intelligence and humour in paradoxes and epigrams. However, he argued that most of Wilde's poems were imitations of D. G. Rossetti and A. C. Swinburne, claiming 'in terms of poems, I do not admire him'.¹¹⁰

Kuriyagawa, who graduated from English Department at Tokyo Imperial University, and was known as an influential literary theorist in Japan of the 1910s, mentioned Wilde in his article 'Studies on the Relationship between Modern British Poets and Their Times' (「近英詩人の時勢に対する関係を論ず」) serialised in

¹⁰⁹ 「仏蘭西では拾九世紀の後半から殆ど時を同じうして種々の主義が出て来た。それがまた英国に及んでオスカーワイルドのエチスート(耽美派)ともなった」, quoted in Sasaki, p. 60

¹¹⁰ 「詩に於てもこれは余り感服した物ではない」, see Iwano, p.31

Imperial Literature (13:10-12) from October to December 1907. The article researched the British poets ‘who were against the times of vulgar materialism and the indulgence in scientism’, such as Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, John Ruskin, D. G. Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, among others.¹¹¹ Kuriyagawa argued Tennyson’s verses of mythological themes, Browning’s lyric poetry, Ruskin’s verses composed in his adolescence, Rossetti’s and the Pre-Raphaelites’ aesthetic poems, Wilde’s and Symons’s decadent poetry, shared one common cultural feature, that is, they rejected materialism and scientism which, Kuriyagawa claimed, were popular in the Victorian period. Kuriyagawa later expanded the discussion of Wilde’s poems in *Ten Lectures of Modern Literature* in 1912. The tenth chapter of this collection, ‘Aestheticism and Modern Poets’, studied Wilde and other aesthetes in the context of Max Nordau’s *Degeneration*.

Hirata, a reputable Japanese essayist and scholar of English literature, contributed the article ‘The Poet Oscar Wilde’ (「詩人オスカー・ワイルド」) to the newspaper *Tokyo Two Six News*.¹¹² In this article, Hirata argued that while Wilde’s poems were indebted to Percy B. Shelley and D. G. Rossetti, these works were primarily under the influence of John Keats in style and taste (Hirata 366).

There were other critical essays on Wilde’s poetry in Japan during this period. For example, an anonymous article ‘Oscar Wilde’s Poetry’ in the aesthetic magazine *Subaru* (1:4) in April 1909 argued that Wilde expressed his deepest sorrow through ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’, and praised Wilde as a great immortal poet in English literature (qtd. in Sasaki 98). Honma Hisao quoted Wilde’s poem ‘Symphony in Yellow’ in his essay in *Waseda Literature* (issue 56) in July 1910, in which Honma asserted that ‘Wilde and Whistler belonged to the same school of “musicians of colours”’. In ‘The Essay about Oscar Wilde’

¹¹¹ 「此科学万能の時勢、物質主義の俗悪な時勢」, quoted in Sasaki, p.73

¹¹² The paper ‘The Poet Oscar Wilde’ was serialised from 24 to 26 June in 1908.

published in *Waseda Literature* (issue 64) in March 1911, Honma argued that ‘Whistler can be considered as “colour-musician”, and Wilde may be thought to be a “verbal-colourist”’ (qtd in Sasaki 96).

Wilde’s prose was also introduced and translated at this time. The poet Tanami Mishiro (1885-1913) translated *Poems in Prose* into Japanese and contributed it to the literary magazine *Imperial Literature* in October 1910.¹¹³ Tanami obtained a BA degree in English from Tokyo Imperial University, and had been active in the editorial board of the magazine *Imperial Literature*. The writer and critic of children’s literature Yamanouchi Shuusei also translated *Poems in Prose*, which was published by the Pioneer Press as *Wilde’s Prose* in 1915.

The criticism and translation of Wilde’s poems and prose in Japan was associated with the Japanese New Poetry Movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such journals as *Imperial Literature*, *Waseda Literature*, *Mi-Ta Literature*, *New Trends*, and *Sun* published a series of articles advocating the creation of modern Japanese poetry. They argued that a new poetic form was needed to depict new situations and accommodate new thoughts and feelings of modern Japan after the Meiji Reformation. The new poetry should be colloquial and use a broader vocabulary from contemporary life rather than the archaic lexicon; it should widen the themes and topics, extending beyond the limited themes of traditional poetry-- seasons and private sentiments. The New Poetry Movement in Japan was directly stimulated by the introduction and translation of Western poems, and constituted a significant challenge to Japanese poetic traditions. The traditional forms of Japanese poetry, that is, Waka, Haiku and Kanshi (Han Chinese poetry), follow very strict rules of syllables and rhyme. When Japanese intellectuals were exposed to Western poetry, mainly French poems and English poems, they were inspired by the totally different poetic form,

¹¹³ In July 1894, Wilde’s *Poems in Prose* was published in *The Fortnightly Review*, including ‘The Artist’, ‘The Disciple’, ‘The Doer of Good’, ‘The House of Judgment’, ‘The Master’ and ‘The Teacher of Wisdom’.

which they regarded as a ‘new form’ without boundaries. They named Western poems as *Shin-Tai-Shi* (poems in new style), and appropriated Western poetry to defy the restrictions of traditional Japanese poetry, challenging the rhetorical conventions that had been traditionally accepted as necessary to poetry. Wilde as a poet was accepted in this macro-cultural context under the umbrella of Western poetry or the so-called ‘new poetry’, which included Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, D. G. Rossetti, Swinburne, Arthur Symons, and Wilde, ranging from the Elizabethans to the decadent *fin-de-siècle* phase. Of course, Western poetry is not really ‘without boundaries’, but it did inspire many of the Japanese poets of the early twentieth century to liberate themselves from traditional conventions into a much freer verse style.

3. Fairy Tales

Among Wilde’s fairy tales, ‘The Nightingale and the Rose’ was most popular in Japan with at least five different translations before the Second World War.¹¹⁴ There were two versions of the title in Japanese. The most common title was a literal translation, which was adopted by Satomi Tonand, Kusuyama Masao, Nagagan Seigo, and Yasuda Hadakahana (see the table).¹¹⁵ The other translation of the title was paraphrased as ‘The Pain of Love’, and it was used by Amanuma Hoson’s translation published in the magazine *The Flower of Heart* (15:8).

The translations of Wilde’s other fairy tales are as following: Tanami Mishiro translated ‘The Selfish Giant’ and published it in the magazine *Imperial Literature* (16:7) in July 1910; in October, he also translated ‘The Devoted Friend’

¹¹⁴ During Wilde’s literary career he published two volumes of fairy tales, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* in 1888 and *A House of Pomegranates* in 1891. The former comprises ‘The Happy Prince’, ‘The Nightingale and the Rose’, ‘The Selfish Giant’, ‘The Devoted Friend’, and ‘The Remarkable Rocket’. The latter comprises ‘The Young King’, ‘The Birthday of the Infanta’, ‘The Fisherman and his Soul’, and ‘The Star-Child’.

¹¹⁵ *White Birch* (2:2), *Sun* (16:3), *Pioneer* (9:6)

and published it in the magazine *The Light of East Asia* (5:10). The dramatist Okaei Itirou serialised the translation of ‘The Young King’ in the literary periodical *Water Pot* (2:9-10) in September and October 1915, and he contributed the translations of ‘The Birthday of the Infanta’ and ‘The Fisherman and his Soul’ to *Imperial Literature* in August and December in the same year. Honma Hisao’s translation of ‘The Star-Child’ was published in the journal *New Fiction* (21:10) in October 1916. Yoshii Naka’s translation of ‘The Fisherman and his Soul’ was serialised in the periodical *National Literature* (no.31-35) from February to June 1917 with the revised title ‘The Story of A Fisherman Who Expelled his Soul’ (「魂を追ひ出した漁夫の話」). Hanazono Kanesada, a journalist writing for the English newspaper *Japan Times*, contributed the translation of ‘The Selfish Giant’ to the anthology *Modern Writers’ Works in English and Japanese* (『英和对訳近代作家』) published by Home and Abroad New Theories Press in July 1918. The Japanese scholar of fairy tales, Ashiya Roson, translated ‘The Young King’ for the anthology *Collection of Christian Fairy Tales* issued by Kei-Sei-Sya Press in December 1924.

The first collection of Wilde’s fairy tales in Japanese was Horiguti Kumaji’s *Wilde’s Masterpieces* issued by Sakae-Bun-Kan Press in November 1914. The collection covered all the fairy tales in *The Happy Prince* and *A House of Pomegranates* except ‘The Remarkable Rocket’. In December 1916, Honma Hisao’s translation of *A House of Pomegranates* was published by Shunyo-do Press.

The most significant theoretical analysis of Wilde’s fairy tales in early-twentieth-century Japan was perhaps Ashiya Roson’s monograph *World Fairy Tales Studies* published by Waseda University Press in November 1924. Ashiya was one of the founders of the Japanese Association for Fairy Tales Studies established in 1922. The monograph consists of introduction, chapter one of classic fairy tales, chapter two of folk tales, and chapter three of artistic fairy

tales. In the last chapter of this work, Ashiya presented several case studies of representative writers of artistic fairy tales, including Charles Perrault, Comtesse d'Aulnoy, Wilhelm Hauffs, Hans Christian Andersen, Ivan Krylov, Leo Tolstoy, and Oscar Wilde. Ashiya comments on Wilde's fairy tales:

In a sense, [Wilde's] fairy tales can be considered to express Andersen's ideas through Flaubert's pen. The fairy tales have free imagination, delicate description, elegant sentences and other valuable merits. I think perhaps Wilde's fairy tales can stand comparison with any masterpiece of modern English literature.¹¹⁶

Ashiya proceeds to assess Wilde's literary position as an exemplary fairy tale writer through comparing him with the other representative writers:

Perrault and Comtesse d'Aulnoy are pioneers of fairy tales in Europe, Hauffs is the creator of Hauffs-style literary fairy tales (tales interweave fantasy and finely wrought ironies), Andersen is the greatest and most productive artistic fairy tale writer, Krylov is the best modern fable writer, Tolstoy's fairy tales are moralistic, and Wilde is an extreme artistic fairy tale writer.¹¹⁷

As a prominent scholar of fairy tales in Japan, Ashiya believed the artistry of Wilde's fairy tales could benefit the emerging aesthetic education in Japan, and enhance the artistic taste of Japanese children (Yamada 509).

The influence of Wilde's fairy tales on modern Japanese literature and culture was also reflected in their Japanese adaptations written by distinguished

¹¹⁶ 「彼の童話は、アンダアゼンの想をフロオベルの筆で書いたと言はるゝほどのもので、其の空想の奔走なる、その描寫の精緻なる、その文章の流麗なる、他に匹儔を見ざるところ、恐らく近代英文学の如何なる作品を以て之と比較する遜色なかるべしと思われる一大藝術品である」、see Ashiya Roson, *World Fairy Tales Studies*, pp. 381-82.

¹¹⁷ 「ペロール及びドールノアは、ヨーロッパにおける童話作家の祖として、ハウフはハウフ型芸術童話の創始者として、アンダアゼンは最大の芸術童話家として、クリロフは近代寓話家の泰斗として、トルストイは思想本位童話家として、ワイルドは極端なる芸術的童話の作家として」、see Ashiya Roson, *World Fairy Tales Studies*, pp. 389-390.

Japanese authors. For example, the novelist Arishima Takeo (1878-1923) adapted 'The Happy Prince' into the story 'Swallow and Prince' (「燕と王子」) for his nephew who was ill. The adaptation was later collected into *The Complete Works of Arishima Takeo* published in October 1924. Arishima naturalised 'The Happy Prince' in a Japanese setting. For instance, at the end of Wilde's original text, the statue of the Happy Prince was pulled down, and melted in a furnace, but God asked one of his angels to bring the prince's broken lead heart and the dead swallow to the paradise. In Arishima's adaptation, the Christian God and paradise are replaced by a Buddhist temple, as Buddhism is Japan's traditional religion. The statue of the Happy Prince was melted and rebuilt into a Buddhist tower clock. It was relocated in the temple to protect and comfort the residents of the town.¹¹⁸ Arishima omitted Wilde's caricatures of the mayor, town councillors, the mathematical master, and the art professor; instead, he added a new character unique in Japan, a poor and young Samurai. The prince asked the swallow to take the jade on his sword to give to a poor young samurai who was prevented to marry a girl he loved due to his poverty. It is noted that Arishima revised ruby into jade because jade not ruby was the special jewellery for samurai and aristocrats in traditional Japan. Arishima's adaptation of 'The Happy Prince' juxtaposed the Occidental inspiration and the Oriental context.

4. Stories

The novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* first appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* on 20 June 1890. Wilde later made amendments to moderate the homosexual implications in the book, simplified the moral messages, and added a preface and more chapters, extending the original thirteen chapters to twenty. The revised edition was published in book form in April 1891.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000025/files/4994_11108.html [cited 24 March 2011]

¹¹⁹ The Oxford University Press published *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, which

The scholar of English literature and essayist Hirata Tokuboku was the first Japanese critic of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Hirata made a presentation of ‘the current situation of English poetry’ to a group of students on 15 April 1907, in which he stated:

This novel has a lot of epigrams and numerous paradoxes. It describes an extremely colourful lifestyle. Wilde’s aesthetics and his opinion about life are expressed in the novel, in which we can obviously trace the influence of Walter Pater. While Wilde shows us the splendid and beautiful lifestyle that seems like burning pearls, and the people who indulge in this flowing, passionate and gorgeous life, at the same time, he also implies deep sadness and tears.¹²⁰

Three years later, in April 1910, Honma Hisao briefly referred to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in his essay ‘The Tendency towards Decadence and Meaning of Naturalism’ (「頹廢的傾向と自然主義の徹底意義」) published in *Waseda Literature* (no.53). He translated the famous ‘Preface’ into Japanese and contributed it to the same journal (no.62) in January 1911. Honma discussed this novel in more detail in his article ‘On Oscar Wilde’ (「オスカー・ワイルド論」).¹²¹ He argued that *Dorian Gray* showed Wilde’s attitude towards the relationship between art and morality: ‘in a word, all literary creation is for writers’ own pleasure; [Wilde] says arts are different from morality; arts have nothing to do with good or evil’.¹²² Honma translated the full text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in April 1913, and this was published by New Trends Press in Tokyo. He revised the title of the novel

included the comparison of the two versions.

¹²⁰ 「種々な警句、バラドックスに富んで、極めて華やかな生涯が描かれてある。氏の哲学、人生観のいては彼のウォルター・ペエタアの感化を受くる事著しく、真珠のごとき焰を燃やし、流れ動いてやまざる美的生活の深い人だけあつて、悲しで破らず云ふやうな深い用意を備へて居る」, see Hirata, p.367.

¹²¹ It was published in March 1911 in *Waseda Literature* (no.64)

¹²² 「一切の創作は要するに作者自らの快樂のためなり、曰く藝術は道徳とは異なる、そこに善悪なし」, see Honma, ‘On Oscar Wilde’, *Waseda Literature* (no.64), p.15.

as ‘A Young Man of Wandering’ (『遊蕩兒』). He later contributed the article ‘How the Author of *Dorian Gray* Saw His Own Work’ to the magazine *New Trends* (18:5) in May 1913. Honma recorded that when he was translating the novel, he could not help considering various aesthetic issues: the relationship between life and art, the relationship between life and morality, the relationship between morality and art.¹²³

The publication of Honma’s translation of *Dorian Gray* stimulated a famous cultural debate over the aesthetic movement among the early-twentieth-century Japanese literary circles. The novelist and aesthetic poet Sato Haruo (1892-1964) wrote the article ‘To the Translator of *Dorian Gray* -- A Little Discussion on Wilde’ (『遊蕩兒』の譯者に寄せて少し許りワイルドを論ず) for the magazine *Pleiades* (*Subaru*) in June 1913. Sato argued that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* belonged to the twentieth century because it gathered together all the tendencies of modern literature.¹²⁴ He focused on analysing Wilde and Gabriele D’Annunzio, tracing aestheticism and decadence to Nietzsche’s philosophy (Yamada 533). Moreover, Sato criticised Honma’s translation, listing Honma’s linguistic mistakes and misinterpretations in the first four pages as an example. As a reply to Sato’s criticism, Honma contributed the article ‘Wilde and D’Annunzio’ to *Waseda Literature* (no.95) in October of the same year, in which Honma defended himself, and assessed the implication of Wilde’s aestheticism on Japanese anti-naturalist literature. In the same way as Ruskin and Whistler’s trials promoted aestheticism in Britain, the debates between Sato Haruo and Honma Hisao enhanced the popularity of this novel in Japan, and were absorbed into a wider discussion about the purposes of arts and literature among Japanese literary circles of the early twentieth century.

¹²³ 「人生と藝術の関係とか人生と道徳の関係とか又は道徳と藝術の関係とか」, see *New Trends* (18:5), p.17.

¹²⁴ 「新時代に属すべき近代文学の諸傾向を打つて一丸にしたやうな気がした」, see Sato Haruo, *Subaru* (6:5), p.123-24.

In September 1936, on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, the scholar of English literature and literary critic Nishimura Koji also translated the full text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.¹²⁵ His translation was published by Tokyo Iwanami Press, an influential publishing house specialising in literature, culture, and academic publications.

The collection of Wilde's short semi-comic mystery stories, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* (1891) includes 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime', 'The Canterville Ghost', 'The Sphinx without a Secret', and 'The Model Millionaire'. There were at least seven translations of 'The Sphinx without a Secret' in Japan. The translators included Honma Hisao, Ozawa Yoshikuni, Hayashi Kaneo, Kitazawa Teizou, Nogami Kyuusen, Kiyomi Rokuro, and Yaguchi Tatsu (See the Table). All translations literally followed the original title of 'The Sphinx without a Secret' except Nogami Kyuusen's version, which paraphrased it as 'Mysterious Woman' (『謎の女』). However, other stories received a cold reception. 'The Model Millionaire' had only one translation.¹²⁶ 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime' and 'The Canterville Ghost' were not translated. The hybrid piece of both fiction and criticism, 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.' (1889), which questioned the identity of the addressee of Shakespeare's Sonnets, was also ignored by Japanese critics and translators of the early twentieth century.

5. *De Profundis* (1905)

In the Japanese reception of Wilde's works, the epistle *De Profundis* was particularly noteworthy. As early as in September 1906, the foremost Japanese novelist of the Meiji period, Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) quoted from *De Profundis* in his novel *Kusa-Makura* (『草枕』): 'the very basis of Christ's nature

¹²⁵ The Japanese translations of this novel listed in this thesis all followed the 1891 version.

¹²⁶ It was translated by Honma Hisao in 1912, but not published.

was the same as that of the nature of the artist' (CW 1027).¹²⁷ Natsume obtained a studentship from the Japanese government to study in Britain for two years. He became a professor of English literature at Tokyo Imperial University, and later joined the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* as the literary editor. His experience of London inspired his collection of short stories *The Tower of London* in 1905. In the collection, although he did not directly mention Wilde, he referred to Max Nordau, the author of *Degeneration*.

The earliest Japanese translation of *De Profundis* was Honma Hisao's version of October 1911 based on Robert Ross's 1905 edition. It was first published in *Waseda Literature*, and then reissued by *Shin-Chō* Association (New Trends) a year later as a separate volume. Honma began the translation with the account of this epistle's background:

Because he lost the lawsuit against the Marquis, Wilde was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour [...] He lost his popularity overnight. The abuse from society, especially from those who were hostile towards the aesthetic movement, was very harsh indeed. Wilde, however, bore all this with perseverance. Although he had opportunities to escape to the continent, he refused to do so. He calmly obeyed the sanctions of the society without complaint. [...] Three months before his release, he was allowed a pen and paper. He started writing, and on the day of his release, he finished this work *De Profundis*.¹²⁸

Since Ross's 1905 edition expurgated all references to the Queensberry family, it was impossible for Honma to read Wilde's bitterness towards Douglas, his grievances against the injustice of his trial and the torture experienced in prison, his sadness over the news of the deaths of his mother and wife. These human

¹²⁷ 「基督は最高度に芸術家の態度を具足したるものなりとは、オスカーワイルドの説と記憶してゐる」, see Natsume Soseki, *Kusa-Makura in New Fiction (Shin-Shou-Setsu, volume 9)*, p.120.

¹²⁸ Honma, 'On Oscar Wilde', *Waseda Literature* 64 (1911), pp.26-27

relations were removed in Ross's version. The letter was turned into an abstract presentation of artistic and philosophical contemplation. Therefore, there were some inevitable misunderstandings in Honma's interpretation. For example, he believed Wilde accepted his humiliation and tragic fate without protesting, and thus he praised Wilde's obedience and perseverance, and associated Wilde's 'endurance' with the virtue of Japanese samurai (Hirata 252). Honma and his contemporary Japanese people had known little about the details of Wilde's trials, and the homosexual relation between Wilde and Douglas. As a result, Wilde was usually seen as an innocent martyr to the British aesthetic movement by the Japanese critics.

The poet and novelist Shimazaki Touson (1872-1943) recorded his feeling after reading Honma's translation of *De Profundis*. He remembered that 'Wilde's *De Profundis*, which was translated by Mr. Honma, consoled me most; when I read it in bed, I was deeply interested' (Shimazaki 305). He stated:

Wilde's sorrow, his life rooted in the suffering, the shame that is difficult to wash, the decadence [...] the sin, and even the physical punishment imposed on his body, all were immediately changed into spiritual meaning. In his *De Profundis*, life was accomplished through the form of arts.¹²⁹

Shimazaki also quoted from *De Profundis* in his article 'Oscar Wilde's Language' in the newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun* on 7 April 1912: 'My nature is seeking a fresh mode of self-realisation. That is all I am concerned with. And the first thing that I have got to do is to free myself from any possible bitterness of feeling'.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ 「彼は悲哀のかずも、一生の根柢に横はれる苦痛も、拭ひ難き恥辱も、墮落も、... 罪悪も、乃至身に蒙れる刑罰までも、直ちにそれを靈的な意味あるものに化さうと努めた。彼の『新生』とは人生を以て藝術の形式と成すにあつた」, see Shimazaki, 'Yanagibashi Sketch', *The Collection of Shimazaki Touson*, p. 308

¹³⁰ Shimazaki's Japanese translation of the quotation is as the following 「私は心から自己実現の清新なる様式を求めている。私が現在の要求はこれである。而して先ず第一になさざることは、世間に反抗せんとする苦い反撥の感情を脱し去ることである」, See

Shimazaki commented that it demonstrated Wilde's unyielding spirit and his insistence on personal freedom.

Seventeen years after translating *De Profundis*, Honma Hisao went to Britain in 1928 and stayed there for one year to write his PhD thesis *A Study on the Aesthetic Movement in Modern England*. According to Yoko Hirata's investigation, in London, Honma visited Wilde's son Vyvyan Holland. The latter granted Honma permission to read and copy the unabridged version of *De Profundis*, and gave him a lock of Wilde's hair as a memento, which is now collected in Waseda University Museum (254). The meeting with Vyvyan definitely benefited Honma's fuller comprehension of *De Profundis* and Wilde's aestheticism.

Following Honma Hisao, other Japanese translators of *De Profundis* included the English language educator and the founder of the Japanese Association for English Studies, Isobe Yaitirou, the essayist and scholar of English literature Hirata Tokuboku, the translator and social critic Tsuiijun, the female English teacher and later parliament member Kamitika Itiko, the translator Sugiyama Sannana, the writer Miki Tadashi, the novelist Abe Tomoji, and the scholar of English Tanabe Juji. Isobe's *De Profundis: Translation and Annotation* was serialised in the monthly periodical *Chugai English Newspaper* from September 1916 to January 1917. Hirata initially translated *De Profundis* as 'New Life' (*Shin-Sei*), but later renamed it as 'From Prison' when his translation was reprinted. Tsuiijun's translation *De Profundis- or Writing in Prison* was issued by Koshiyama-Do Press in September 1919. In July 1920, *The Complete Works of Wilde* published by Ten-Yuu-Sya Press collected Kamitika's version of *De Profundis* ('from the depth') in the fifth volume. Sugiyama adopted Honma's title 'Writing in Prison', and serialised it in the magazine *Banquet* from September 1925 to February 1926. Miki also used the title 'Writing in Prison' for his

The Collection of Shimazaki Touson, p.144.

translation published in *Waseda Literature* (no. 242, 245) in 1926. It is noticed that Miki did not translate from the original English version but from Max Meyerfeld's German translation. In the 1930s, there appeared another two Japanese translations of this epistle. Iwanami Press published the novelist Abe's *De Profundis* ('writing in prison') in 1935. New Trends Press issued Tanabe's translation in 1936, which also adopted the title 'Writing in Prison'. Both Abe and Tanabe graduated from English Department at Tokyo Imperial University. In terms of translators, *De Profundis* was the most translated non-dramatic work among Wilde's corpus in Japan with nine different translations during the early twentieth century (1900-1936).

Among the translators of *De Profundis*, the writer Hirata Tokuboku's comments are especially important. When he studied in the University of Oxford and made friends with Shimamura Hougetsu there, he admired Pater's *The Renaissance* and Wilde's *De Profundis* most. As the assistant editor of the magazine *Literature World* (*Bun-Gaku-Kai*), he made a speech on 'The Current Situation of English Poetry' (「英国詩界の現状」) at the conference organised by the Japanese New Poetry Association (*Shin-Shi-Sya*) on 15 April 1907, introducing William Butler Yates, Wilde, and Robert Seymour Bridges. The presentation was later refined and published in the magazine *Bright Star* (*Myojo*, volume 5, May 1907). On Wilde, Hirata claimed: '*De Profundis* appeared around February 1905 and caused a great sensation among British literary circles.'¹³¹ He highly appraised this long letter, believing 'when *De Profundis* was published, Wilde immediately regained his reputation'.¹³² In November 1920, Hirata translated the first half of *De Profundis* as 'New Life' (*Shin-Sei*), and it was collected in *The Alice Series of English Literature* issued by Shobunsha Press. The second half was

¹³¹ 「一九〇五年春二月の頃 *De Profundis* なる異常な一本が英の文界を騒がせた」, see Hirata, p.365.

¹³² 「ワイルドの名声は忽ち復活した」 *Ibid.*

published by the same press in January 1922. Hirata renamed his translation as 'From Prison' when another publishing house, National Library Publication Society reprinted it together with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a separate volume in August 1925.

To some extent, the translation and criticism of *De Profundis* contributed to the popularity of Japanese confessional literature, the series of 'I-Novels', in the 1920s. The writers expressed their personal anxieties and made self-confessions through exposing their individual and private living experiences, especially psychological activities. For example, one of the readers of *De Profundis*, Shimazaki Touson (1872-1943) wrote an autobiographical 'I novel' *New Life* in 1916, confessing his suffering caused by love, and his struggle for a spiritual rebirth.

6. Epigrams, Essays, and the Japanese Edition of *Complete Works of Wilde*

The earliest introduction of Wilde's epigrams was Kuriyagawa Hakuson's article, 'Oscar Wilde's Aphorisms' published in the magazine *Imperial Literature* (15:5) in May 1909. This article quoted 38 aphorisms from Wilde's works, including *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, society comedies, and especially the essays collected in *Intentions*. Kuriyagawa commented that the core idea of Wilde's aestheticism should be 'life imitates art far more than art imitates life'. He defined the aesthetic movement as 'a rebellion against ugly realistic life, an attempt to build a beautiful new world' (Kuriyagawa 169). In January and February 1912, the periodical *Waseda Literature* (no. 74, 75) serialised 'The Collection of Oscar Wilde's Epigrams' edited by Ubukata Toshirou. In this collection, Ubukata translated 170 aphorisms by Wilde into Japanese. It was reprinted by New Trends Press as a separate volume in 1913. Other translations of Wilde's epigrams included Shimazaki Touson's 'Oscar Wilde's Words' in *the Sunday supplement to Yomiuri News* on 7 April 1912, Wake Ritsujirou's 'Wilde's Episodes' published in

the journal *Modern Thoughts*, Araki Syuuiti's 'Wilde's Analects' collected in *The Stories of Modern Dramas* (『近代劇物語』) issued by Great Japanese Books Press in 1913, the anonymous article 'Wilde's Words' in the magazine *Articles Club* in March 1922, Watanabe Kiyoshi's 'Men and Women -- From Oscar Wilde's Epigrams' in the magazine *Women Public Opinion* in July 1924. The poet and playwright Kobayashi Aiyuu's *The Collection of Modern Ornate Diction* published by Shunyo-Do Press in 1921 also collected some of Wilde's epigrams.

Regarding the reception of Wilde's essays and lectures in Japan, 'The Decorative Arts' was translated by the art historian Moriguchi Tari (1892-1984) in the artistic journal *Masks* in July 1914; 'Impressions of America' was translated by an anonymous author in the magazine *Articles World* (8:8) in June 1913; 'Pen, Pencil and Poison' was translated by Honma Hisao and published in *Waseda Literature* in January 1915. Honma also wrote a review of 'The Decay of Lying' for *Articles World* (5:4) in March 1910. He argued that the character Vyvyan represented Wilde's own view of the supreme value of art; through rejecting naturalism and realism, Wilde advocated the new romanticism. Honma quoted Wilde's assertion that 'in reality, it is Life, and it is Nature, that should imitate Art'.¹³³ According to Yoko Hirata, Japanese intellectuals could detect in Wilde's aestheticism a distant echo of traditional Japanese aesthetic theory. Ideas, such as 'all art is useless', 'life imitates art rather than art imitates life', were not strange to the Japanese. 'Chinese Taoist idea of *Wu Wei*, do nothing or the use of useless things, which Wilde wrote a review of in the 1890s, had been within the range of common Japanese knowledge for centuries' (Hirata 256). Besides, the idea 'life imitates art' sounded similar to the traditional Japanese poet Matsuo Basho's aestheticism widely known among educated Japanese circles (Hirata 256).

Wilde's career in journalism was noticed by Japanese critics as well. Between March 1885 and May 1890 Wilde wrote more than seventy unsigned

¹³³ Honma Hisao. 『人生も自然も芸術の模倣なり』 . *Articles World* 5:4 (1910), pp. 63–69

book reviews for *Pall Mall Gazette*, between November 1887 and June 1889 he was the editor of the magazine *The Woman's World*, and throughout the late 1880s he contributed a number of pieces, some signed, some not, to other newspapers and journals. In a letter to Wemyss Reid in April 1887, Wilde claimed that *The Women's World* 'should be made the recognised organ for the expression of women's opinions on all subjects of literature, art, and modern life' (CL 297). Wilde's working experience in *The Woman's World* was quoted in an anonymous review 'The Great Thinkers' Ideas of Women' (『大思想家の婦人観』) in the journal *Universe Magazines (Rikugou, no.391)* in 1913. The scholar of journalism Chiba Kameo (1878-1935) wrote a chapter specially introducing Wilde's journalism in his monograph *The Course of Newspaper and Magazine Studies* (『新聞紙学講座』) published in 1926 by Bun-Shun Press (Spring Literary Society). The title of the chapter was 'Wilde's Ideas of Journalism', and it was put under the section of 'The Development of British Journalism'. Chiba mainly discussed Wilde's editorship of *The Woman's World*. The Japanese interest in Wilde's journalism was associated with the social context of the development of modern journalism and publication in Japan, particularly the journals and magazines for women. In the efforts to modernise the Japanese culture, a group of leftist Japanese intellectuals led by Ito Noe (1895-1923) launched 'New Woman' movements to liberate Japanese women from the social, political and sexual oppression. Women's rights were seen as an essential part of national modernity, and the education for women was raised on the agenda. Since 1900, there appeared numerous women's magazines, such as *Women's Literature* (January 1905), *Women's Pictorial* (July 1905), *Women's Criticism* (September 1912), *Women's Society* (January 1913), *Women's Friends* (March 1918), *Female Japanese* (September 1920), to name but a few.¹³⁴ The introduction of Wilde's journalist career was against the background

¹³⁴ In Japanese language, they are 『女子文壇』, 『婦人画報』, 『婦人評論』, 『大正婦女社会』, 『主婦之友』, 『女子文藝』, 『女性日本人』

of the development of Japanese modern journalism and the New Women's movement.¹³⁵

Finally, it is noted that in the history of Japanese reception of Western literature, Wilde was the second writer after William Shakespeare whose complete works were published.¹³⁶ Yamada Tsuyoshi argues that the publication of *The Complete Works of Wilde*, and the performances of his plays, primarily consisted of the reception of aestheticism in Japan (510). The five volumes of *The Complete Works of Wilde* in Japanese were issued by Tokyo Ten-Yuu-Sya Press in 1920. The collection was edited by the scholar of English literature Yaguchi Tatsu (1889-1936). The contributors to the collection covered the reputable Wilde specialist Honma Hisao, the dramatist Osanai Kaoru, the poet Hinatsu Kounosuke, the writer and dramatist Akita Ujyaku, the dramatist Nakamura Kitizou, the writer Kusuyama Masao, the playwright Shimamura Tamizou, the drama critic Tsubouchi Shiko, the writer and scholar of English literature Tanizaki Seiji, the drama critic Kawatake Shigetoshi, and the journalist Kamitika Itiko. This group gathered a number of eminent Japanese intellectuals of the early twentieth century. The first volume collects Wilde's stories, the second his plays, the third his plays and fairy tales, the fourth poems, the final volume his critical essays and letters. The contents of each volume are listed in the following table:

Volume One

Works	Translators
<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Yaguchi Tatsu
<i>Lord Arthur Saville's Crime</i>	Akita Ujyaku
<i>The Canterville Ghost</i>	Akita Ujyaku
'The Model Millionaire'	Akita Ujyaku
<i>The Portrait of Mr. W. H.</i>	Akita Ujyaku

¹³⁵ More details about Wilde's journalism can be found in John Stokes 'Wilde the journalist' in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP)

¹³⁶ The Japanese translation of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* was published in 1909 by Great Japanese Books Press.

‘The Sphinx without a Secret’	Yaguchi Tatsu
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Volume Two

Works	Translators
<i>Salome</i>	Nakamura Kitizou
<i>A Florentine Tragedy</i>	Honma Hisao
<i>The Duchess of Padua</i>	Kusuyama Masao
<i>Lady Windermere’s Fan</i>	Shimamura Tamizou
<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Tsubouchi Shiko

Volume Three

Works	Translators
<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	Tanizaki Seiji
<i>A Woman of No Importance</i>	Kawatake Shigetoshi
<i>Vera, or the Nihilist</i>	Osanai Kaoru
<i>A House of Pomegranates</i>	Yaguchi Tatsu

Volume Four

Works	Translator
Wilde’s poems and prose, such as ‘Ravenna’, ‘The Sphinx’, ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’	Hinatsu Kounosuke

Volume Five

Works	Translators
‘The Decay of Lying’	Yaguchi Tatsu
‘Pen, Pencil and Poison’	Honma Hisao
‘The Critic as Artist’	Shimamura Tamizou
‘De Profundis’	Kamitika Itiko
‘The Truth of Masks’	Osanai Kaoru
‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’	Honma Hisao

(Table 4: contents of *The Complete Works of Wilde* 1920)

iii Monographs on Wilde and British Aestheticism in Japan

This section makes a chronological overview of representative monographs on Wilde Studies and British aestheticism in Japan of the early twentieth century.

Shimamura Hougetsu (1871-1918), a scholar of English literature at

Waseda University and renowned Japanese dramatist, published the paper 'British Aestheticism' in the monthly literary magazine *Bright Star (Myojo)*, volume 9) in 1907.¹³⁷ The paper was thought to be the first systematic research on the British aesthetic movement in Japan (Sasaki 50). Shimamura had visited Britain in 1902 and studied in the University of Oxford for several months, where he showed a great interest in aestheticism and the history of arts. The article was based on Walter Hamilton's 1882 monograph *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (「英国の尚美主義」) and Wilde's 1889 essay 'The Decay of Lying'. Shimamura introduced the Pre-Raphaelites, Walter Pater, John Ruskin, William Morris, A. C. Swinburne and Oscar Wilde. He first argued that the British aesthetic movement should be traced back to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the Mid-Victorian period. Then he listed the representative figures of the aesthetic movement, such as William Morris, Swinburne and Wilde. Shimamura defined Wilde as 'the performer of aestheticism'.¹³⁸ He saw Wilde's aestheticism as an extension of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. He thought the most significant points of Wilde's aestheticism included 'art for art's sake; art does not depend on life, nature or ideas; life imitates art far more than art imitates life'.¹³⁹ He commented 'such ideas showed Wilde's negative attitude towards the conventional social habits', and therefore, 'Wilde's aestheticism was condemned by the general public as ridiculous and radical nonsense'.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, Shimamura described Wilde's aesthetic clothing, and mentioned the opera *Patience*. He finally concluded:

Generally speaking, there are three main points that need to pay

¹³⁷ The article was later collected in *Modern Arts and Literature Studies* (『近代文藝之研究』) issued by Waseda University Press in 1909.

¹³⁸ 「尚美主義に於ける立場はむしろ実行者」, see Shimamura, p.588.

¹³⁹ 「芸術は芸術みづからを目的とする。芸術は人生、自然、思想などいふものに頼ることなし。較もすれば人は芸術が人生を模すると云ふが倒様である、人生が却て芸術を模するものである」, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ 「當時一般の風俗に対する反抗主義であつたのです」, 「斯様な主張を以て居ることが世間一般から極端な邪論として罵られる傾向を以てゐる」, Shimamura, p.589.

attention to in aestheticism. That is to say, the first is the so-called sensual pleasure; the second is art is independent of morality; the third is to freely express one's own strong sentiment.¹⁴¹

About Wilde's aestheticism, Shimamura quoted from 'The Decay of Lying':

Art never expresses anything but itself / All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals / Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life.¹⁴²

Noguchi Yone (1875-1947) was an influential Japanese poet, essayist and literary critic. He studied English literature in Britain and the U.S., where he established personal connections with his contemporary prominent English writers including William Butler Yeats, Thomas Hardy and Arthur Symons. He returned to Japan in 1904 and became a professor of English at Keio University. Noguchi was better known as a cross-cultural interpreter who introduced Japanese arts to Westerners. He contributed articles in English to the periodicals such as *The Bookman (London)*, *The Graphic* and *The Westminster Gazette* as well as his domestic magazines and newspapers. Noguchi published two critical articles on Wilde: 'The Reason for Reviving Oscar Wilde' (「オスカー・ワイルドの復活理由」) in *Keio University Review* (issue 135) in October 1908, and 'The Other Side of Oscar Wilde' (「オスカー、ワイルドの一面」) in the literary magazine *Sun* (15:8) in June 1909. The former introduced Wilde's works 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' and 'De Profundis', comparing Wilde's changes before and after imprisonment. Noguchi thought Wilde became more compassionated and more realistic during his later years. The latter was an abridged translation of Andre Gide's *Oscar Wilde*:

¹⁴¹ 「尚美主義といふものの中には、凡そ三點の注意すべき箇條がある。即ち第一は、所謂肉感的といふこと、第二は藝術は...思想道德の凡てから獨立しやうとすること、第三は情緒の強いのを...掲げ出さんとすること」, see Shimamura, p.592.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 588

a *Study*. Noguchi praised Gide's work was 'doubtlessly very valuable for Wilde scholars'.¹⁴³

Tsugi Hiko's monograph *Wilde's Double Personality* (『ワイルドの二重人格』) issued by Ryokodo Press in September 1914 was a noticeable biographical research on Wilde.¹⁴⁴ It included three chapters: 'Wilde's Life', 'Wilde's Thoughts', and 'Wilde's Personality'. Specifically, the first chapter 'Wilde's Life' had three sections: the first, 'Early Days of the Genius' introduced Wilde's parents, family, early years in Dublin, and university life at Oxford; the second, 'Heyday of the Genius' recorded Wilde's lecturer tour in America, his marriage, and his literary career in London; the third, 'Decadence of the Genius' narrated Wilde's trial, and his exile after imprisonment. The second chapter 'Wilde's Thoughts' consisted of six sections: 'aestheticism', which focused on Wilde's critical essays of *Intentions*, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; 'Greek Thoughts', which traced aestheticism back to ancient Greek aesthetics; 'Ruskin', which compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between Wilde and Ruskin in aesthetic ideas and attitude towards morality; 'Superman', which argued Wilde's aestheticism was also inspired by Nietzsche's idea of the superman; 'Love', which discussed *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading of Gaol*, and noticed Wilde's change from self-centred, superman's individualism to religious philanthropy after imprisonment; 'Criticism', which focuses on Wilde's arguments on life and art. The third chapter 'Wilde's Personality' analyses Wilde in the perspective of psychology with reference to Max Nordau's *Degeneration*. It investigates Wilde's characters, family heritage, sensitivity, and imagination.

In July 1915, the Japanese Culture Association published the series of *Modern Western Elites* (『近世泰西英傑傳』). The fifteenth chapter in the second volume introduced Wilde's life and his works, including *Lady Windermere's Fan*,

¹⁴³ 「ワイルド研究者の一好材料たるを疑は無い」, quoted in Sasaki, p.97

¹⁴⁴ Tsugi Hiko did not use 'double-personality' in psychological term but used it to emphasise Wilde's complexity.

The Importance of Being Earnest, *Salome*, and some epigrams. It also discussed the influences of John Ruskin, Walter Pater, J. P. Mahaffy and James Whistler on Wilde.¹⁴⁵

Moriguchi Tari (1882-1984), who graduated from English department at Waseda University, published the article ‘Oscar Wilde’s Aesthetics’ (「オスカア・ワイルドの美学」) in *Waseda Literature* (124) in March 1916. This article consisted of four sections: Preface, ‘On New Hedonism’, ‘On Beauty Irrelevant to Reality’, and ‘On Decorative Arts’. Moriguchi analysed *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ‘The Decay of Lying’, ‘The English Renaissance of Art’, and ‘The House beautiful’.

In December 1919, New Trends Press published Nishinomiya Toutyou’s monograph *Modern Eighteen Great Writers and Their Life* (『近代十八文豪と其生活』). The chapter ‘Wilde’ had five sections: childhood, aesthetic life, artistic theory, works, and imprisonment. It noticed the influence of Wilde’s mother on him and the cultural relationship between Wilde and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

In August 1921, Tokyo New Trend Press published *Twelve Lectures on Modern Arts and Literature* (『近代文芸十二講』) co-authored by Ikuta Tyokou (1882-1936), Morita Souhei (1881-1949), and Nogami Kyusen (1883-1950). They all graduated from Tokyo Imperial University. Wilde was introduced in Chapter Five, ‘The Rise of Neo-Romanticism’ as a symbol of hedonism.

Yano Houjin (1893-1988) was a scholar of English and comparative literature. He graduated from the Department of English at Kyoto University, and then studied in Britain for a year. His *Modern British Literary History* (『近代英文学史』) published by Tokyo First Press in June 1926 was a monograph on the British aesthetic movement and *fin-de-siècle* Decadence. It studied Walter Pater, Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, *fin-de-siècle* poets, and the Irish Revival. In Chapter Five ‘Decadence’, Yano contended *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Salome* with

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 15, ‘Oscar Wilde’, pp.501-39.

Beardsley's illustrations were the embodiment of decadence. In Chapter Six 'Oscar Wilde', Yano had a close reading of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Honma Hisao was the most productive Wilde specialist in Japan. He wrote dozens of articles and monographs on Wilde and British aestheticism, making a special contribution to the reception of Wilde in Japan. For example, His 'On Oscar Wilde' (「オスカア・ワイルド論」) published in *Waseda Literature* in March 1911 was the first systematic Japanese survey of Wilde. This article comprised twelve sections, dealing with Wilde's poetry, the American lecture tour, his theoretical essays of 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist', his fairy tales and stories, *De Profundis*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. His 'Oscar Wilde and Japan' (「オスカア・ワイルドと日本」) published in the magazine *Literature* (2.1) in January 1934 investigated Wilde's attitude towards Japanese art, and the influence of Japanese art on the British aesthetic movement. The monograph *A Study of Aestheticism in Modern Britain* (『英国近世唯美主義の研究』) published by Tokyo-do Press in May 1934 was the most comprehensive research on the British aesthetic movement written by Japanese scholars during the first half of the twentieth century, and earned Honma a lectureship at Waseda University. Honma argued in the preface that the British aesthetic movement was not only a literary and artistic movement but a movement of promoting a view of life, or a movement for social practical life, which was cooperated by writers, painters, sculptors and artists.¹⁴⁶ This monograph had two sections. The first section examined the aesthetic movement as a social phenomenon. Honma traced the characteristics of aestheticism as 'mediaeval taste', 'beautification of life', and 'exoticism'. He argued that the magazine *Punch* and the opera *Patience* promoted the aesthetic movement in Britain. In particular, he observed the significance of 1862 London Exhibition for the aesthetic movement, and the influence of

¹⁴⁶ 「単なる文学上，芸術上の運動ではなく，広く人生観上の或いは実際生活上の運動であり，文学者，画家，彫刻家，芸術家全体の協力運動」 see Honma, p.27

Japanese *ukiyo-e* painting on D. G. Rossetti and James Whistler. The second section focused on Wilde. Honma contended that the development of Wilde's aesthetic theories could be separated into two stages: the first was represented by his American lectures, and the second was embodied in *The Soul of Man under Socialism* and the essays collected in *Intentions*. There was a chapter on 'Wilde and Japan'. Honma examined 'Japan' in Wilde's essays 'The English Renaissance', 'The Decorative Arts', 'The House Beautiful', and 'The Decay of Lying'. He also collected the articles about Japanese arts and textiles in *Women's World* when Wilde was the editor. Honma pointed out that Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations of *Salome* was influenced by Japanese painting. In this monograph, Honma seemed to be aware of Wilde's homosexuality as he described Wilde's trial and imprisonment in detail. Although Honma did not offer any personal moral judgement on Wilde's sexuality, traditionally, East Asia had tolerance of homosexuality. As early as in 1880, the Japanese Meiji government had issued the act that homosexuality would not be seen as an offence.

Japanese intellectuals also translated Wilde biographies written in the West, such as the works of Robert H. Sherard, André Gide, Anna Comtesse de Brémont, Leonard Cresswell Ingleby, and Alfred Douglas. In December 1908, the periodical *Taste* (3:12) published the critic Yasunari Sadao's abridged translation of Robert H. Sherard's *Oscar Wilde: the Story of an Unhappy Friendship* (1902). André Gide's 'Homage to Oscar Wilde' was first translated by Noguchi Yone from German in June 1909, and published in the literary magazine *The Sun* (15:8). The title was revised as 'One Side of Oscar Wilde' (「オスカー、ワイルドの一面」).¹⁴⁷ In the introduction to Gide's article, Noguchi stated that Gide recorded Wilde's life

¹⁴⁷The French author André Gide's 'Homage to Oscar Wilde' was first published in June 1902, and has been widely disseminated well beyond Francophone countries. The article was structured around Gide's personal memories. It was translated into German in 1903, and appeared in English in 1905. Victoria Reid notes, 'Gide's writings played a crucial role in the European diffusion and understanding of Wilde's works; his 1902 essay had a substantial impact on Wilde's critical reputation'. See *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, p. 96.

unknown to the public, and offered first-hand materials valuable to Wilde scholars.¹⁴⁸ Gide's monograph *Oscar Wilde* (1905) was translated from English into Japanese by Wake Ritijirou in November 1913. It was initially issued as a separate volume by Tokyo Shunyo-do Press, and later collected in *The Series of Modern Arts and Literature* (vol. 31). Anna Comtesse de Brémont, a friend of Wilde's mother, published her reminiscence *Oscar Wilde and His Mother: Memoir* in 1911. It was promptly introduced into Japan. In August 1912, the drama critic Ozawa Yoshikuni contributed an article introducing this book to the periodical *Mi-Ta Literature* (3:8). Leonard Cresswell Ingleby's *Oscar Wilde* (1907) and *Oscar Wilde: Some Reminiscences* (1912) were introduced in the articles of several Japanese intellectuals, for example, Takeuchi Itsu's 'Wilde in Prison' in the magazine *Masks* (no. 9) in 1913, Kimura Shougo's 'Reminiscence about Wilde' in *Mi-Ta Literature* (5:1), and Ishii Kaoriyume's 'Wilde's Life in Prison' in the literary publication *Canary* (no.6) in 1914. Alfred Douglas's *Oscar Wilde and Myself* (1914) was noticed by Yaguchi Tatsu, the editor of *The Complete Works of Wilde* (1920). Yaguchi believed that Douglas's book possessed high documentary values in comprehending Wilde's life and works, even though Douglas might be questioned in accuracy and objectiveness. Yaguchi translated the introduction and the first four chapters into Japanese -- 'Oxford', 'Lost Illusions', 'Wilde in Society', and 'The Lord of Language', and published them in the magazine *Masks* (vol. 26-28) in 1915.

Moreover, The Great Japanese Civilisation Association translated Max Nordau's influential *Degeneration* and revised the title as 'Modern Decadence' (『現代の墮落』) in 1914. *Degeneration* could be considered as one of the earliest canonisation of Wilde, which offered a platform to promote aestheticism and decadence identified with Wilde's influence. Wilde gained a reputation as one of the main exponents of the international artistic currents that Nordau was trying to

¹⁴⁸ *The Sun* (15:8), p.118

repress (Evangelista 4). Before this translation, some Japanese intellectuals had already known this book. For example, Natsume Soseki mentioned Nordau's criticism of urbanisation in his collection of essays *The Tower of London* in 1905. However, generally speaking, the Japanese did not support Nordau's negation of Wilde.

In summary, Wilde emerged as one of the foremost writers and principal icons among the numerous Western authors introduced into Japan during the early twentieth century, and his works exerted a noticeable influence over the early-twentieth-century Japanese literature and culture in transition. In the 1910s and 1920s, led by Mori Ogai and the professor at the University of Kyoto Ueda Bin (1874–1916), a group of writers, dramatists, and poets, such as Tanizaki Junichiro, Sato Haruo, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Mishima Yokio, launched the aesthetic movement in Japan. Ueda Bin's novel *Vortex* (『漩渦』) in 1910 was seen as the theoretical guideline of Japanese aestheticism. The ideas in *Vortex* were almost completely under the spell of Walter Pater's 'the conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*' and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The Japanese aesthetes advocated aestheticism in journals such as *Waseda Literature*, *Mi-Ta Literature*, *Subaru* (The Pleiades), *Kabuki*, *New Trend of Thoughts*, and *Imperial Literature*. They criticised the industrialisation of Japan, and its negative social consequences. They had a tendency to romanticise Japan's past. They debated over the relationship between Japanese culture and Western culture, and tried to redefine Japanese cultural identity through 'beauty'. The Japanese aesthetic campaign borrowed ideas from British aestheticism, including Wilde's theories. In this sense, the reception of Wilde in Japan also stimulated Japanese intellectuals to reconsider Westernisation.

2. Translating and Performing Wilde's Plays in Japan

This chapter investigates introduction, translation, criticism and theatrical production of Wilde's plays in Japan from the late nineteenth century to the eve of Second World War with emphasis on the one-act tragedy *Salome*, and with reference to the four society comedies, to examine the role of Wilde as playwright in modern Japanese theatre.

Since the Meiji Reformation in 1868, Japan embarked on a social transformation of modernisation. In culture, Western arts, literature and entertainments, including English dramas, were introduced to Japan. Japanese dramatists and dramatic theorists, such as Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1935), Shimamura Hougetsu (1871-1918) and Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), launched the movement of 'New Theatre' (*Shin-Pa* and *Shin-Geki*). This movement reached the height of its commercial success in the first decade of the twentieth century. Through combining acting styles of *kabuki* (the traditional Japanese drama) and the realistic scenery of Western theatre, Japanese 'New Theatre' attempted to nationalise imported Western plays, and adapt traditional Japanese stories, promoting the ideas of social and political reform (S. Liu 37). Wilde's plays were introduced, translated and performed in the socio-cultural context of this popular Japanese 'New Theatre' movement. The timeline below offers an overview of the textual transmission of Wilde's plays to Japan. In the column of 'Publisher', the names of journals, magazines and newspapers are italicized.

Timeline of Japanese Translations of Wilde's plays (1907-1936)

Date	Work	Translator	Publisher
Jan. 1909	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>	Iwano Houmei	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Feb. 1909	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	Iwano Houmei	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Mar. 1909	<i>Salome</i>	Kobayashi Aiyuu	<i>New Fiction</i>
Sep.- Oct. 1909	<i>Salome</i> (translated from German)	Mori Ogai	<i>Kabuki</i>
Apr. 1910	<i>A Florentine Tragedy</i>	Kaneko Kenji	<i>The Flower of Heart</i>
Nov.-Dec. 1911	<i>Vera, or the Nihilist</i> ¹⁴⁹	Uchida Roan	<i>Asahi News</i> (newspaper)
Feb. 1912	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> ¹⁵⁰ (Handbag)	Mori Gaiho	<i>Current Topics Newspaper</i> (newspaper)
Dec. 1912	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Yaguchi Tatsu	<i>Holy Cup</i>
May- Jun. 1913	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Shishikura	<i>Life and Presentation</i>
Jun. 1913	<i>Salome: a Tragedy in One Act</i>	Wakatsuki Siran	Gendai Press
Nov. 1913	<i>Salome</i>	Nakamura Kitzou	South-North Press
Dec. 1913	<i>Salome</i> (translated from Richard Strauss's opera)	Hata Toyokiti	<i>Creation</i>
Dec. 1913	<i>Salome</i>	Araki Shuuiti	Great Japanese Book Press
Mar. 1914	<i>Salome</i>	Murakami Sizujin	Akagi Series Books
Mar. 1914	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>	Unuma Tadashi	Shoubun-do Press
May 1914	<i>Salome</i> (German and Japanese parallel texts)	Onozawa Von H	Nanzando Publishing House
Oct. 1914	<i>Salome</i>	Ikuta Tyoukou	Bamboo Publishing House
May 1916	<i>A Florentine Tragedy</i>	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Jul. 1918	<i>The Duchess of Padua</i>	Honma Hisao	<i>Waseda Literature</i>
Mar. 1919	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>	Tanizaki Junichiro	Ten-Yuu-Sya Press
c. 1920	<i>Salome</i> (collected in <i>Complete Works of Wilde</i>)	Nakamura Kitzou	Ten-Yuu-Sya Press
Mar. 1923	<i>Salome</i> (translated from French)	Naitou Arou & Miyahara	Hakusui Press

¹⁴⁹ Uchida Roan translated *Vera, or the Nihilist* as 『革命婦人』, which literally means 'a woman of revolution'.

¹⁵⁰ Mori Gaiho changed the title of the comedy into 'Handbag'.

		Koichiro	
Oct. 1924	<i>Salome</i> (French and Japanese parallel texts)	Naitou Arou & Miyahara Koichiro	Hakusui Press
Jan. 1926	<i>Salome</i>	Takayama Y.	Enomoto Publisher
c. 1928	<i>Salome</i>	Hinatsu Kounosuke	First-Book Press
Nov. 1929	<i>Salome</i>	Kusuyama Masao	New Trends Press
Aug. 1931	<i>Salome</i>	Hagawa Kenkiti	Syun-You-Dou Press
Oct. 1935	<i>Salome</i> (French and Japanese parallel texts)	Abe Kentarou	Hiyou Press
Feb. 1936	<i>Salome</i>	Sasaki Naojirou	Iwanami Press

i Translation and Production of *Salome* in Japan

In European literary and cultural tradition, the prototype of Salome originated in the Gospels. The legend of this dancing Jewish princess had been a popular theme over the centuries in the religious illustrations, sculptures and murals of the martyrdom of John the Baptist in churches, which often encompassed Christian asceticism and misogyny. However, the late nineteenth century saw new interpretations of Salome in visual arts and literature. She was appropriated by European Decadence as one of the most representative *femmes fatales*, along with Mérimée's Carmen, Gautier's Cleopatra, and Flaubert's Salammbô. The image of Salome as a *femme fatale* was especially found in the paintings of Gustave Moreau, who had an enormous influence on later representations.

Wilde's *Salome* may be indebted to such literary sources as Heinrich Heine's *Atta Troll*, J. C. Heywood's 'Salome, the Daughter of Herodias', Flaubert's *Herodias*, Mallarmé's 'Hérodiade', Gustave Moreau's paintings and Huysmans's description of them in *A Rebours*. However, in these cases, Salome usually played a rather minor role as an innocent girl who was too subservient to the wishes of her mother. It is Herodias who acted the heroine of the legend, taking responsibility for the prophet's death. In contrast, Wilde created an

independent Salome, who would tell Herod, 'I do not heed my mother. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Jokanaan in a silver charger' (CW 600). Wilde originally focused on the relationship between Salome and John the Baptist, meanwhile, deprived Herodias of eroticism and added philistinism to her. As Norbert Kohl contends, 'Wilde combined Maeterlinck's symbolism with the rich imagery of the Song of Solomon, the exoticism of Flaubert, and the sensuality of Moreau as interpreted by Huysmans, and out of all these elements he created a *fin-de-siècle femme fatale*' (qtd. in Donohue 123). First, Salome symbolises the refusal of the Christian salvation of the soul. Her kissing the head of John the Baptist on a silver plate acts like a heathen worship or a vampire's ceremony. Secondly, *Salome* could be read as the culmination of Wilde's Orientalism. The colonial expedition of the nineteenth century established new direct connections between Westerners and the land of the Middle East and its tradition. The setting of Wilde's *Salome* is the Hebrew court of the Middle East; Herod's empire represents addiction to sensual desires and material extravagance; the dance of seven veils was linked with the ancient myth of Ishtar; the story offers a potent combination of *fin-de-siècle* obsessions with the exotic Orient: murder, incest, wealth, sexual passion and mysticism.

The production of *Salome* in England was banned by Lord Chamberlain, ostensibly because of an old English law that forbade the depiction of biblical characters onstage, but probably also because of the play's immoral and erotic implication.¹⁵¹ Although some critics, for example, Max Beerbohm, considered *Salome* as 'a marvellous play' (CH 134), this play received 'almost universal hostility from the press' in England (Tydeman and Price 40). *The Times* (23 Feb.1893) described the play as 'an arrangement in blood and ferocity, morbid, bizarre, repulsive, and very offensive in its adaptation of scriptural phraseology to

¹⁵¹ The Lord Chamberlain's examiner of plays, E. F. S. Piggott illustrated the alleged national bias in a letter (27 June 1893) to his colleague Spencer Ponsonby, characterising *Salome* as 'half Biblical, half pornographic', quoted in J. R. Stephens, p. 112.

situations the reverse of sacred' (CH 133). *Daily Telegraph* (25 Feb. 1893) also commented that Wilde had distorted the facts of one of the most straightforward of biblical tales and his version of it left an unpleasant taste in mouth (CH 134). Even in the early twentieth century, *Salome* was still opposed in England. *The Morning Post* (6 June 1918) harshly criticised that 'the play is not merely immoral; it is morbid and leads to the black and hopeless portals of criminal insanity [...] these perversions of sexual passion have no home in the healthy mind of England' (qtd. in Hoare 182). This play did not appear on the British stage until 1905, and its premiere was largely boycotted by the press.¹⁵² Although in the following years, there were some productions of *Salome* in London and Cambridge, this play was lawfully denied public presentation in Britain until 1931.

In contrast with the controversies encountered in Britain, *Salome* has been highly admired in Japan since it was first introduced to Japanese readers in 1907. The Japanese translation of *Salome* persisted throughout the early twentieth century, and the translation history of *Salome* in Japan demonstrates Wilde's internationalism as the Japanese intellectuals translated this play from a multiplicity of source texts: its English, German and French versions. Wilde's *Salome* was originally written in French; the English edition was translated from the French of Wilde by Douglas; Less than two years after Wilde's death, this play was translated into German. Max Reinhardt produced the first German production in Berlin in 1902, and Richard Strauss produced his operatic version of *Salome* in Dresden in 1905.

There were eleven translations from English. The composer and one of the founders of Japanese modern opera, Kobayashi Aiyuu (1881-1945) contributed the first translation of *Salome* in Japan with the title *The Salome Tragedy* to the magazine *New Fiction* in March 1909. In June 1913, the Japanese playwright

¹⁵² The New Stage Club produced the first performance of *Salome* in London on 10 and 13 May 1905 at Bijou Theatre in Archer Street, Westbourne Grove. See Tydeman and Price, p.40.

Wakatsuki Siran's translation, *Salome: a Tragedy in One Act* was collected in the fourth volume of *The Series of Modern Scripts* (『近代脚本叢書』) issued by Tokyo Gendai Press. Graduated from Tokyo Imperial University, Wakatsuki founded the aesthetic journal *Man and Arts*, and established the Institute for New Theatre Studies. Wakatsuki's translation was accompanied by Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations, 'Dancer's Reward' and 'Salome's Climax'. In 1921, this translation was reissued by Tokyo Kyokou Press as a separate volume. In November 1913, the novelist and playwright Nakamura Kizō (1877-1941) translated *Salome* for the production of this play at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. Nakamura graduated from English Department at Waseda University. He promoted the New Theatre Movement after studying in Europe and America, and devoted himself to writing scripts for Japanese new dramas. Nakamura's translation was later collected in *The Complete Works of Wilde* (Volume Two) issued by Tokyo Ten-Yuu-Sya Press and published as a separate volume by Tokyo South-North Press. In December 1913 Great Japanese Book Press published Araki Shūiti's translation, *Salome*. In March 1914 Murakami Sijūjin's translation *Salome* was collected in the eighth volume of *Akagi Series* edited and issued by Akagi Syōzō (1890-1915) in Tokyo. In October 1914 Ikuta Tōkoku's translation of *Salome* was issued by Bamboo Publishing House. Ikuta graduated from Philosophy Department at Tokyo Imperial University, and pursued a successful career as a critic, dramatist and novelist. The poet and scholar of English literature Hinatsu Kōnosuke (1890-1971) translated *Salome* in 1921. His translation was collected in the forty-first volume *British Dramas* of the series *The Complete Collection of Modern Dramas* published by First-Book Press seven years later. In January 1926, Enomoto Publisher issued Takayama Yuuka's version of *Salome*. In November 1929, the New Trends Press published the thirty-fifth volume of *The Complete Collection of World Literature* on modern European plays. It collected *Salome* translated by Kusuyama Masao (1884-1950), a Japanese playwright, dramatic

critic, and writer of children's literature. The ninth volume of *The Series of Modern British and American Literature* issued by Tokyo Syun-You-Dou Press in August 1931 collected Wilde's *Salome*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and 'The Ballard of Reading Gaol' translated by Hagawa Kenkiti. The series *Iwanami Collection of Literature* published by Iwanami Press collected Sasaki Naojirou's translation in February 1936.

There were three translations from German. In August 1907, the remarkable novelist Mori Ogai (1862-1922) published the article 'Abridged Plot of the Script of *Salome*' (「脚本『サロメ』の略筋」) in the theatrical magazine *Kabuki* (issue 88). He asserted that '*Salome* was unique in Wilde's corpus.'¹⁵³ Mori Ogai enrolled in the medical department at Tokyo Imperial University, and was subsequently sent by the government to learn military hygiene in Germany, where he developed a strong interest in European philosophy and literature, and began to examine the cultural gaps between Japan and the West. While not a playwright himself, he was especially enthusiastic about the creation and improvement of modern Japanese drama. Mori Ogai usually translated English literature into Japanese through German translations, and his reception of English literature was heavily influenced by German critics.¹⁵⁴ Wilde's imprisonment did not adversely affect the theatrical productions of his plays in Germany, and Mori Ogai witnessed the success of Max Reinhardt's production of *Salome* in Berlin in 1903, and of Richard Strauss's opera of *Salome* in 1905. Therefore, when introducing the reception of this play in the West, he said 'it seems that Wilde is even more popular in Germany and Italy than in his home country Britain'.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, in September and October 1909, he translated the full text of *Salome* from von Hedwig's 1906 German translation. The Japanese translation was also

¹⁵³ 「全て外の作と違って居る」, see Mori Ogai, p.259

¹⁵⁴ Mori Ogai's German was much better than his English.

¹⁵⁵ 「現今の處では、ワイルドの流行は、本國よりは獨逸の方が盛な様に見える」, see Mori Ogai, p.260

published in *Kabuki* (issue 110 and 111). In the postscript to the translation, he introduced the performance of *Salome* in Germany, especially the success of the opera composed by Richard Strauss. In December 1913, the periodical *Creation* published Hata Toyokiti's translation of Richard Strauss's opera *Salome*. After graduating from Law Department at Tokyo Imperial University, Hata worked in the Mitsubishi Company, but kept his interest in German literature. He is now more remembered as a director, translator and essayist than as a successful businessman. In May 1914, Onozawa Von H translated *Salome* from Max Reinhardt's German script for the production in Berlin in 1903. In Onozawa's translation, *Salome: German and Japanese Texts*, the Japanese translation was parallel with the German version. This volume was published by Tokyo Nanzando Publishing House.

There were two translations from French. The scholar of French literature Naitou Arou (1883-1977) and the writer Miyahara Koichiro (1882-1945) co-translated *Salome* from French. Naitou and Miyahara's translation was first published by Tokyo Hakusui Press in March 1923. When it was reprinted by Hakusui Press a year later, the French text was added. The volume was revised as *Salome: French and Japanese Parallel Texts*. The revised edition was republished in June 1932. In October 1935 Tokyo Hiyou Press issued Abe Kentarou's translation from French accompanied by Beardsley's twelve illustrations under the title *Salome: French and Japanese Parallel Texts*. Overall, before 1937, there were no less than sixteen different translations of *Salome* in Japan, which made this tragedy the most translated work in Wilde's corpus.

The performance of *Salome* in Japan was associated with Japanese New Theatre Movement. The reform of drama started in Japan in the 1880s as a modern reaction to Japanese traditional theatre *kabuki*. On 9 November 1912, Allan Wilkie and his Company staged *Salome* and *A Florentine Tragedy* in the English language at the Gaiety Theatre in the coastal city Yokohama. The Gaiety

Theatre was designed by a French architect and built in 1885 for commercial purposes. This was the premiere of *Salome* in Japan. The troupe then moved to Tokyo to hold the performances of *Salome* at the famous and grander Imperial Theatre from 11 to 15 November that year. The eminent Japanese writers and dramatists such as Shimamura Hougetsu, Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Osanai Kaoru went to the theatre to watch the performances of this one-act tragedy. Akutagawa Ryunosuke described the scenery of the premiere at the Gaiety Theatre, and recorded his feelings in the article 'Salome and Others' published in the monthly magazine *Women* (『女性』) in August 1925. He said that the British actress of Salome, although she was not beautiful enough in his eyes, did give him a great impression. He also described the stage facilities, and noticed that the majority of the audiences were Westerners.¹⁵⁶

Around a year later, Shimamura Hougetsu and his Art Troupe produced the first Japanese performance of *Salome* at the Tokyo Imperial Theatre in December 1913. Matsui Sumako (1886-1919) played the role of Salome. The Italian choreographer Giovanni Vittorio Rossi, who had come to Japan in 1912, designed 'the dance of seven veils'. The script was based on Nakamura Kitzou's translation.¹⁵⁷ In Shimamura's conception, 'this play should be glamorous from beginning to end through employing impressive colours and lines, enchanting dresses, lights and sounds, that is, every available sensual means'.¹⁵⁸ He expected to create such a stimulating effect on the stage that 'would stun Wilde or anyone else of the British aesthetic circle'.¹⁵⁹ Shimamura's production of *Salome* was extremely successful. From 1914 to 1919, there were 127 performances of his production across Japan, and numerous reviews in newspapers and magazines praising it. For example, Honma Hisao reviewed Shimamura's production of

¹⁵⁶ <http://homepage2.nifty.com/onibi/gaiety.html> [cited 30 March 2011]

¹⁵⁷ P.206

¹⁵⁸ Shimamura, *The Complete Works of Shimamura* (vol.2), Tokyo: Ten-Yo Press, 1920, p. 540

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 542

Salome in the article ‘*Sendaihagi and Salome*’ in *Theatre Pictorial* (8:1) on 1 January 1914.¹⁶⁰ He praised the excellent performance of Matsui Sumako, the actress of *Salome*.¹⁶¹ Other representative critical articles on this production included the unsigned essay ‘Old and New Hougetsu and Sumako’ in *Creation* (4:12) in December 1913, the literary and dramatic critic Komiya Toyotaka’s ‘Imperial Theatre’s *Salome*’ in *Yomiuri News* on 14 December 1913, the novelist and playwright Kinei’s ‘*Salome* at the Imperial Theatre’ in *Kabuki* (no. 163) in March 1914.¹⁶² Yoko Hirata attributes the success of Shimamura’s production of *Salome* to three causes. First, the audience were impressed by the glamorous and exotic scenery on stage, and the grotesque severed head on a silver plate; second, the story is simple, the lines are lucid and repetitive; third, the Japanese audience were familiar with the theme of the *femme fatale*, because it resonated with ‘dangerous women’ (*Dokufu-Mono*) usually seen in Japanese traditional kabuki theatre (253). Moreover, the performances of *Salome* created a by-product of fashion. The hairstyle and hair accessories of *Salome* played by Matsui Sumako were imitated by urban Japanese girls, and called ‘*Salome style*’.

After Shimamura and his Art Troupe’s production, there were at least other eight productions of *Salome* in Japan during the early twentieth century. The timeline below covers the stage performances of *Salome* in Japan, including the dates of premieres, performing troupes, details of the venues, and information regarding directors and actors.

Timeline of Japanese Performances of *Salome* (1912-1919)

Date	Troupe	Venue	Director and actors
Nov.	Allan Wilkie and	Gaiety (Yokohama),	Allan Wilkie (director),

¹⁶⁰ ‘*Sendaihagi and Salome*’ in Japanese is 『先代萩とサロメ』

¹⁶¹ 「須磨子氏は...現存の日本の女優中の随一に置かるべき人である」, see Honma, ‘*Sendaihagi and Salome*’, *Theatre Pictorial* (8:1), p.53

¹⁶² These articles in Japanese are 「古く新しい抱月須磨子」、「帝劇の『サロメ』」、「帝国劇場の『サロメ』」 respectively.

1912	his Company	Imperial Theatre in Tokyo	F. Hunter-Watts (Salome)
Dec. 1913	Art Troupe	Imperial Theatre in Tokyo	Shimamura Hougetsu (director), Matsui Sumako(Salome)
May 1914	The Kawakami Theatre	Tokyo Hongouza Theatre	Matsui Matsuba (director), Kawakami Sadayakko (Salome)
Jan. 1915	New Period Drama Association	unknown	Nishimoto Asaka (director), Kimura Komako (Salome)
Mar. 1915	Modern Theatre Association	Akasaka Theatre (Tokyo)	Kamiyama Soujin(director), Shiki Mago (Salome), Mori Ogai's script
Jul. 1915	Tenkatsu Troupe	Tokyo Yuraku Theatre	Osanai Kaoru (director), Tenkatsu (Salome), Mori Ogai's script
c. 1918	Hara Nobugo and Her Troup	Kannon Theatre (Tokyo)	Giovanni Vittorio Rossi (director), Hara Nobugo (Salome)
Mar. 1918	Bandsman Troupe	Pink Theatre (Tokyo)	Ebina (director), Kawai Sumiko (Salome)
c. 1919	unknown	Tokyo Imperial Theatre	Kawamura Kikue (Salome)
c. 1919	Shochiku Theatrical Company	unknown	Charles Ricketts (director) ¹⁶³

One of the most reputable Japanese playwrights and dramatic critics, Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) contributed a review of the productions of *Salome* to the magazine *Theatre Pictorial* in June 1915, comparing the four different representative productions of *Salome* directed by Allan Wilkie, Shimamura

¹⁶³ The British artist Charles Ricketts (1866-1931) presided over a Tokyo production of *Salome* by the Shochiku Theatrical Company. Although he 'added touches of oriental detail, his final design for *Salome* remained very much in the pattern established in a conversation with Wilde over twenty-five before', see Tydeman and Price, p.57.

Hougetsu, Richard Strauss, and Kamiyama Soujin. Osanai graduated from English Department from Tokyo Imperial University. He founded the artistic and literary magazine *New Trend of Thoughts (Shin-Shi-Cho)* in 1907, and focused on introducing Western dramas in his early days. Before reviewing *Salome*, he had already contributed an insightful essay on Wilde, 'Oscar Wilde's Masterpieces' to *New Voice of Drama* in January 1912. In the review of the theatrical performances of *Salome* in 1915, Osanai first discussed Allan Wilkie's production, criticising the quality of scenery, especially the insufficiency in stage facilities, and the unskilled usage of light. The actress of *Salome*, Frediswyde Hunter-Watts presented the mysteries of the heroine, but did not show the sensual aspect. Shimamura's production, in Osani's opinion, was the best presentation of *Salome* in Japan. Its use of the stage facilities, including sound and light, reached the peak in Japanese theatre of the 1910s. Matsui Sumako for the first time transformed *Salome* into a Japanese beauty, whose performance was 'perfect'. Osanai continued by discussing Richard Strauss's successful opera *Salome* in Germany. Finally, he reviewed Japanese Modern Theatre Association's production in March 1915 directed by Kamiyama Soujin. He believed Kamiyama successfully staged *Salome* for the Japanese modern theatre, and Mori Ogai's script reflected the beauty of the Japanese language.¹⁶⁴

It can be said that *Salome* has been crucial in consolidating and broadcasting Wilde's literary reputation in modern Japan. This experimental tragedy matched the emotional and romantic desires of the era, and its influence propelled the rise of a sentimental trend in modern Japanese writings that carried themes of love, passion, and death. *Salome* had a great impact on Japanese young avant-garde writers, and helped to anticipate the new sensationalist school in the 1930s, which assimilated influences of the Pre-Raphaelites, the Decadents and the

¹⁶⁴ More details see Osanai Kaoru, 'Hongo-Theatre of *Salome*', *Theatre Pictorial* (2:6), 本郷座の『サロメ』, quoted in *The Complete Collection of Osanai Kaoru* (1975), pp. 272-95.

Symbolists. For example, it inspired the prominent Japanese aesthete Tanizaki Junichiro (1886-1965). Tanizaki accepted Pater's and Wilde's aesthetic theories. In his works, there was no struggle against conscience or established morality but the pursuit of sensual pleasure and 'pure beauty' only. The echoes of Wilde can be found in his early stories and plays. His 'Tattoo' (1910) depicted the process of an innocent girl transforming into a *femme fatale*. His 'Kirin' (1910) was adapted from an ancient Chinese story about a meeting between Confucius and Queen Nanzi, but the influence of *Salome* could be obviously traced. The Chinese king was torn between his aspiration to be a ruler with virtue and to be a slave to his beautiful and evil queen. Confucius tried to persuade the king to be moral, but the Queen used beauty and sensual pleasures to lure Confucius, although Confucius resisted the temptations, the king finally yielded to the sensual beauty and drove Confucius away. In 1916, Tanizaki adapted *Salome* into the four-act tragedy *The Story of Houjyou Temple* (『法成寺物語』). The adaptation reset the background to mediaeval Japan. The characters corresponding to those of *Salome* are listed below:

The regent Fujiwara -- Herod

Fujiwara's Lover, the princess Yonnookata -- Salome

Jyouun, a monk, admirer of the princess Yonnookata -- young Syrian

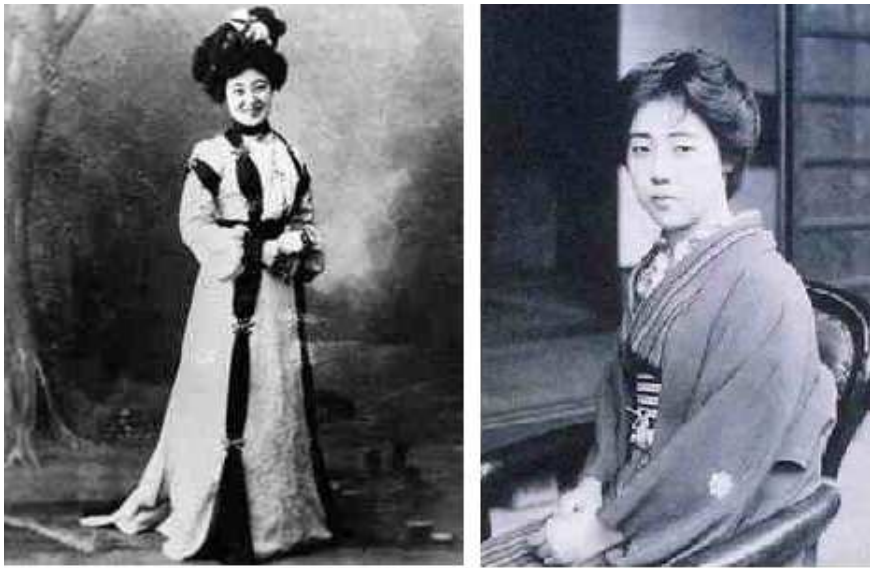
Ryoen, a handsome and devoted monk – St. John

The regent Fujiwara commissioned the famous sculptor Jyouun to build a Buddhist statue modelling the beautiful princess Yonnookata. By accident, the princess Yonnookata saw a statue which was modelled after the handsome monk Ryoen. She was attracted by the statue, and fell in love with Ryoen immediately. Nonetheless, her devotion was rejected by Ryoen. In Tanizaki's adaptation, Ryoen (St. John) loved Yonnookata (Salome), too. Ryoen refused Yonnookata not because of religious asceticism but because Yonnookata fell in love with him through the statue, that is, through art and aesthetics, so it was better not to meet

in reality but let love stay in art only, which made love immortal. The literary influence of *Salome* could also be traced in the drama ‘The Story of *Ten-Syu*’ (『天守物語』) written by Izumi Kyouka (1873-1939) in 1917, in which the beautiful princess embraced the severed head of the handsome young man she deeply loved. The image of Salome stimulated Japanese avant-garde poets as well. For instance, Takamura Kotaro (1883-1956) wrote ‘the heart of Salome embracing St. John’s head/the demand of the deep heart of myself at any cost’ in the poem ‘Waking in a Winter Morning’.¹⁶⁵

In terms of the social impact, *Salome* chimed with the Japanese ‘New Woman’ movement. Contrasting with Japanese ‘Old Woman’ who was an obedient, passive, innocent, self-sacrificed housewife, ‘New Woman’ valued self-fulfillment and independence, believed in legal and sexual equality, was well-educated and had a job. The actresses of *Salome*, Matsui Sumako and Kawakami Sadayakko, were ‘New Women’ in their own right. Matsui married at the arrangement of relatives but divorced within a year. She chose to be an actress partly in order to free herself from her patriarchal family. She married Shimamura without family’s approbation. Her performance of Nora in *A Doll’s House* promoted the women’s liberation in Japan. Kawakami was educated in traditional Japanese Geisha art, but she was one of the few Japanese women who travelled to the West. She toured America and Europe with the troupe and became the first Japanese actress famous in the West. Therefore, it can be said that the performance of *Salome* in Japan was a cultural product in commercial theatres decorated with modern ideas borrowed from the enlightenment. *Salome* was designed by Wilde as an Oriental girl, but she was comprehended in Japan as a modern Western woman equipped with the Occidental spirits: individualism, independent personality, and the courage to fight for the freedom of marriage.

¹⁶⁵「ヨハネの首を抱きたるサロオメの心を / 我はわがこころの中に求めむとす」in 『冬の朝のめざめ』, see Yamada, p. 502



(Fig. 10 Japanese Actresses of *Salome*-- Kawakami Sadayakko-left; Matsui Sumako-right)

Wilde exerted a great influence on modern Japanese theatre of the early twentieth century in transition. The translation and performance of Wilde's *Salome* was part of the modernisation of Japanese culture.

ii The Society Comedies and Other Plays

In January and February 1909, Iwano Houmei (1873-1920) published summaries of Wilde's society comedies *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* in the magazine *Waseda Literature* (issue 38/39). His introduction of Wilde's plays was noticeable in the early reception of Wilde in Japan. As Yamada Tsuyoshi points out, 'Iwano's introduction of Wilde as a playwright of society comedies was valuable to the unbalanced Japanese reception of Wilde, when *Salome* was too overwhelmingly talked about' (520). Iwano classified Wilde's plays into 'Romantic Drama', such as *Salome*, *The Duchess of Padua*, *Vera or the Nihilist*, *A Florentine Tragedy*, and 'Society Comedies', such

as *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *An Ideal Husband*. He contended that Wilde gained the most successful achievements in the genre of society comedies, arguing 'Wilde's comedies can be called dialogue dramas; the poet renewed the old comical materials through the new dramatic form'.¹⁶⁶ Iwano mainly introduced *Lady Windermere's Fan* in the thirty-eighth issue of *Waseda Literature* (Jan. 1909), claiming the four-act comedy 'revealed the real conditions of London society without reserve' and 'it was Wilde's first play to cause a great sensation'.¹⁶⁷ He then discussed *The Importance of Being Earnest* in the following issue of the same magazine, focusing on Wilde's paradoxes and epigrams in the comedy.

Regarding the translations of Wilde's society comedies in the 1910s, *Current Topics Newspaper* serialised Mori Gaiho's version of *The Importance of Being Earnest* from 5 February to 13 March 1912. The title was revised as 'Handbag'. *An Ideal Husband* had two translations, Yaguchi Tatsu's version in the literary journal *Holy Cup* in December 1912, and Shishikura's in the magazine *Life and Presentation* in May and June 1913. In March 1914, Shoubun-do Press published *Lady Windermere's Fan* translated by Unuma Tadashi. Five years later, Ten-Yuu-Sya Press issued Tanizaki Junichiro's translation of the same comedy. Wilde's less-known plays were also translated. There were two Japanese versions of *A Florentine Tragedy*, one was Kaneko Kenji's translation for the aesthetic magazine *The Flower of Heart* (14:4) in 1910, and the other was Honma Hisao's for *Waseda Literature* in May 1916. Uchida Roan translated *Vera or the Nihilist* and revised the title as 'a woman of revolution'. It was serialised in *Asahi News* from 6 November to 29 December 1911. The journal *Waseda Literature* published Honma Hisao's translations of *The Duchess of Padua* in July 1918. *The Complete*

¹⁶⁶ 「ワイルドの賞讃者等は之を対話劇と称して、この詩人がこの新形式によつて陳腐な喜劇的材料を再び新しくしたと云つて居る」 see Yamada, p.62

¹⁶⁷ 「ロンドン交際社会の実情を遠慮なく暴露してある」「初めて世を騒がした」 see Yamada, p.63

Works of Wilde (1920) edited by Yaguchi Tatsu collected all of Wilde's plays except *La Sainte Courtisane*.¹⁶⁸ However, there were no theatrical productions of these plays in Japan during the early twentieth century except Allan Wilkie's *A Florentine Tragedy* at the Gaiety Theatre on 9 November 1912.

In conclusion of the reception of Wilde in Japan, the great number of translations from Western literature since the Meiji Reformation indicated Japan's 'turn to the West for enlightenment' in culture accompanying Japan's success at industrialisation and capitalism.¹⁶⁹ Translation played an important role in establishing modern Japanese literature and literary theories. In the early twentieth century, Japanese intellectuals embraced Western models and concepts with the hope of updating the traditional Japanese cultural identity to be compatible with modernisation. They translated, imitated, and sought inspiration from the imported Western literary models, especially the latest literary trends in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the Western literature was usually interpreted and adapted to suit the convenience of those who supported a political, cultural or ideological position. Therefore, the reception of Western literature shows the interaction between Japanese traditions and the foreign impacts during the process of modernising Japanese nation. To the creators and critics of Japanese modern literature, Wilde's works had much to offer; he became the object of critical reviews, articles and books by renowned Japanese writers of the early twentieth century. Through examining the reception and adaptation of Wilde in Japan, it seems that the Japanese intellectuals regarded him as a source of both literature and ideology. His works exerted influences over modern Japanese literature in the genres of poems, fairy tales, novels, and plays; meanwhile some of his works or ideas were appropriated for Japanese social movements such as socialism, democracy, and 'New Woman'. It is also noted that some of the representative

¹⁶⁸ See pp.191-92

¹⁶⁹ Japan's national strategy for modernisation was 'leaving Asia, Joining the West'.

Japanese aesthetes tried to transplant Occidentalism into the Japanese or Oriental context.

Chapter Five: Oscar Wilde in China

1. Oscar Wilde's Fairy Tales and Other Non-Dramatic Works in China

Since the publication of the Chinese translation of 'The Happy Prince' in 1909, Wilde's works have been frequently introduced, translated and commented in China. This chapter primarily examines the reception and adaptation of Wilde's fairy tales against the background of the Chinese New Culture Movement during the early twentieth century. Chinese intellectuals exploited Wilde's fairy tales in their efforts to reform children's education, which served to cultivate modern Chinese citizens with humanitarianism and the awareness of social responsibility. Moreover, this chapter also investigates the Chinese reception of Wilde's non-dramatic works of other genres, such as poems, prose, stories, essays, and the epistle *De Profundis* during this period. Finally, this chapter offers an overview of the representative Chinese academic monographs on Wilde and British aestheticism during the early twentieth century.

Chinese readers first noticed Wilde through his fairy tales. In March 1909, Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967), a notable essayist and critic, translated the story 'The Happy Prince' into classical Chinese. This is the first Chinese translation of Wilde's

works. The story was collected into his and his elder brother Lu Xun's self-funded publication, *Anthology of Foreign Stories* (《域外小说集》) issued by Tokyo Kanda Press on 2 March 1909 in Japan.¹⁷⁰ Since then, the popularity of Wilde's works among the Chinese educated classes is evidenced by the various translations and reviews published in newspapers and magazines. The timeline below covers all the major translations of Wilde's works (excluding plays) in China from 1909 till 1937, namely when Wilde was first introduced to China, to the eve of Second World War. Under 'Translator', the timeline chronologically records the Chinese translators of Wilde's works. Under 'Publisher', it lists the corresponding journals, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, or publishing houses in which the translations were published. The names of journals, newspapers, magazines and periodicals are italicised.

**Timeline of Chinese Translations of Wilde's Works
(1909-1937, excluding plays)**

Date	Work	Translator	Publisher
Mar. 1909	'The Happy Prince'	Zhou Zuoren	Tokyo Kanda Press
Apr. 1920	'The Nightingale and the Rose'	Hu Yuzhi	<i>The Eastern Miscellany</i>
Dec. 1920	'The Selfish Giant'	Mu Mutian	<i>New Trends</i>
Aug. 1921	'The Selfish Giant' (Chinese translation: 'Giant and the Kids')	Zhu Pu	<i>The Eastern Miscellany</i>
Sep. 1921	'The Star Child'	Hu Boken	<i>Women's Magazine</i>
Nov. 1921	<i>Five Pomes in Prose of Oscar Wilde</i>	Liu Fu	<i>Story Monthly</i>
Nov. 1921	'The Doer of Good'	Zhang Jin-Zhen	<i>The Morning Daily Supplement</i>
Feb. 1922	<i>The Fairy Tales of Wilde</i>	Mu Mutian	Tai-Dong Press
Mar. 1922	Translation of 'the Preface to	Yu Dafu	<i>Creation</i>

¹⁷⁰ This book was first published in Japan, and then reprinted in China by Shanghai Qun-Yi Press in 1921 and Shanghai Zhong-Hua Press in 1936.

	<i>Dorian Gray</i> '		
Apr. & May 1922	<i>De Profundis</i> NB Chinese translation: 'Writing in Prison' (《狱中记》)	Zhang Wentian, Wang Fuquan	<i>Republic Daily Supplement</i>
Jul. 1922	Some poems	Zhang Jin-Fen	<i>Republic Daily Supplement</i>
Jul. 1922	'The Artist', 'The Doer of Good'	Zhang Jin-Fen	<i>Republic Daily</i>
Jul. 1922	'The Remarkable Rocket'	Zhao Jingshen	<i>Morning Daily Supplement</i>
Aug. 1922	'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young'	Zhang Wentian	<i>New News</i>
Sep. 1922	'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'	Shen Zemin	Commercial Press
Jan. & Mar. 1923	'The Happy Prince', 'The Young King', 'The Selfish Giant'	Zheng Zhenduo	<i>Children's World</i>
Dec. 1923	'The Nightingale and Rose'	Lin Huiyin	<i>Morning Daily Supplement</i>
c. 1928	'The Soul of Man under Socialism' NB Chinese translation was 'Socialism and Individualism'	Zhen Ying	Shou-Kuang Press
c. 1928	'The Decay of Lying'	Zhu Weiji	Guang-Hua Publisher
Jan.- Mar. 1928	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> (unfinished)	Zhang Kebiao	<i>General</i>
Feb. & Mar. 1928	'The Doer of Good', 'The Artist'	Zeng Xu-Bai	<i>Truth, Beauty, Sincerity</i>
Mar.-Apr. 1928	'The Critic as Artist': sections 1, 2 NB The essay was revised by the translator into five sections	Lin Yutang	<i>Yu-Si</i>
Apr. 1928	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Du Heng	Golden House Bookshop
Dec. 1928	'The Doer of Good', 'The Disciple'	Xu Bao-Bing	<i>Great River Monthly</i>
Oct.- Dec. 1929	'The Critic as Artist': sections 3, 4, 5	Lin Yutang	<i>Bei-Xin</i>
Nov. 1932	<i>The Collection of Wilde's Fairy Tales</i>	You Baolong	World Book Press

c. 1936	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Ling Biru	Chinese Publishing House
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This chapter mainly examines the reception and influence of Wilde’s fairy tales in China, but also investigates the Chinese readings of Wilde’s works of other genres.

i Wilde’s Fairy Tales and the Development of Chinese Children’s Literature

The first Chinese version of Wilde’s fairy tale, Zhou Zuoren’s translation of ‘The Happy Prince’ was generally literal, but still contained minor adaptation. He used the Chinese word *Shi* (‘food’) to replace the original English word ‘bread’ in the sentence ‘the children’s face grew rosier [...] “We have bread now!”’ (CW 276) Considering bread was not popular food for ordinary Chinese people in the early twentieth century, it is understandable for the translator to make this adaptation to avoid possible confusion.¹⁷¹ In the preface to *Anthology of Foreign Stories*, Zhou recorded his motivation for editing such a collection of Western stories and explained the standard of selection -- to ‘improve Chinese nationals’ character and transform (Chinese) society’¹⁷²-- which shared the zeitgeist of the enlightenment of the New Culture Movement in early twentieth-century China. In the postscript to this anthology, Zhou specified his reason for translating and introducing ‘The Happy Prince’: because of ‘the orientation of humanitarianism embodied in this story’.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ In Zhou Zuoren’s time, bread was seen as a commodity that embodied the luxurious westernised lifestyle of the Chinese economic elites in China’s metropolitan cities and coastal trading ports. Even today, the word ‘bread-eater’ is used jokingly to refer to the Chinese elites who have studying experiences in the West.

¹⁷² “转移性情，改造社会”，see *Anthology of Foreign Stories* (1909), p.1. Zhou Zuoren’s *Anthology of Foreign Stories* collected sixteen short stories, including the works of Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, Maupassant, Hans Christian Andersen, Chekhov, etc.

¹⁷³ “特有人道主义倾向”，*Ibid.*

Partly due to Zhou Zuoren's influence in the literary circle, by the mid 1930s, such representative magazines of the New Culture Movement as *New Youth*, *Story Monthly*, *New Trends*, *Morning Daily Supplement*, and at least eight intellectuals had been involved in the translation and publication of Wilde's fairy tales. Specifically, Mu Mutian (1900-1971), a brilliant poet of symbolism and one of the founders of Chinese Modern Poetry Society, translated 'The Selfish Giant' and published it in *New Trends* (3:1) on 25 December 1920. He admired Balzac, André Gide, Tolstoy, Pushkin and Lermontov as well as Wilde. He finally embraced Marxism and became a leader of the left-wing proletarian literary movement in the 1930s. The linguist and writer, Hu Yuzhi translated 'The Nightingale and the Rose', and it was published in *The Eastern Miscellany* (17:8) on 25 April 1920. In the introduction, 'Translator's Words about "The Nightingale and Rose"', Hu claimed that 'we have to study his poems and fairy tales if we want to know Wilde as an aesthete', and 'only in his poems and fairy tales, his vivid imagination of beauty, his rare gift in art, and his wonderful attractiveness are given full play' (qtd. in X. Zhou 97). Hu's translation of 'The Nightingale and the Rose', together with Zhu Pu's translation of 'The Selfish Giant', which was first published in *The Eastern Miscellany* (18:8) in 1921, were later collected in *Modern British and American Stories*.¹⁷⁴ Zhu revised the title 'The Selfish Giant' into 'Giant and the Kids' in his translation. The poetess Lin Huiyin (1904-1955) also chose to translate 'The Nightingale and Rose' when she returned from Britain after finishing her studies. The writer Hu Boken translated 'The Star Child' for *Women's Magazine* (7:9) in 1921. The novelist and scholar of children's literature Zhao Jingshen (1902-1985) translated 'The Remarkable Rocket' for *Morning Daily Supplement* in July 1922. The historian and writer Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958) translated 'The Happy Prince', 'The Young King'

¹⁷⁴ The book *Modern British and American Stories* was edited by Hu Yuzhi and issued by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1923.

and 'The Selfish Giant', and published them in the magazine *Children's World* (no. 1&3) in 1923.¹⁷⁵

There were two anthologies of Wilde's fairy tales. In February 1922, Shanghai Tai-Dong Press issued the Chinese translation of *The Fairy Tales of Wilde* edited by Mu Mutian, which contained 'The Happy Prince', 'The Nightingale and the Rose', 'The Selfish Giant', 'The Fisherman and his Soul' and 'The Star-Child'. This is the first collection of Wilde's fairy tales in Chinese. The other collection, which included more fairy tales, appeared in November 1932. Shanghai World Book Press published *The Collection of Wilde's Fairy Tales* translated by the journalist You Baolong, which covered most of Wilde's fairy tales: 'The Happy Prince', 'The Nightingale and the Rose', 'The Selfish Giant', 'The Devoted Friend', 'The Remarkable Rocket', 'The Young King' and 'The Star-Child'. This version was republished in 1933.

In statistics, during the early twentieth century (1909-1936), 'The Happy Prince' was Wilde's most popular fairy tale in China with five translations, closely followed by 'The Selfish Giant' and 'The Nightingale and the Rose', each with four translations. 'The Star Child' came fourth with three versions; 'The Young King' and 'The Remarkable Rocket' followed behind with two translations respectively. 'The Fisherman and his Soul' is 'in some ways the most substantial, complex and significant of these stories' (Raby, *Oscar Wilde* 63), yet as Jarlath Killeen notices, this story is generally considered to be Wilde's most obscure fairy tale (141). Possibly because of the obscurities in the theme and the difficulties in comprehension, 'The Fisherman and his Soul' attracted relatively few critical comments, and had only one translator. The story 'The Devoted Friend', a satire of the so-called friendship between little Hans and the rich Miller, also had just one translation. Wilde's most critically neglected tale during the New Culture

¹⁷⁵ 'The Happy Prince' was collected in issue one; 'The Young King' and 'The Selfish Giant' were collected in issue three.

Movement was ‘The Birthday of the Infanta’: there were no Chinese translations of the story in which a dwarf died of grief when a mirror reflected his ugliness.

In terms of literary criticism, Zhou Zuoren and Zhao Jingshen pioneered the theoretical analysis of Wilde’s fairy tales. On 2 April 1922, Zhou contributed an article under the title ‘The Fairy Tales of Wilde’ to *Morning Daily Supplement* as a review of Mu Mutian’s collection *The Fairy Tales of Wilde*. In this review, Zhou agreed with Mu’s selection of stories but revised some of his inappropriate translations of place names. Zhou illustrated this with the phrase ‘the Cornish ogre’ in ‘The Selfish Giant’, which Mu mistranslated as ‘ogre living in the wall of corn’. Zhou corrected this by explaining that ‘Cornish’ meant ‘of or related to Cornwall or its people or the Cornish language’, and ‘the name Cornwall comes from the word *corn-wealas*, which meant west Wales in the corner of Britain’ (Z. Zhou 64). Zhou also complained about the poor quality of typesetting and printing of this edition, protesting that ‘spelling mistakes and crude paper of this book are a kind of injury and insult to Wilde and his translator, if not to the readers’.¹⁷⁶

More significantly, Zhou’s review offered an insightful analysis of the literary features of Wilde’s fairy tales as he raised the concept of ‘literary fairy tale’ (*Wen-Xue-de-Tong-Hua*). In this article, Zhou clarified the distinction between folk tales and fairy tales. He argued that although folk tales belonged to literature, they were different from literary fairy tales, because folk tales were popular, oral and natural, while literary fairy tales were private, creative and intended. The former was ‘childhood of fiction’ (*Xiao-Shuo-de-Tong-Nian*), and the latter was a combination of narration and emotion. He defined those who recorded folk tales as folklorists, such as the Brothers Grimm, and those who created literary fairy tales as professional writers, such as Wilde.¹⁷⁷ Then, he

¹⁷⁶ “粗纸错字是对于著者和译者——即便不是对于读者——的一种损害与侮辱”，see Zhou Zuoren, *One’s Own Garden* (《自己的园地》), p.64.

¹⁷⁷ “民间童话虽然也是文学，却与所谓文学的童话很有区别：前者是民众的，传述的，天然的；后者是个人的，创作的，人为的；前者是‘小说的童年’，后者...抒情与叙事的

quoted the Scottish poet, novelist and literary critic Andrew Lang's theory on fairy tales to further explain the chronological progress of literary fairy tales.¹⁷⁸ Zhou stated that the nineteenth century witnessed many remarkable works of this genre, for example, Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*, George MacDonald's *A Faerie Romance for Men and Women*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Zhou praised Wilde's *The Happy Prince* and *A House of Pomegranates* as 'poems of a poet', which embodied the highest aesthetic standards of literary fairy tale.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Zhou compared Wilde's fairy tales with those of Hans Christian Andersen. In Zhou's opinion, Andersen was both a poet and 'a permanent child', 'the unique imagination of Andersen made himself extremely close to the minds of children'.¹⁸⁰ However, the style of Wilde's fairy tales was 'not childlike talk', and 'these fairy tales were more creative writings of a poet than children's literature'.¹⁸¹ Zhou argued that Wilde's fairy tales were full of 'sensitive and beautiful sympathy for the society'.¹⁸²

In the same year, Zhao Jingshen, a professor at Shanghai University and an active member of Literary Research Association (文学研究会), followed up Zhou's criticism and contributed the article 'Wilde as a Fairy Tale Writer', which was also published in *Morning Daily Supplement* (15,16 July 1922). Zhao wrote the article as an academic communication with Zhou. Zhao basically agreed with Zhou's analysis. Zhao argued that Wilde's fairy tales were not 'the talks of children' but presented the sympathy of adults for society. He also compared the differences between Wilde and Andersen, arguing that while Andersen's stories

合体。记录民间童话的人是民俗学者，格林兄弟是最著名的例；创作文学的童话的是文人，王尔德便是其中之一人。” See Zhou Zuoren, *One's Own Garden*, p.64.

¹⁷⁸ For example, Andrew Lang's *The Colour Fairy Books*

¹⁷⁹ “诗人的诗”，see Zhou Zuoren, *One's Own Garden*, p.64.

¹⁸⁰ “永久的孩子”，“安徒生的特殊的想象使他格外和儿童的心思亲近”，*Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ “非小儿说话一样的文体 [...] 他的童话是诗人的，而非是儿童的文学”，*Ibid.*

¹⁸² “敏感而美的社会的哀怜”，*Ibid.*

might be more understandable and approachable for children, Wilde's fairy tales were deep and abstract but had more literary values. In Zhao's analysis,

Andersen did not use abstract or difficult words, but Wilde was quite different, when he expressed his ideas, he adopted both detailed descriptions and difficult language [...] sometimes, he inserted the abstract words such as 'wisdom', 'love' into his fairy tales.¹⁸³

Zhao concluded that Wilde's fairy tales could be appreciated as prose for their delicate rhetoric, fantastical imagination, and poetic style of narration (qtd. in Z. Zhang 245).

Zhou and Zhao's reviews in *Morning Daily Supplement* represented the mainstream comprehension of Wilde's fairy tales among the Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement in the 1920s. Other critical articles on Wilde's fairy tales generally held similar opinions. For example, the literary critic and novelist Shen Zemin considered 'The Happy Prince' as 'an ironic fairy tale full of sympathy for the society, but also keeps the essence of aestheticism'.¹⁸⁴ The socialist theorist Zhang Wentian commented, 'besides the very poetic, graceful language, Wilde's fairy tales have passionate and sincere praise for love, and radical criticism and mockery of society'.¹⁸⁵ The Chinese critics recognised the literariness of Wilde's fairy tales, and simultaneously discovered the moral values in them, such as sympathy for working classes and love for children.

¹⁸³ “安徒生不用任何深奥的话。王尔德表现他的思想方法却不同，已是事实和深奥的话并用了 [...] 有时还把不可捉摸的‘智慧’、‘爱情’等等抽象的名词插在童话里。” See Zhao & Zhou, 'Discussion of Fairy Tales' (*Guan-Yu-Tong-Hua-De-Tao-Lun*), first published in *Morning Daily Supplement* (25 January, 12 February, 28 & 29 March, 9 April, 1922), later collected in Zhao Jingshen, *The Collection of Fairy Tales Theories* (1927).

¹⁸⁴ “讽刺的短篇童话,很富于社会的同情,而仍不失其唯美主义的本色”, see Shen Zemin, 'Criticism of Oscar Wilde' (《王尔德评传》), *Story Monthly*, 1921 (5), qtd in Z. Zhang, p.245

¹⁸⁵ “文字十分华美、优雅 [...] 热烈的爱和敬虔的爱底赞美和嘲笑的、矫激的社会底批评”, qtd in Xie Zhixi, p. 21.

The translation and criticism of Wilde's fairy tales was largely associated with the widespread discussion of modernisation among the Chinese intelligentsia. Wilde's fairy tales were exploited to serve the needs of Chinese society in transition, in particular his humanitarianism was seen as a prescription for China's 'Children's Question'. Since the late nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals began to reconsider the traditional Confucian education of children. They argued that Confucianism should be blamed for China's backwardness, as it was incompatible with the modern world, and therefore, Chinese children should not continue to recite 'the epigrams of the sages' and be 'poisoned' by Confucian classics.¹⁸⁶ The Chinese intellectuals of enlightenment felt obliged to find alternative reading materials for Chinese children. The earliest Chinese publication for children was *Children's Monthly* (*Xiao-Hai-Yue-Bao*) launched in 1875, funded by the Presbyterian Church in New York, and which published the translations of Western fairy tales, stories, and nursery rhymes. Since 1897, numerous magazines, newspapers and books for children emerged in China. Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), the leading liberal Chinese educator and the chancellor of Beijing University, emphasised the importance of children's education for Chinese modernisation in the opening issue of *Children's World* (《童子世界》) in April 1903, claiming 'whether China will survive in the twentieth century depends on our children'.¹⁸⁷ During the New Culture Movement of the 1910s and 1920s, there was a general perception that the education of children was the method of salvation for the Chinese nation. For instance, Lu Xun (1881-1936), one of the greatest Chinese writers of the twentieth century, repeated the view that education of children figured as a method of modernisation. In his short story 'The Diary of a Madman' (《狂人日记》) published in the journal *New Youth* in 1917, Lu Xun claimed his negation of Confucianism through the hero 'Madman':

¹⁸⁶ 'The epigrams of the sages' in Chinese is 圣人之言

¹⁸⁷ "二十世纪中国之存亡，实系吾童子"，see Hu Congjing, *Children's Literature in Late Qing*, p.116.

I read that history of Confucianism very carefully for most of the night, and finally I began to make out what was written between the lines; the whole volume was filled with a single phrase: Eat Human!¹⁸⁸

Lu Xun linked the fate of children to that of the nation, advocating the revival of China through reforming children's education. For this reason, at the end of 'The Diary of a Madman', he cried out 'save the children!' This story is celebrated as a herald of Chinese literary modernity.

Besides Lu Xun, many other Chinese intellectuals of the enlightenment, such as Zhou Zuoren, Mao Dun, Zhang Tianyi, Ye Shengtao and Bing Xin, were actively involved in constructing theories of children's education and writing for children throughout their literary careers. For example, Zhou Zuoren discussed the functions of fairy tales in modern education of children, which were 'to satisfy the desire of children to hear stories, to cultivate the imagination of children, to teach children about social life'.¹⁸⁹ He concluded that reading fairy tales 'benefits children's lives when they grow up and step in society'.¹⁹⁰ In other words, the translation of Western fairy tales served the purpose of modernising children's education, which was one of the priorities on the agenda of constructing modern Chinese culture, and because fairy tales were generally assumed to support humanistic ideas, they could teach children appropriate behaviour as qualified citizens in society (Y. Chen 72). The introduction and translation of Western fairy tales, together with the poetry revolution, novel revolution, drama revolution, and vernacular campaign of the New Culture Movement, finally contributed to the

¹⁸⁸ Lu Xun, 'The Diary of a Madman', <<http://www.tianyabook.com/luxun/lh/002.htm>>, cited 6 April 2010

¹⁸⁹ "厌其喜闻故事之要求 [...] 长养其想象 [...] 童话叙社会生活", quoted in J. Wu, P.108.

¹⁹⁰ "为将来人世之资", *ibid.*

Chinese enlightenment, and all of which established the socio-ideological context of the reception of Wilde's fairy tales in early twentieth-century China.

Therefore, Wilde's fairy tales were recommended both for their linguistic beauty and the moral connotation of humanitarianism, while the implication of the *fin-de-siècle* decadence was almost entirely ignored. Humanitarianism was the prevalent perspective of reading Wilde's fairy tales in early twentieth-century China. For example, in Zhou Zuoren's opinion, Wilde's stories were beneficial to the cultivation of responsible and compassionate citizens in a modern civil society. Zhou valued highly what he perceived as the tendency to humanitarianism and benevolence in Wilde's fairy tales. Of course, whether Wilde's humanitarianism could really reform society was questionable, as Jarlath Killeen points out, in Britain, 'society continues on in exactly the same way after the Prince's sacrifice as before; self-immolation of the Prince appears to change nothing in the political or economic establishment' (22). However, in Zhou's opinion, to educate children on humanitarianism and self-sacrifice through reading literary fairy tales is a passage to Chinese national salvation. This motivation partly explained the uneven selection of Chinese translation of Wilde's works: the most popular stories, 'The Happy Prince', 'The Selfish Giant', 'The Star Child' and 'The Young King', could be seen to cultivate children's love and compassion for other people while the satire of 'The Devoted Friend' and the opaqueness of 'The Fisherman and his Soul' were viewed as beyond the comprehension of a child, so they were less welcomed; the most neglected one, 'The Birthday of the Infanta', although it has a masterly touch of pathos, in the eyes of the Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement, seems useless for entertaining children or teaching them anything positive, as a result, it had no translation.

On the other hand, few Chinese critics discussed the *fin-de-siècle* decadence in Wilde's fairy tales. Zhao Jingshen mentioned that 'The Fisherman and his Soul' had 'the beauty of imagination' and 'its aim is to demonstrate and

realise aestheticism',¹⁹¹ but he immediately dismissed anything decadent in this fairy tale. In Zhao's defence of Wilde, he argued that '[Wilde] hates hypocrisy in society, so his aestheticism is to build another world of beauty; when a world has beauty, truth, goodness, then love can be simultaneously realised'.¹⁹² Zhao saw 'The Fisherman and his Soul' as a plea for social reform. Moreover, Wilde's fairy tales frequently used biblical archetypes such as the Garden of Eden (e.g. the Palace of Sans-Souci in 'The Happy Prince'), City of God (e.g. 'for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me' in 'The Happy Prince'), Paradise (e.g. 'you let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise' in 'The Selfish Giant'), and Babylon (e.g. the temptations of the Mirror of Wisdom, the Ring of Riches, and the feet of the daughters of men in 'The Fisherman and his Soul'). Wilde also had a fascination for the figure of Christ, and the Christian belief of salvation was espoused in his fairy tales such as 'The Selfish Giant', 'The Young King' and 'The Star-Child'. However, the Chinese translators and critics in the early twentieth century consciously or unconsciously neglected the religious connotation, and failed to hold in-depth discussion of it.

It is possible that the Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement overemphasised the alleged social effects of Wilde's fairy tales, which sometimes led to apparently creative criticism, or biased interpretation. For instance, Wilde denied that his intention in writing 'The Happy Prince' was to make realistic criticism of social problems, instead, he maintained that 'the story is an attempt to treat a tragic modern problem in a form that aims at delicacy and imaginative treatment: it is a reaction against the purely imitative character of modern art' (*CL*

¹⁹¹ “完全是幻想的美”，“他的主旨全在于表明他的唯美主义，实现他的唯美主义”，see Zhao Jingshen, 'Wilde as a Fairy Tale Writer', *Morning Daily Supplement* (15,16 July 1922).

¹⁹² “他不过是嫉恨社会一般虚伪的人，所以他这主张，就是另造美的世界，有了美，真善爱也就同时能够实现。他对于纯真的人和物仍是非常爱的。” See J. Zhao, 'Wilde as a Fairy Tale Writer', *Morning Daily Supplement* (15, 16 July 1922).

355). However, most of Wilde's Chinese admirers read this fairy tale as a piece of work of nineteenth-century realism. 'The Happy Prince' was seen as an accusation against social inequality and poverty among the lower classes in Victorian Britain. Similarly, 'The Young King' was perceived as a protest against the heavy exploitation of the labouring classes by the Western capitalists. Zhou Zuoren's comments were representative of this comprehension. He stated in the newspaper *Morning Daily Supplement* on 9 April 1922 that 'Wilde's fairy tales do not create utopia but a realistic world under a very thin veil'.¹⁹³ There is a notable discrepancy between the reception of Wilde's fairy tales in China and the comprehension of these works in Britain. Wilde himself might have predicted the controversies and debates concerning his fairy tales, as he wrote a letter to Thomas Hutchinson (13 July 1888), 'I like to fancy that there may be many meanings in the tale, for in writing it I did not start with an idea and clothe it in form, but began with a form and strove to make it beautiful enough to have many secrets and many answers' (CL 354). To Chinese critics, Wilde's 'The Happy Prince', 'The Selfish Giant', 'The Devoted Friend', 'The Young King' and 'The Star-Child' were widely read as realistic criticism of social repression.

Reading Wilde's fairy tales in the perspective of realism had a profound influence on the creative writing of Chinese fairy tales for children. When Ye Shengtao (1894—1988), the first prominent Chinese writer of modern fairy tales recalled his literary career, he said 'I began to write fairy tales due to the influence of the Western culture, when the Grimm brothers, Andersen and Wilde were gradually introduced to China'.¹⁹⁴ He drew an analogy between Wilde's influence on him and the spices in a kitchen, which means Wilde's influence is scattered

¹⁹³ “他的童话创造出来的不是‘第三的世界’，却只在现实上复了一层极薄的幕”，quoted in Z. Zhang, p. 225.

¹⁹⁴ “我写童话，当然是受了西方的影响。五四前后，格林、安徒生、王尔德的童话陆续介绍过来了。” - see Ye Shengtao, 'I and Children's Literature' (《我和儿童文学》) in *The Complete Works of Ye Shengtao*, volume 9, p. 384

throughout his writings.¹⁹⁵ Although he claimed to be Wilde's disciple in fairy tales, he strongly rejected the aesthetic slogan 'art for art's sake', and was dedicated to the literary movement of 'art for life's sake' in modern China.¹⁹⁶ He argued that 'the expression and critique of life is something to which real writers devote themselves, as they do to life itself' (Ye, 'On the Literary Arts' 163). His story 'Scarecrow' (《稻草人》) published in 1923 emulated the plot and the structure of Wilde's 'The Happy Prince', but melded with social realism (Farquhar 35). This story adopted the typical pattern of three-fold repetition in Wilde's fairy tales: a scarecrow witnesses the tragedies of three Chinese women and their children in three nights. On the first night, a poor widow has her rice shoots eaten by caterpillars; on the second night, an exhausted woman has no food to feed her hungry child; and on the last night, a despairing young girl attempts suicide. The scarecrow felt so hurt that his heart broke in half and fell down on the field, echoing the plot in 'The Happy Prince' in which the leaden heart of the Happy Prince snapped in two. Wilde's influence can be traced in Ye Shengtao's other fairy tales as well. For example, 'The Goldfish and the Rose' (《玫瑰与金鱼》) seems to be inspired by Wilde's 'The Nightingale and the Rose': a young student is infatuated with the daughter of Professor; and the symbol of beauty (goldfish and rose in Ye's story) is sacrificed for nothing. His 'The Ancient Hero's Statue' (《古代英雄的石像》) reminds readers of Wilde's most comical story 'The Remarkable Rocket': dialogues between a proud stone of nobility and his fellow stones of the commons. Ye's contemporary writer, Zheng Zhenduo, notes Wilde's influence on Ye's stories, saying

¹⁹⁵ When Ye Shengtao was asked if Wilde had influenced his stories, he replied: 'It is like the spices in a kitchen', quoted in Farquhar, p. 101.

¹⁹⁶ One of the two most prominent literary associations in modern China, *Wenxueyanjiuhui* (Literary Research Association) advocated the slogan 'art for life's sake', and its members launched the literary movement with this slogan in the 1920s and 1930s.

The tragic reality does not allow Wilde to indulge in beautiful fairy life [...] the criticism of realistic life and the sympathy for the unfortunate people in Wilde's fairy tales influenced Ye Shengtao's literary career, and shaped the realistic tradition of Chinese modern fairy tale writings.¹⁹⁷

In summary, Wilde's fairy tales were introduced and translated against the background of the social zeitgeist of the enlightenment in early twentieth-century China. The Chinese reception of Wilde started from his fairy tales. The combination of dreamland and reality, and the multiple implications in Wilde's fairy tales were, aesthetically and politically, attractive to modern Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement of the 1910s and 1920s. The Chinese intellectuals were concerned about social and political reforms. They appropriated the humanitarianism they perceived in Wilde's fairy tales to challenge the traditional Confucian pedagogy and launch the modernisation of children's education.

ii Poems and Prose, *Dorian Gray* and Other Stories, Essays, and *De Profundis*

In China, Wilde's prose was highly recommended while his poetry was relatively neglected among his corpus. All of the six pieces of prose in Wilde's *Poems in Prose* (1894) had Chinese translations. 'The Doer of Good', 'The Artist', and 'The Disciple' were repeatedly translated. The novelist Liu Fu translated 'Five Pomes in Prose of Oscar Wilde', which covered all the prose in the collection except 'The Doer of Good', and published them in the influential literary periodical of the New Culture Movement *Story Monthly* (12:11) on 10 November 1921. The writer Zhang Jin-Zhen translated 'The Doer of Good' and published it in the magazine *The Morning Daily Supplement* on 13 November

¹⁹⁷ “王尔德童话所蕴含的对现实的反映、对苦难的怜悯的精神影响叶圣陶童话创作并由此形成中国现代童话创作中（现实主义）创作道路”，see Zheng Zhenduo, 'Preface to The Scarecrow', *literature weekly (Wen-Xue-Zhou-Bao)*, 15 Oct 1923).

1921. The poetess Zhang Jin-Fen translated ‘The Artist’ and ‘The Doer of Good’ in the newspaper *Republic Daily News* on 7 July 1922. There appeared several other translations of the prose in 1928. The artistic magazine *Truth, Beauty, Sincerity* (1:7 & 1:9) published ‘The Doer of Good’ and ‘The Artist’ translated by Zeng Xubai (1895-1994) on 1 February and 1 March. Later, the journal *Great River Monthly* (no. 3) published ‘The Doer of Good’ and ‘The Disciple’ translated by Xu Baobing on 15 December 1928. However, there was no Chinese translation of Wilde’s 1881 collection of *Poems*. Only the supplement to the newspaper *Republic Daily News* introduced and published several of his poems such as ‘Impression du Matin’, ‘By the Arno’, ‘Under the Balcony’, ‘Endymion’, and ‘Madonna Mia’ translated by Zhang Jin-Fen in July 1922.

Wilde’s long poem ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’ (1898) written in exile after his release from imprisonment was translated by Shen Zemin, and published by Shanghai Commercial Press together with *De Profundis* translated by Zhang Wentian and Wang Fuquan as a separate volume in December 1922. Shen Zemin (1902-1933) studied in Tokyo Imperial University in 1920, and became a professor of sociology at Shanghai University in 1923. He was an editor of *Republic Daily News Supplement*, and one of the early theorists of Marxism in China. In the introduction to ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’, Shen asserted that this long poem ‘represented the highest quality of Wilde’s poetry’, and ‘in regard to rhetoric, the poem is the rare treasure among English poems, as it has the symmetry of form, the harmony of rhythm, and the strength of expression’.¹⁹⁸

One of the two translators of *De Profundis*, Zhang Wentian was also an active Marxist theorist. He and Wang Fuquan’s co-authored translation of *De Profundis* was initially serialised in *Republic Daily News Supplement* in April and

¹⁹⁸ “论到文辞，原诗是英诗中不可多得的珍品：形式之整齐，韵律之自然，表现之强烈” quoted in http://www.lunwendays.com/pages/Literature/Literature_A/17.htm [cited 5 January 2011]

May in 1922.¹⁹⁹ The title of the Chinese translation followed the Japanese Wilde specialist Honma Hisao's version, 'Writing in Prison'.²⁰⁰ The romantic poet Xu Zhimo (1897-1931) reviewed *De Profundis* in his lecture 'Modern English Literature' at Nankai University in Tianjin in the summer of 1923. It is worth quoting Xu's comments:

It can be said that Wilde was a martyr. As he wrote in *De Profundis*, 'the two great turning points in my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison'. Being sent to gaol caused the greatest psychological trauma for him. He confessed that the imprisonment gave him a much deeper awareness. His *De Profundis* is extremely eloquent. The whole letter can be read as a lyric poem, and every word seems to be carved from the deepest heart.'²⁰¹

The Chinese comprehension of *De Profundis* was similar to that in Japan, namely, to perceive Wilde as a martyr to British aestheticism.

On 15 March 1922, Yu Dafu (1896-1945), a representative aesthetic and decadent writer in his own right, translated the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and published it in the first issue of the quarterly *Creation*. He regarded Wilde's aestheticism as 'a conscious reaction against the obstinate traditions in Victorian England'.²⁰² The scholar of philosophy Huang Chanhua (1890-1977) commented that 'Dorian Gray embodies the modern hedonism' in his monograph

¹⁹⁹ On 20,23,24,25,27,28,30 April, and 4,7,8,9,11,12,14 May

²⁰⁰ The Chinese title of *De Profundis* is 狱中记.

²⁰¹ “可以说他是一个殉道者[...]他一身有两个关键，一个是他父亲把他送到牛津大学；一个是社会把他送进监狱[...]他思想的最大的刺激便是入狱这一件事。他说他这一入狱，便有了更深一层的觉悟。他的狱中记极流畅，全书差不多是抒情诗的，一个个的字都有雕刻的意味”，quoted in Zhao Jingshen, *Collection of Modern Literature Studies* (近代文学丛谈), New Culture Publishing House, 1934, p. 144.

²⁰² Yu Dafu, 'Focusing on the People of The Yellow Book' (1923), see <http://www.chinese-thought.org/whyj/005674.htm> [quoted 5 February 2011]

Modern Literary Thoughts published by Commercial Press in September 1924.²⁰³

The literary critic Zhao Jiabi (1908-1997) contributed an introductory review of this novel to the periodical *Story Monthly* (18:10) in October 1927. He praised it as ‘Wilde’s greatest work’, and believed ‘[this novel] established Wilde’s leadership of the aesthetic movement’.²⁰⁴ In 1928, there appeared two Chinese translations of the full text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. One was Du Heng’s version published by Shanghai Golden House Bookshop in April, the other was Zhang Kebiao’s unfinished version serialised in the journal *General* (4:1-3) from January to March. Zhang later explained that he did not complete the translation because he thought Du’s version was better than his own. In 1936, Shanghai Chinese Publishing House also issued a full-text version of the novel translated by Ling Biru.

The Picture of Dorian Gray explores the relationship between art and its model in a gothic style. Wilde extends Stevenson’s exploration of the divided self. The novel inspired a number of Chinese imitations. For example, the Chinese decadent writer Teng Gu’s fiction ‘The Wall Painting’ (《壁画》) describes an art student who used his own blood as the pigment with which to draw a beauty’s portrait, and when the artistic work was completed, the artist died. The fiction was influenced by the metamorphosis of Dorian’s picture. The aforementioned decadent writer Yu Dafu cited the epigrams of *The Picture of Dorian Gary* in his semi-autobiographical story *Decadence* (《沉沦》). However, the Chinese decadent writers such as Teng Gu and Yu Dafu also showed sentiments of patriotism and anti-colonialism in their works. To some extent, decadence and the pursuit of sensual pleasures were transformed as a rebellion against Confucian asceticism

²⁰³ “近代享乐主义的真髓”, quoted in Zhang Damin, *Western Literary Thoughts in Modern China*, Chengdu: Education Press, 2001, p.258, 《西方文学思潮在现代中国的传播史》

²⁰⁴ “王尔德生平最伟大之著作 [...] 唯美运动里占有领袖的地位”, see *Story Monthly* (18:10), p.80

and a plea for individual freedom, in other words, decadence was prized for the sake of enlightenment.

Wilde's *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* (1891) received a cold reception in China. Although 'The Canterville Ghost' was translated by the journalist Zeng Xubai and published by Shanghai Truth-Beauty-Virtue Press in April 1928, there was no translation of the other three stories. 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.' (1889) was also neglected.

Regarding Wilde's critical essays, on 29 August 1922, Zhang Wentian translated 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young' in the magazine *New News*. In 1928, Zhen Ying translated 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' under the revised title 'Socialism and Individualism', and published it by Shou-Kuang Press. Two of the four essays collected in *Intentions* (1891), 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist' were translated into Chinese. Zhu Weiji (1904-1971) translated 'The Decay of Lying' and collected it into his anthology of translated essays *Narcissus* in 1928. Lin Yutang's translation of 'The Critic as Artist' was separated into five sections for publishing: 'On Silent Thinking and Empty Talking' in the literary magazine *Yu-Si* (4:13) on 26 March 1928, 'On Creation and Criticism' in the same magazine (4:18) on 30 April 1928; the other three sections were published in another periodical *Bei-Xin* -- 'Impressionist Criticism' (3:18) on 1 October 1929, 'The Virtues of a Critic' (3:22) on 16 November 1929, and 'The Functions of Criticism' (3:23) on 1 December 1929. The essayist, literary critic and scholar of English literature Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) wrote the article 'Wilde's Aestheticism', which was collected in *The Disciplines for Literature* issued by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1928, introducing and reviewing Wilde's aesthetic theories from six aspects: art and era, art and life, art and nature, art and morality, individuality and universality, art and artistic criticism.

Wilde's critical theories were assimilated into modern Chinese literary theories. For example, Zhou Zuoren echoed the idea 'independence of art' in a series of essays collected in his book *One's Own Garden* in 1923.²⁰⁵ In the preface to this book, Zhou argues that 'immortality is not the purpose of writing',²⁰⁶ a denial of Confucian criticism of literature which regards 'writing, cause, virtue as the three methods of realising one's immortality'. He opposed the Confucian requirement that 'writers must speak on behalf of the sages';²⁰⁷ instead, he argued that the sole purpose of literature was to serve the beautification of human life, as Wilde advocated.²⁰⁸ The poet Wen Yiduo's literary theory was inspired by Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist'. The core argument of Wen's representative poetic essay 'The Rules of Poetry' followed Wilde's theories in 'The Decay of Lying', such as 'Art never expresses anything but itself', 'Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life'. However, Wen softened Wilde's statements such as 'realism is a complete failure' (CW 1080), revising it as 'absolute realism is the failure of art', and paraphrased 'nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition' (CW 1071) as 'many times, nature is far from perfect'. His letter to the essayist and literary critic Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) on 15 February 1923 claimed 'I hope to be an evangelist of art rather than a creator of art',²⁰⁹ echoing 'The Critic as Artist', which eulogised 'the Critical Spirit'.²¹⁰ Both Zhou Zuoren and Wen Yiduo (1899-1946) were among the most prestigious literary

²⁰⁵ The first edition of *One's Own Garden* in 1923 includes the series of 'One's Own Garden' (eighteen essays), the series of 'Oasis' (fifteen essays), and 'miscellany' of other twenty-five essays. The second edition of *One's Own Garden* in 1927 keeps the series of 'One's Own Garden' and 'Oasis', but replaces the miscellany with the series of 'Tea Time' (twenty-three essays).

²⁰⁶ "不朽决不是著作的目的", see Zhou, Zuoren, p1.

²⁰⁷ The Confucian mottoes: "立言、立功、立德, 三不朽", "为往圣继绝学".

²⁰⁸ "如王尔德的提倡人生之艺术化", see Zhou, Zuoren, p6

²⁰⁹ "我最希望的是作一个艺术的宣道者, 不是艺术的创造者", see *Materials of New Literature* (《新文学史料》), volume 2, Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1984, , p.175.

²¹⁰ 'Creation is always behind the age. It is Criticism that leads us.' See Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', *Complete Works*, p.1154

theorists in modern China. Their appreciation and appropriation of Wilde's critical essays enhanced Wilde's influence on modern Chinese literary theories.

iii Monographs on Wilde and British Aestheticism in China

In the early twentieth century, there were two representative monographs on Wilde in China. One was Shen Zemin's 'Critical Biography of Wilde' (《王尔德评传》) published in the periodical *Story Monthly* (12:5) on 10 May 1921, the other was co-authored by Zhang Wentian and Wang Fuquan, 'An Introduction to Wilde' (《王尔德介绍》) serialised in *Supplement to Republican Daily News* from 3 April to 18 April in 1922.

Shen Zemin focused on Wilde's significant role in promoting aestheticism in England and America. Shen's long essay has five sections. In the first two sections, he introduces Wilde's hedonism and individualism, and compares Wilde with George Bernard Shaw, believing that both of them are 'geniuses who tell the truth through simple words'.²¹¹ In the third and fourth sections, he argues that Wilde's society comedies demonstrated and mocked Englishness, and holds a special discussion about the tragedy *Salome*. In the final section, he concludes that 'art is the theme of his personality, and decoration is the enjoyment of his life'.²¹² Shen asserts that 'Wilde's literary talent, beautiful rhetoric, and rich imagination have immortal value'.²¹³

Zhang Wentian and Wang Fuquan's research on Wilde has nine chapters. Chapter one introduces Wilde's childhood, family, and his early life in Oxford. Zhang argues that Wilde's view of life and art could be traced to his admiration for ancient Greek culture. 'The Greek spirit', as Zhang defines, is 'the combination of aestheticism and idealism, hedonism and mentalism', which is

²¹¹ “用简单的话说出真理的天才”, see Shen Zemin, 'A Critical Introduction to Wilde', *Story Monthly* (12:5, 1921). *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 1 July 2010].

²¹² “艺术是他人格的主调, 装饰是他一生的享乐”, *Ibid*.

²¹³ “他那种华美的文采, 丰富的想象是有不朽的价值的”, *Ibid*.

‘the beauty of the ancient Greeks’, and ‘the beauty sought by Wilde’.²¹⁴ Chapter Two introduces Wilde’s American lecture tour in 1882, and offers an overview of Wilde’s works. Chapter Three specifically analyses Wilde’s views of life and art. Zhang argues there were three characteristics of Wilde’s attitude towards life: the first was ‘anti-science’--‘Wilde was extremely disgusted by the materialistic and mechanical view generated by this mechanical capitalist civilisation [...] he condemned this rigid, impersonal, utilitarian, hardhearted society’.²¹⁵ The second was ‘self-adoration’ -- ‘he was a complete, self-centred individualist’.²¹⁶ The third was ‘aestheticism’ -- ‘in Wilde’s aesthetics, beauty is not based on reality and nature, instead, beauty was non-realistic, technical, artificial [...] he believed the purpose of art is to create beauty, and the purpose of life is to enjoy beauty’.²¹⁷ Zhang observes that ‘Wilde tried to beautify life’.²¹⁸ He points out the interrelationship between Wilde’s view of art and view of life:

Why did he mock the society? Why did he exaggerate himself? Why did he praise youth? Why did he belittle the reality? Why did he wear beautiful clothes? Why did he like fantasy? [...] The answers to these questions should be sought from his attitude towards life. Wilde was not only a poet, novelist, dramatist, but also a doer of beautifying ordinary life.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ “希腊思想就是唯美主义和理想主义的提携，快乐主义和精神主义的合致，就是希腊人的所谓美，也就是王尔德所找求的美”，see Zhang and Wang, ‘Introduction to Wilde’, *Supplement to Republic Daily* (April 1922). *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 1 July 2010].

²¹⁵ “王尔德对于唯物的机械观和由这机械观所产生的文明极其憎恶。他痛骂这死板的，无感情的，功利的，冷酷的社会”，*Ibid*.

²¹⁶ “自己崇拜 [...] 他是十分执着自己的，彻底的个人主义者” *Ibid*.

²¹⁷ “不是现实的\自然的美，而是非现实的，技巧的，人工的美，他以为艺术的目的就是美的创造，人生的目的就是美的享受” *Ibid*.

²¹⁸ “王尔德努力把人生美化” *Ibid*.

²¹⁹ “他何以要嘲骂社会，何以要夸张自己，何以赞美青春，何以看轻现实，何以穿美的服装，何以喜欢空想 [...] 这些问题，都是他从对于人生的态度上来的。他不但是诗人，小说家，戏曲家，他更是一个实行家” *Ibid*.

Chapter Four assesses the characteristics of Wilde's works. Zhang argues that Wilde's individualism was not selfishness, instead, individualism meant to focus on oneself and to fully develop one's individuality. He also discusses the themes of 'love' and 'beauty' reflected in Wilde's fairy tales and poems:

Love and Beauty can't be separated. In Wilde's works, love is beauty, and beauty is love. The paradise of beauty is the paradise of love. Both love and beauty can make life into a romance, an idyll.²²⁰

Chapter Five examines Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Zhang contends that this novel is not immoral or anti-social; Dorian represents the clash between flesh and soul, which is the symptom of modernity. Chapter Six investigates *Salome*. Zhang praises this play as 'a masterpiece of tragic love'.²²¹ Chapter Seven discusses Wilde's society plays. Zhang anticipates the social value of these plays:

Through an overview of Wilde's society plays, we can observe his dissatisfaction with the society at that time. Because of dissatisfaction, he created his aestheticism and his new hedonism. It shows that aestheticism was not indifferent to the society, and we dare to conclude that in the future construction of our new (Chinese) society, what he advocated will get an important position.²²²

Chapter Eight surveys Wilde's essays, letters, and critical articles especially *Intentions*. Chapter Nine was written by Wang Fuquan, which studies *De*

²²⁰ “爱和美是不能分离的：在王尔德的作品上看来，爱就是美，美也就是爱。美的乐园就是爱的天国” *Ibid.*

²²¹ “恋爱悲剧的妙品”，*Ibid.*

²²² “统观王尔德的社会剧，我们看出他对于当时社会的不满。由于不满，造出了他的唯美主义，他的新快乐主义，可见他所提倡的唯美主义不是与社会漠不相关，而且我们敢断定，在未来的新社会的建设中，他所提倡的一定会得到一个重要的位置”，*Ibid.*

Profundis. Wang argues that ‘*De Profundis* is the best description and defence of Wilde’s aesthetic life, and also the biggest challenge to his denunciators’.²²³ To conclude the whole research, Wang calls ‘To look for the pleasure of life! To require changes! Wilde is leading in front of us, what shall we do but follow him?’²²⁴ Zhang Wentian and Wang Fuquan appreciated Wilde’s hedonism because they perceived hedonism as an ideological resource to promote the individuality of the younger generation of China:

The spiritual life of Chinese youth is poor, because they do not know happiness. To make life meaningful, the only method is to promote life. To be happy is the best way to promote life.²²⁵

In the early twentieth century, modern Chinese writers’ pursuit of beauty was accompanied by two social themes of the zeitgeist: liberation of individuality, and liberation of society. The prominent leader of Chinese New Culture Movement, Lu Xun (1881-1936) regarded Wilde as one of the representative *fin-de-siècle* writers, and recommended aestheticism as ‘medicine to cure the illness of the past, stones to build the house of the new life’.²²⁶ In this socio-cultural context, Zhang Wentian and Wang Fuquan praised Wilde’s aestheticism, which they believed could be adapted to transform and improve a modern Chinese nation.

Other Wilde studies included the scholar of drama and translator Wang Gulu’s monograph *Wilde’s Life* published by Shanghai World Book Press in 1929. Wang argues ‘Wilde is the best representative aesthete, and the great writer of the nineteenth century’ (2), ‘Wilde’s dissatisfaction with his contemporary society is

²²³ “这是他的唯美主义生活的最好的说明和辩护，又是对于非难者的最大的挑战”，*Ibid.*

²²⁴ “要求生之快乐吧！要求变动吧！王尔德已在我们前面走了，我们还不赶去吗？”，*Ibid.*

²²⁵ “中国青年精神生活的贫乏，由于不知道快乐。人生要有意义只有发扬生命。快乐就是发扬生命的最好办法”，*Ibid.*

²²⁶ “作旧弊之药石，建新生之津梁”《文化偏至论》，see *Lu Xun Studies*, Beijing: Renmin University Press, 1991, p.23 (《鲁迅研究》)

the basic reason for his aestheticism and artistic hedonism', and 'we shall not misunderstand or slander him because he intended to dominate his life by art, and devoted himself to his own aesthetic doctrines' (64).

During the 1920s and 1930s, some overseas Wilde studies were introduced to China. For example, the aesthetic journal *Golden House Monthly* (1:5) published the educationist Guo Youshou's abridged translation of Andre Maurois's *Etudes anglaises: Dickens, Walpole, Ruskin and Wilde* in May 1929. The essayist Liang Yuchun (1906-1932) translated Robert Wilson Lynd's essay 'Oscar Wilde' and published it in the magazine *Youth* (3:1) on 5 March 1933. André Gide's *Oscar Wilde: A Study* translated by Xu Maoyong (1911-1977) was published in the journal *Translation* (2:2) on 16 April 1935. The Japanese Wilde specialist Honma Hisao's works were also translated and cited by Chinese critics. For example, the translation of Honma's essay 'Wilde in Prison' was published in one of the representative magazines of the Chinese New Culture Movement *Yu-Si* (5:43) on 6 January 1930.

There were two noteworthy monographs on the British aesthetic movement in China during the early twentieth century. The Chinese aesthete Teng Gu's *Aesthetic Literature* (《唯美派的文学》) published by Shanghai Guang-Hua Press in July 1927 was the first Chinese systematic research on British aestheticism. The contents of this monograph included three sections: first, 'The Pioneers of Modern Aesthetic Movement', introducing William Blake and John Keats; second, 'The Pre-Raphaelites'; third, 'The *Fin-de-siècle* Hedonists', introducing Walter Pater, Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Symons. Teng Gu did not confine the discussion to *fin-de-siècle* British literature, but extended it to the early nineteenth-century poets William Blake and John Keats. He pointed out that 'British aestheticism inherited English romanticism, and echoed the Continental symbolism' (44). The scholar of British literature Xiao Shijun's monograph *The Fin-de-siècle British New Artistic and Literary Movement* (《世纪

末英国新文艺运动》) published by China Press in 1934 discussed the British aesthetic movement and decadence. It had eight chapters: 'Walter Pater's Philosophy', 'Overview of *Fin-de-siècle* British Literature', 'Characteristics of *Fin-de-siècle* British Literature', 'Decadence', 'Oscar Wilde', 'Arthur Symons', 'The Symbolist Movement', and 'W. B. Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival'. Xiao Shijun's research was undertaken from the perspective of comparative literature, in which he analysed the relationship between British aestheticism and French literature.

There were other academic studies involving Wilde and the British aesthetic movement, for example, Huang Chanhua's *Modern Literary Trends* published by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1924, and Zhang Kebiao's *Introduction to Literature* published by Shanghai Kai-Ming Press in 1930. In these monographs on Wilde and British aestheticism, Wilde was perceived as the symbol of artistic lifestyle, the representative of the aesthetic movement, and a crusader for 'pure art' and 'beauty'. By the 1930s, the British aesthetes, such as Wilde, Pater, Beardsley, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, had already become widely known among Chinese literary circles.

In conclusion, Oscar Wilde was the first British aesthete introduced into China. He was widely appreciated among the Chinese intelligentsia, and perceived as the personification of the British aesthetic movement. The reception of Wilde in China was in the context of the Chinese admiration for Western culture. The introduction and translation of Western literature contained the quest for modernisation of Chinese nation. Wilde's humanitarianism, individualism, and 'art for art's sake', were used by Chinese critics to challenge traditional Confucian didacticism, question the unjust social reality, and advocate the modern values of personal freedom, individual independence, and social benevolence.

2. Oscar Wilde's Society Plays and Chinese Modern Drama

Oscar Wilde's society comedies had an enormous impact on modern Chinese drama. He was regarded predominantly as a brilliant, progressive and serious playwright of socialist realism in the mainstream journals of the Chinese New Culture Movement of the early twentieth century. The comprehension of his society comedies in China was associated with the Chinese social and cultural campaign for women's rights and the reform of family in the 1920s. This chapter begins with an overview of the development of Chinese modern drama and its relationship with Western theatre, highlighting the literary, cultural and social influences of Wilde's society comedies in China. Then it explores the translation, reception, adaptation and performance of Wilde's four society-plays, especially *Lady Windermere's Fan* produced by the renowned Chinese director and playwright Hong Shen. This chapter attempts to place the comprehension of Wilde's society comedies in the context of cultural and social debates about individualism, virtue, the reform of family, and the position of women in early twentieth-century China.

Modern Chinese drama directly originated with the influence of Western plays. The Chinese intellectuals of the enlightenment launched the New Drama Movement as part of the New Culture Movement of the early twentieth century, which aimed to regenerate Chinese society through reforming literature, culture

and ideology. In 1907, a group of Chinese students in Japan established the Spring Willow Theatrical Group (*Chun-Liu-She*, 春柳社) in Tokyo, and staged the first Chinese modern drama *Heinuyutianlu* (*Black Slaves' Cry to Heaven*) adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Japan. This production marked the beginning of Chinese modern drama. It was named *Wen-Ming-Xi* ('civilised drama'), which implied the modernisation of China through learning from the West and enlightening the Chinese public through literary education. The Chinese intellectuals considered *Wen-Ming-Xi* as 'the art of the people', which could reach the great majority of illiterate Chinese masses.²²⁷ These modern dramas adopted vernacular language for dialogues, staged topical events, and delivered speeches on contemporary social issues. The predominant themes of these dramas centred upon the emancipation of women, the freedom of marriage, and the rebellion against patriarchal family. During the 1910s and 1920s, *Wen-Ming-Xi* flourished in large Chinese cities, especially Shanghai. The leading playwrights and performance societies of 'civilised drama' looked for inspiration from the Western theatre patterns. Before the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, more than one hundred and sixty foreign scripts were translated into Chinese and no less than seventy playwrights from seventeen countries were introduced in journals (Fan 165). William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and Oscar Wilde were among the most celebrated British playwrights whose works exerted tremendous influence on Chinese modern drama. To Chinese translators, their selection of Western dramas was not only based on literary value but also the possible utilitarian function for social improvement (Fan 162). In the mind of the Chinese intellectuals of the enlightenment, Wilde's society comedies encompassed progressive feminism,

²²⁷ 'The theatre is a great school for all the people of China.' See Chen Duxiu's article 'On Drama' (1905) published in *New Novel*, vol.2 no.2, quoted in Fan, p.162. Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) is a leader in the New Culture Movement, and one of the pioneers to promote Marxism in China.

anarchist idealism, and the rejection of all forms of authority, therefore, translation, imitation and adaptation of Wilde's plays could be exploited to serve the purpose of expressing the plea for enlightenment and social reform.

The foremost journal of the New Culture Movement, *New Youth* (*Xin-Qing-Nian*), played a significant role in introducing Wilde as playwright to Chinese readers. It serialised the Chinese translation of *An Ideal Husband* from 15 December 1915 to 1 October 1916, and published the translation of the unfinished and less-known play *A Florentine Tragedy* in September 1916.²²⁸ The third issue of the journal put Wilde's picture on the cover page (See fig. 11). The chief editor Chen Duxiu discussed aestheticism in his article 'History of Modern European Literature', assessing Wilde as one of the most important playwrights of modern theatre, and one of the four most representative Western writers of the nineteenth century.²²⁹ In his remarkable essay 'On Revolution of Literature' (1 February 1917), which announced the beginning of the literary revolution, Chen Duxiu stated 'I love the Britain of Bacon and Darwin, but I love especially the Britain of Dickens and Wilde'. He believed that China must not only learn scientific spirit from Britain, but also learn its culture and humanistic spirit. He passionately appealed for the emergence of 'Chinese Wilde', crying 'who will be China's Hugo, Zola, Goethe, Hauptmann, Dickens or Wilde? Who will be bold enough to publicly challenge the "eighteen demons" and ignore the criticism of so-called scholars?'²³⁰ Chen's 'eighteen demons' referred to the eighteen Chinese writers of classicism in Ming and Qing dynasties (from the fifteenth century to

²²⁸ The translator of *An Ideal Husband* is Xue Qiying, and the translator of *A Florentine Tragedy* is Chen Gu

²²⁹ In Chen's article, the four greatest modern European writers are Wilde, Ibsen, Turgenev and Maeterlinck. See 'History of Modern European Literature', *New Youth* (1:3), 1 November 1915, p.2.

²³⁰ "予爱培根、达尔文之英吉利，予尤爱狄铿士、王尔德之英吉利。吾国文学界豪杰之士，有自负为中国之虞哥、左喇、桂特郝、卜特曼、狄铿士、王尔德者乎？有不顾迂儒之毁誉，明目张胆以与十八妖魔宣战者乎？" see Chen Duxiu, 'On Revolution of Literature' (《文学革命论》), *New Youth* (2:6), p.1

seventeenth century). He challenged the conventions of traditional Chinese literature in order to establish Chinese 'New Literature' (*Xin-Wen-Xue*) which could embody the zeitgeist of freedom and democracy. Besides Chen Duxiu's remarkable critique of Wilde, in the special issue of *New Youth* on modern drama in 1918, a reputable professor at Beijing University, Hu Shi (1891-1962) recommended modernising Chinese drama by following the examples such as Ibsen, Tolstoy, Schiller, Maeterlinck and Wilde.²³¹ Hu Shi shared Chen Duxiu's opinion that the stale Chinese classicism should be replaced with vigorous modern Western literature, and both of them urged Chinese playwrights to learn from Wilde's dramas. Chen Duxiu was later devoted to the promotion of Marxism in China, but Hu Shi insisted on liberalism and individualism. It seems the Chinese admiration for Wilde's plays was shared by intellectuals of different political opinions. This special issue on drama also listed a selection of one hundred 'best Western plays' as a guide for would-be translators, in which Wilde topped the English section with three works: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband* and *Salome*.

Wilde's society comedies inspired Chinese intellectuals to launch in-depth discussion about the realistic topics of gender and family. He gained a reputation as 'English Ibsen', and his comedies were often associated and compared with Ibsenism by Chinese critics.²³² In Britain, when Wilde was imprisoned in 1895,

²³¹ Hu Shi (1891-1962) is one of the most prominent leaders of the New Culture Movement and the Chinese vernacular movement. He is famous for being a theorist of liberalism in China.

²³² When George Bernard Shaw's *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* was published in 1891, Wilde wrote to him that 'your little book on Ibsenism and Ibsen is such a delight to me that I constantly take it up, and always find it stimulating and refreshing' (Eltis 23). Concerning the relationship between Wilde and Ibsenism, see some of Kerry Powell's studies, 'Wilde and Ibsen,' *English Literature in Transition* (1985), pp. 224-42, and *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (Cambridge, 1990). The Chinese compared Wilde to Ibsen probably because both of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which was very famous in China, and Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* involved the question about woman and family. Wilde was called 'English Ibsen' mainly because both of them questioned the traditional family relationship, which the Chinese leftist

his plays were withdrawn from the London stage. However, in China, many distinguished Chinese playwrights, such as Hong Shen, Tian Han, Guo Moruo and Ouyang Yuqian, translated or emulated Wilde's plays to challenge the traditional hierarchical Chinese family and encouraged Chinese youth to rebel against the bondage of Confucianism. This chapter will discuss each of the translations, reception, criticism and adaptations of Wilde's four society plays.



intellectuals were concerned. Bonnie S. McDougall argues 'although Wilde did not present the problems of individualism and the rights of women as boldly as Ibsen and Shaw, the works of all three were translated and published as part of the movement for a cultural rebirth in China in the 1910s' (81).

Fig. 11: The picture of Wilde on the cover page of the magazine *New Youth* (1:3), 1915

i *Lady Windermere's Fan*

On 20 February 1892, the four-act play *Lady Windermere's Fan* premiered at the St James's Theatre in London. This is Wilde's first successful play on stage. According to Anne Varty, 'it ran until 29 July before embarking on a provincial tour from 22 August to 29 October' and 'it was immediately revived in London and ran from 31 October to 30 November' (157). The subtitle of this play is 'a play about a good woman', referring ambiguously to the innocent and naive Lady Windermere, or, more contentiously, referring to the character of Mrs. Erlynne, a female dandy and woman with a past. In this comedy, Wilde reversed the traditional hierarchy of the fallen-woman plays, challenging the moral values and social conventions on which it was based. 'Mrs Erlynne is the only character with complete knowledge, and, beyond that, complete understanding. The fallen woman has a wit and wisdom which surpass that of the protective male and the innocent female' (Eltis 58).

The first Chinese translation of *Lady Windermere's Fan* appeared in May 1918 in the liberalist journal *People's Bell* (*Min-Duo*, vol.1 no.4). The anonymous translator used the pseudonym *Shen-Zhou-Tian-Lang-Sheng*.²³³ The title of this play was modified as *Fan*. Later in the same year, the female sociologist Shen Xingren (1895-1943) contributed another version using the title *Yi-Shan-Ji* (*The Story of a Lost Fan*), which was serialised in *New Youth* (5:6, 6:1, 6:3) from December 1918 to March 1919.²³⁴ She assessed this play as Wilde's 'best masterpiece' and 'a piece of work of genius'.²³⁵ She especially appreciated

²³³ The literary translation of *Shen-Zhou-Tian-Lang-Sheng* (神州天浪生) is 'Chinese inborn romantic lad'.

²³⁴ *Yi-Shan-Ji* in Chinese characters is 《遗扇记》

²³⁵ “戏剧里最大的杰作” “天才的著作”, see *New Youth* (5:6), p.596

Wilde's witty dialogues and 'the truth revealed in paradox'.²³⁶ Meanwhile, she also noted that Wilde's society comedies were 'located in English scenery, describing pure English upper society and using pure English idioms, so they are not easy for foreign readers to fully grasp'.²³⁷ Such concern about the acculturation seemed to be addressed in Hong Shen's translation in 1924. Hong (1894-1955) graduated from Beijing Tsinghua University and then went to the United States to continue his education. He attended Professor George Pierce Baker's course in playwriting at Harvard University in 1919, and thus became the first Chinese person specialising in Western performing arts. His version of *Lady Windermere's Fan* reset the scene from central London of Victorian Britain to early twentieth-century Shanghai. The names of the characters in the play were replaced by Chinese names, and the names of places in England were fully adapted to well-known locations in Shanghai. For example, Lord Windermere was given a Chinese name *Zi-Ming*, and Duchess of Berwick was renamed Madame Chen. 'Lady Windermere' was changed into a typical Chinese word *Shao-Nai-Nai*, which was used in high classes' families in 1920s Chinese metropolitan cities to refer to housewives. The most approximate English word corresponding to *Shao-Nai-Nai* should be 'her ladyship'. The adaptation made this play easier for a Chinese audience to understand. Hong's version of *Lady Windermere's Fan* was serialised in the magazine *The Eastern Miscellany* in 1924 (21:2-5). A year later, it was reissued as a separate volume by Shanghai Commercial Press. Hong Shen's translation was unique among the Chinese translations of Wilde's works because it was also a process of creative writing. Hong Sinicized this English comedy and successfully tailored it to the taste of Chinese readers. Hong defended his cross-cultural adaptation by maintaining 'the weakness in humanity is similar and

²³⁶ "Paradox 的蕴藏真理", *Ibid.* p. 597

²³⁷ "王尔德的戏曲大部分都是用本地风光, 所描写的又是极纯粹的英国上等社会, 所用的话也是极纯粹的英国熟语, 所以外国人不容易领会", *Ibid.*

universal regardless of country or period'.²³⁸ Therefore, as long as the translation can pass Wilde's irony and criticism of society to Chinese readers, the translator has the right to change the background of the story if such adaptation benefits the understanding of the readers. Hong's interpretation of *Lady Windermere's Fan* retained the basic structure of the original plot, but was not limited to original linguistic expression. It exploited the sociological significance of the comedy to serve a different cultural context, and this experiment in acculturation proved to be successful. The dramatist Cao Yu recalled: 'When I was in high school, I read Mr Hong Shen's translation of *Lady Windermere's Fan*. I became so interested in it that I read it many times until the pages of the book scattered'.²³⁹ After Hong Shen's translation, there were at least other three Chinese translations of this play. In 1926, Pu Press published the version of Pan Jiaxun, who transliterated the title 'Lady Windermere's Fan'.²⁴⁰ In the preface, the translator pointed out 'many people think Wilde's advantage is wit, so reading his scripts is just to learn how to speak wittily. I believe this concept is a big obstacle to fully understanding Wilde'.²⁴¹ Pan argued that the readers should focus more on the criticism of society in Wilde's comedies. In May 1936, Zhang Youji's translation was published by Shanghai Qi-Ming Press. In the epilogue, Zhang introduced Wilde's literary significance as a playwright and the reception of this play in Britain. Finally, on the eve of Sino-Japanese war, Yang Yisheng got his translation of this play published by Shanghai Da-Tong Press. The timeline below lists the translations of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in Chinese chronologically.

²³⁸ “生性之弱点，则古今万国，多有相同，故剧中所言，大似我国之情形”，quoted in Fang, p.32

²³⁹ “在中学时，我把洪深先生改编的王尔德的《少奶奶的扇子》都读破了”，see Cao Yu, *On Plays*, p.535

²⁴⁰ The literal translation of the title 'Lady Windermere's Fan' in Chinese is 《温德米尔夫人的扇子》

²⁴¹ “有许多人以为 Wilde 的长处只有会说漂亮俏皮话，读他的剧本亦只是学说漂亮俏皮话，这个观念我以为了解 Wilde 的一个大障碍”，see Pan Jiaxun, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1926), p.1.

Year	Translator	Publisher	Location	Chinese Title
1918	anonymous	<i>People's Bell</i>	Beijing	<i>Fan (Shan)</i>
1918/ 1919	Shen Xingren	<i>New Youth</i>	Beijing	<i>The Story of a Lost Fan (Yi-Shan-Ji)</i>
1924	Hong Shen	<i>The Eastern Miscellany</i>	Shanghai	<i>Her Ladyship's Fan (Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi)</i>
1926	Pan Jiayun	<i>Pu Press</i>	Beijing	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>
1936	Zhang Youji	<i>Qi-Ming Publisher</i>	Shanghai	<i>Her Ladyship's Fan (Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi)</i>
1937	Yang Yisheng	<i>Da-Tong Press</i>	Shanghai	<i>Her Ladyship's Fan (Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi)</i>

This play was premiered in China at Shanghai's famous Olympic Theatre on 30 May 1924. Its director was Hong Shen, and it was performed by Shanghai Drama Association. The Olympic Theatre was located at No. 742 West Nanjing Street in central Shanghai. In the 1920s and 1930s, the West Nanjing Street in Shanghai gathered a number of the best theatres in China, including the Olympic, Carlton, Empire, Palace, Victoria, Paris, Isis, Majestic, etc, that could be compared with Piccadilly Circus area in London. Yet, most of these theatres were owned by European or American companies. Hong's production of the play was based on his own sinicized translation *Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi*. This was the first British comedy to be successfully staged in China, and it exerted a substantial influence on the development of Chinese modern drama in direction and performance. The performance was acclaimed in Shanghai's newspapers and magazines. The critic and novelist Mao Dun recorded the enthusiasm of the audience, 'five hundred tickets are sold out immediately, and the theatre has to issue two hundred extra tickets, (even so), people still demand extra performances'.²⁴² The aesthetic theorist Zhu Guangqian contributed a review of the Chinese performance of this play in the journal *General* (1:2) in October 1926.

²⁴² “五百张票子顷刻之间就卖完了,不得不增加二百张”, see L. Wang, p.195

Zhu compared the response of the British and Chinese audience to the comedy, and believed that the production of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in China was even more successful.²⁴³ The renowned playwright Tian Han asserted that Hong Shen's production established the foundation of the performing arts of Chinese modern drama and praised it for this reason.²⁴⁴

Hong made several noticeable contributions to modern Chinese drama through staging this play. First, he brought actresses into the performance. In 1920s Shanghai, watching Western dramas or Chinese modern dramas was thought to show one's elite westernised education and liberal political attitude. In contrast, those who attended indigenous Chinese Peking opera were labelled as conservative both in culture and morality. However, the earliest Chinese modern dramas were influenced by the tradition of Peking opera: they did not have actresses.²⁴⁵ The problem is, unlike Peking opera, which has a special make-up and professional voice training for a male actor to play the female role, most of the actors of the earliest modern drama were amateurs, and the plays were formed by dialogues rather than singing. When the audience saw a Chinese man wearing Western woman's dress step on the realistic stage and desperately try to speak in a woman's voice, they were often unable to help laughing. Although the directors wanted to express serious social concerns and enlighten the public, the performances of the modern dramas usually turned into a farce. One of Hong Shen's contributions to the development of Chinese modern drama is that he pioneered the introduction of actresses to the stage. It did encounter resistance from some actors who used to play female roles, but Hong successfully persuaded them without offending their self-esteem. After his production of *Lady*

²⁴³ This article was later collected in Zhu's monograph, *Travelling in Britain* (《旅英杂谈》).

²⁴⁴ “奠定了中国话剧表导演艺术方面初步的规模”, see *Complete Works of Tian Han*, vol. 13, p.652

²⁴⁵ The Peking opera only has male actors; the female roles are also played by male actors, who are called *Dan*.

Windermere's Fan, actresses began to be widely accepted in Chinese modern drama.

Secondly, Hong underscored the importance of cross-cultural transition. The success of Wilde's play in China directed by Hong Shen could be contrasted with the failure of the first production of George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* four years earlier. Shaw's play was premiered in October 1920 at the New Shanghai Theatre with abundant advertisements, but met with a cold reception. More than one third of the audience left the theatre before the last act, complaining they did not understand what the play talked about. Its director Wang Zhong-Xian reflected on the failure and concluded that adaptations were needed to accommodate China's socio-cultural ideals and the needs of a Chinese audience (K. Li 203). Hong Shen agreed with Wang's opinion, noting that translation of foreign plays was usually involved in transplanting alien customs, psychology, and manners, which baffled the audience's understanding.²⁴⁶ He argued that translators needed to bring a foreign text more completely into the Chinese cultural system if the audience had little knowledge of the cultural background of that text. For example, a Chinese actor reading the lines such as 'I am an Englishman' would appear funny to Chinese audience, and divert their attention away from understanding the ideas of social reform expressed in plays.²⁴⁷ Therefore, Hong Shen presented all the characters in *Lady Windermere's Fan* with Chinese names and in Chinese dress; the fan in the play was made of Chinese green silk; Lord Darlington (Mr. Zhang in Hong's translation) was served an oolong tea on a lacquered plate made in southern Chinese Fujian Province. Playing cards in Wilde's English text was changed into playing mahjong in the

²⁴⁶ “译剧乃甚难之事，往往有此国之风俗、习惯、行事、心理，断非他国人所能领悟了解者。勉强译出，观众仍然莫名其妙”，see Sun Zhong-Tian, *Modern Chinese Literary History*, p. 222.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Chinese version.²⁴⁸ ‘Cigarette’ in Mr Dumby’s analogy for marriage was replaced with ‘opium’, because ‘opium’ was a more popular addictive drug in China.²⁴⁹ More significantly, Hong revised the form of Wilde’s play to highlight Chinese affairs, which the audience would more readily accept, while keeping the overall meaning and acts. For example, he reset the scene of Act One. This is Wilde’s script,

Scene: Morning-room of Lord Windermere’s house in Carlton House Terrace, London. [...] Doors C. and R. Bureau with books and papers R. Sofa with small tea-table L. Window opening on to terrace L. Table R.

LADY WINDERMERE *is at table R., arranging roses in a blue bowl (CW 420).*

Hong Shen’s translation is quoted below (the adaptations are underlined):

Scene: Drawing-room of Madam Xun's house in a high-class residential area in central Shanghai. [...] the room is decorated with small flags and paper flowers. Two doors on each side of the room, velvet curtains hung up, windows *opening on to garden*, sofa with small smoking-table, on it cigarette, matches, ashtray, armchair with embroidered cushion, on desk, hair-pen, Chinese ink, Chinese rice paper, and invitation letters.

MADAM XU wears purple Indian silk dress, writing letters at the desk.²⁵⁰

Hong Shen creatively described the interior decoration of the house in detail. Small flags and paper flowers were frequently seen in Westernised families in

²⁴⁸ Cecil Graham: ‘I say, Darlington, let us have some cards’ (CW 451) was translated as ‘let us have some mah-jong’. Mahjong is a game of Chinese origin, played by four people with 144 tiles.

²⁴⁹ In Wilde’s English text, Dumby (with a sigh) states ‘Good heavens! How marriage ruins a man! It’s as demoralising as cigarettes and far more expensive’ (CW 451). The word ‘cigarettes’ was replaced by ‘opium’ in Hong Shen’s Chinese version.

²⁵⁰ Translated from *Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi* in *The Eastern Miscellany* (21:2), p.123

1920s Shanghai. Velvet curtains and embroidered cushions demonstrated the owner of this house belonged to the wealthy upper classes. Writing letters on rice paper by a hair-pen gave the audience the impression that the hostess was elegant and well educated. The purple dress was usually the college uniform of female students, implying Madam Xu (Lady Windermere) might hold a degree and thus be a 'New Woman'. Hong Shen revised the scene in the original text, 'LADY WINDERMERE *is arranging roses in a blue bowl*', into 'MADAM XU *is writing letters at the desk*', because in China it was usually the servants rather than the hostess who did the job of arranging flowers in a room.

In the beginning of the second act, Mr Dumby, Lady Stutfield, Duchess of Berwick, and Mrs. Cowper-Cowper chatted about the season of English society, which was unfamiliar to Chinese audience. Hong replaced the word 'season' with 'the fashion of dancing', and added some witty Shanghai dialects. In the Chinese translation, Hong renamed Mrs Erlynne as 'Ms Jin'. When interpreting the dialogue between Lady Plymdale and Mr Dumby on Mrs Erlynne's name (CW 438), Hong obviously added the new content of his own.

Lady Zhu (Lady Plymdale): why does she not call herself 'Mrs' or 'Miss', but calls herself 'Ms'?

Li B. R. (Dumby): This is the convenience of being a 'New Woman'.²⁵¹

The discussion about Erlynne and the new woman in the above dialogue was not seen in Wilde's original English text but created by Hong Shen.

Hong's translation also reflected the particular social characteristic of Shanghai in the 1920s as a semi-colony under the administration of Western powers. For example, in Act Three, the men left the club and went back to Lord Darlington's house. Mr Dumby (Li B. R. in Hong's translation) complained

²⁵¹ Translated from *Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi* in *The Eastern Miscellany* (21:3), p.129

What a nuisance their turning us out of the club at this hour! In Shanghai's concession area, the Westerners say the last words, as they enjoy extraterritoriality. It is only two o'clock. The lively part of the evening is only just beginning (CW 449).²⁵²

The underlined sentence was added by Hong Shen, which Sinicized the social context of this conversation. In the story of the Western empires' expansion in East Asia since the late nineteenth century, Chinese economies, natural resources, industries were largely controlled by the Western companies, and its domestic politics were greatly influenced and operated by the Western and Japanese empires. The complaint about the Westerners' privileges in China could easily arouse an emotional echo and win supports from the Chinese audience in Shanghai and other coastal cities. The introduction of modern theatres to China was a by-product of Western colonialism, but Hong Shen used this new platform to voice a sentiment of anti-colonialism.

It is noted that Hong Shen used Chinese idioms to interpret abstract debates. For instance, in Wilde's writing on 'cynic',

Cecil Graham: What is a cynic? (*Sitting on the back of sofa*)

Lord Darlington: A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Cecil Graham: And a sentimentalist, my dear Darlington, is a man who sees an absurd value in everything, and doesn't know the market price of any single thing (CW 452).

Hong Shen translated this conversation as the following:

Mr. Zhang: What is a cynic? (*Sitting on the back of sofa*)

Mr. Bo-Ying: A man who knows the bad smells of a sheep but does not know the good smells of mutton.

²⁵² Translated from *Shao-Nai-Nai-De-Shan-Zi* in *The Eastern Miscellany* (21:4), p.128

Mr. Zhang: And a sentimentalist is a man who only knows the good smells of mutton, and doesn't know the bad smells of a sheep.²⁵³

Hong Shen used the Chinese idiom of sheep and mutton to explain the abstract dialogue about cynic and sentimentalist. Such language of daily life was much easier for the Chinese audience to understand and more suitable for performance on stage.

The performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan* was an important event in the history of Chinese modern drama. It was not only acclaimed as a great success at that time, but also produced influential impacts on the development of modern theatres in China. The performance of this play should be located against the background of Chinese social conditions. During the early twentieth century, the Chinese intellectuals of enlightenment focused on the criticism of patriarchy. Because family is the most basic unit of society, the reform of family is a passage to rebuilding the new Chinese society based on the principles of freedom and equality. They argued that women were the biggest victims of the double standards of morality in the Confucian society. The liberation of women was seen as the most important part of the campaign for individual emancipation. Many gender-related issues, from freedom of marriage to the role of women in the family, were widely discussed. Such social consciousness warred against the conservative Confucian mode of patriarchy and engendered anti-traditional visions of the position of women in the family. *Lady Windermere's Fan* greatly enhanced Wilde's reputation among both Chinese intellectuals and middle classes, because as Bonnie McDougall points out, '[it] treats problems of social morality and the position of women' (78). Wilde expressed a series of engagingly modern arguments about English society's double standard with respect to morality and gender, which were Sinicized by Hong Shen to spotlight China's social problems.

²⁵³ “只知羊骚不知道羊肉香”, see *Ibid.* p.131

Hong talked about his ambition for the translation and production of this society play, he wanted to

create a genuinely new Chinese drama-- drama that would suit Chinese society rather than merely imitating the West. [...] [This play] describes a 'morally degenerated' woman, who seemed to be heartless, sacrificed herself to save other people's happiness. It shows that it is not easy to distinguish good and bad, and it should not arbitrarily distinguish the so-called good and bad. [...] This play has the sympathy for women.²⁵⁴

The play entered into serious debates about individualism and women's position in the family. In the moral revolution of the Chinese New Culture movement, Wilde's sympathy for 'fallen women' was appropriated for the ideological battle in China, which emphasised individual freedom, self-expression and rebellion against conventional authority. The Chinese intellectuals were searching for a model of anti-traditional new woman. The translation and performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan* suggested the socio-cultural climate that partly shaped literary interpretation during the 1920s. The barrenness of conventional morality exposed in this society play highlighted women as the victims of the double standards of morality in a male-chauvinist society.

Hong Shen also adapted and directed *Lady Windermere's Fan* for the screen in 1927. Although it did not create a sensation as great as it did on the stage, it was one of the earliest Chinese movies. It is said that the quality of this film could equal the best movies produced by Hollywood of the 1920s (Chen and Zou 170).

²⁵⁴ “中国自己的戏剧”,所述堕落之女子,似无心肝者,忽然天良触发,作不自私自利之事,保全他人幸福 [...] 善与恶不易分明,亦不宜太分明也”,“劝人厚道”, see *The Complete Works of Hong Shen*, Vol.1, p.464



(Fig. 12: the production of *Lady Windermere's Fan* directed by Hong Shen in Shanghai in 1924)



(Fig.13: A film poster for Chinese *Lady Windermere's Fan* in the 1930s)

ii Other Society Plays

Wilde's sympathy for 'fallen women' condemned by Victorian society is paramount in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance* (McDougall 80). In contrast to the popularity of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde's second society play, *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) was nevertheless relatively ignored in China.²⁵⁵ The only translation of this play was published in *Story Monthly* from 10 May 1921 to 10 December 1921 in Shanghai.²⁵⁶ The translator is Geng Shizhi, a member in Literary Research Association. This play could be seen as the most moralistic among Wilde's society comedies. As Sos Eltis argues, 'the play does more than offer a stereotypical battle between wicked aristocrat and seduced maiden; it questions the social and sexual customs which produced those stereotypes' (100). However, this play received a lot of negative criticism from the Victorian newspapers and journals. London's *Saturday Review* (6 May 1893) commented 'the story cannot be regarded as pleasant or satisfactory' (CH 153), and *Westminster Review* (June 1893) also criticised that 'as a work of art we find *A Woman of No Importance* unsatisfactory' (CH 160). The Chinese reviews and comments on this play were few, but generally they were consistent with those of the Victorian critics. For example, the literary and political critic Zhang Wentian admired Wilde's courage to challenge the hypocrisy within a system of double standards in respect of sex and gender, while on the other hand, thought that this play did not rise above the general level of the stage in terms of the plot and literary achievements.²⁵⁷

Wilde's third society play, *An Ideal Husband* produced by Lewis Waller at the Haymarket Theatre London on 3 January 1895, had several Chinese translations. This comedy talks about a man whose fortune and career is founded

²⁵⁵ In Britain, *A Woman of No Importance* was produced at Haymarket Theatre London on 19 April 1893 by Beerbohm Tree.

²⁵⁶ Volume 12, No. 5, 6, 8, 12

²⁵⁷ See *Anthology of Zhang Wentian*, vol.2, p.186

on deceit and who is rewarded with a seat in the cabinet. In contrast with Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, the hero in Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* did not confess his crime publicly but chose to only tell his wife. As Bonnie McDougall argues, *An Ideal Husband* can be seen as a political farce in which the innate corruption of political life is revealed and in which Wilde records that fraud and hypocrisy always win in the end (80). Kerry Powell observes that while a major theme of Victorian plays was the ideal wife, the dramatic basis of *An Ideal Husband* was the reverse-- Lady Chiltern demanded her husband to be 'pure' and 'without stain' (89). In this comedy, 'it is the husband not the wife who is being blackmailed; it is the wife not the husband who saves the day' (Powell 157). Powell points out that *An Ideal Husband* belonged to a heated debate over woman and family carried on in late Victorian literature and journalism.

The first Chinese translation of this play appeared in 1915 and 1916. Xue Qiying translated this play and got it published in *New Youth* in Beijing.²⁵⁸ The Chinese title was *Yi-Zhong-Ren*, which means 'Mr Right'. The translator Xue graduated from English department at Su Zhou Women's college. She thought the ironies of politicians and upper classes in this play could apply to both Britain and China.²⁵⁹ In October 1928, Shanghai Golden-House Bookshop issued another version translated by Xu Peiren, who admired Wilde's beautiful dialogues and intelligent paradoxes. In June 1932, Shanghai Shen-Zhou-Guo-Guang Publisher circulated Lin Chaozhen's translation *Li-Xiang-Liang-Ren*, which followed Shishikura's Japanese version of this play in 1913.²⁶⁰

The Importance of Being Earnest (February 1895) produced by George Alexander opened at St James's Theatre London. This farce removed its action from reality to the comic world (Eltis 170). H G. Wells praised it in the *Pall Mall*

²⁵⁸ It was serialised in volume 1, no.2, 3, 4, 6 and volume 2, no.2 of *New Youth*.

²⁵⁹ “对中国的‘上流社会’的绝妙讽刺”，quoted in *Foreign Literature Studies* (外国文学研究, issues 1-6, 1987) , p.77

²⁶⁰ The titles of both Japanese and Chinese translations were 《理想良人》

Gazette (15 Feb. 1895), asserting that ‘we must congratulate him unreservedly on a delightful revival of theatrical satire’ (CH 188). A. B. Walkley’s assessment was that ‘*The Importance of Being Earnest* was the culmination of Wilde’s development as dramatist’ (CH 196).²⁶¹ However, George Bernard Shaw did not accept a comedy aloof from social and political problems. He commented on this play in *Saturday Review* (23 Feb. 1895):

I cannot say that I greatly cared for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It amused me, of course; but unless comedy touches me as well as amuses me, it leaves me with a sense of having wasted my evening (CH 195).

The Chinese readers shared a similar attitude towards *The Importance of Being Earnest* with Shaw. Wilde had been regarded as a serious playwright, and few Chinese critics admired his plays simply because they were witty. The social and family problems raised by Wilde in *Lady Windermere’s Fan* attracted the attention of various sectors of Chinese society and the reading public. In contrast, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which is regarded by many British readers as Wilde’s masterpiece, received a cold reception in China. There was only one Chinese translation of this play in the 1920s and the 1930s. In March 1921, Wang Jing and Kong Xiangwo cooperated to translate this play, using the title ‘Same name, different marriages’ (《同名异娶》). It was published by Shanghai Tai-Dong Press.

Regarding Wilde’s other plays, *A Florentine Tragedy* translated by Chen Hu was serialised in the magazine *New Youth* in the second volume in 1916.²⁶² There were no Chinese translations of *The Duchess of Padua*, *Vera, or the Nihilist* and *La Sainte Courtisane* during the early twentieth century. The table below

²⁶¹ *The Speaker*, 23 Feb 1895.

²⁶² No.1 on 1 September, and No.3 on 1 November

shows the translations of Wilde's society comedies (excluding *Lady Windermere's Fan*)

Oct. 1915 - Oct. 1916	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Xue Qiyong	<i>New Youth</i>	Beijing
May-Dec. 1921	<i>A Woman of No Importance</i>	Geng Shizhi	<i>Novel Monthly</i>	Shanghai
Mar. 1921	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	Wang Jing & Kong, Xiangwo	Taidong Book Company	Shanghai
Oct. 1928	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Xu Peiren	Golden house Publisher	Shanghai
Jun. 1932	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Lin Chaozhen	Shen-Zhou-Guo- Guang Press	Shanghai

Comparing how Wilde was read and judged in Victorian Britain and early twentieth-century China, it is observed that Chinese readers, regardless of the social and cultural gaps, understood ideas shown in Wilde's plays such as social satire, individualism, bourgeois hypocrisy, moral conservatism, social injustice, class discrimination, and subversion of social and sexual conventions. As Chang and Owen argue, Chinese readers found in Western masters a consistent strain of social criticism and intellectual enlightenment, and the Chinese intellectuals believed that the Western plays 'could serve not only as a new literary form but also as a template for new behavioural patterns in life' (485). Wilde's plays were associated with the social themes of individual freedom and women's emancipation. In particular, the adaptation and production of *Lady Windermere's Fan* echoed the social movements of improving women's position in society and family. The discussion about these plays inspired Chinese readers to question the traditional Confucian ethics thus accelerated the decline of the orthodox values of Confucianism. The sexual and moral politics of modern China provided an indispensable basis for understanding Wilde's reputation as a serious playwright of social realism. Overall, in reading *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of*

No Importance (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Chinese critics who were concerned with social reform appropriated these society comedies to herald a more liberated morality of women and family.

3. *Salome* in China and Its Social Interpretation: Women's Liberation

This chapter first examines the translation and performance of *Salome* in China. Many Chinese intellectuals showed interest in this tragedy, and the playwright Tian Han made the most significant contribution to the promotion of the play on the Chinese stage. The chapter then investigates the Chinese emulation, adaptation and transformation of *Salome* in the process of cross-cultural dissemination, analysing the social influence of this play on the movements of women's liberation in modern China.

In contrast to his society comedies, Oscar Wilde's one-act tragedy *Salome* is unique in his corpus. Anne Varty notices that '*Salome* appears to be uneasy bedfellow with the society comedies which dominate our received picture of his dramatic work' (131). Yet, this tragedy was one of the most influential English plays in China during the 1920s. Many Chinese critics considered *Salome* as Wilde's best and most representative play. Chen Duxiu, one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, read *Salome* as the announcement which proclaimed 'love is the source of life'.²⁶³

i Translation and Performance of *Salome* in China

²⁶³ “爱情者生活之本源”，see Chen Duxiu, 'A Preface to *Jiang-Sha-Ji*' (《绛纱记》), *Jia-Yin* (1:7) July 1915, quoted in Yang, p.135

Robert Ross, the literary executor and a lifelong friend of Wilde, once said ‘*Salome* has made the author’s name a household word wherever the English language is not spoken’ (qtd. in Sato, *Wilde Years* 60). Whether this statement was exaggerated still remains as a question, nevertheless, at least it applies to the reception of Wilde in China and Japan during the early twentieth century. In contrast to the controversies that it encountered in Britain, *Salome* received overwhelming appreciation in China. Numerous writers, critics and playwrights showed their interest in this play. In terms of the number of translations, reviews and imitations, Wilde’s *Salome* topped the list of the most widely known British plays in China during the 1920s and 1930s. There were at least six Chinese translations during this period. The earliest version of Lu Si’an and Qiu Peiyue appeared in 1920. It was serialised in the newspaper *Shanghai Republic Daily News Supplement* from 27 March to 1 April. Around a year later, Tian Han (1898-1968), one of the most marvellous Chinese playwrights, contributed another translation of *Salome* initially published in the magazine *Young China* (*Shao-Nian-Zhong-Guo*, 2:9) on 15 March 1921. It was later collected into *The Series of Young China Association* (《少年中国学会丛书》), which would be issued in Shanghai in January 1923. Tian Han’s version has been recognised by many critics as the best Chinese translation of Wilde’s *Salome*, and it was repeatedly reprinted during the 1920s.²⁶⁴ Guo Moruo (1892-1978), a leading poet of the New Culture Movement, wrote a poem entitled ‘The Night Song of a Misanthrope’ as the preface to Tian Han’s translation, with a dedication ‘to Oscar Wilde, the author of *Salome*, and Tian Han, the translator of this play’.²⁶⁵ In 1927, other two Chinese translations of *Salome* were issued almost at the same time. One was Xu Baoyan’s version first published by Shanghai Guang-Hu Press and later reprinted by Daguang Press in 1935. The other was co-authored by Gui Yu

²⁶⁴ It is still used as a standard reference in Chinese universities today.

²⁶⁵ Guo’s poem devoting to Wilde and Tian Han was published in *Young China* (*Shao-Nian-Zhong-Guo*, 2:9) on 15 March 1921, together with Tian Han’s translation.

and Xu Mingji, which was published by Shanghai Commercial Press. The popularity of *Salome* persisted in the 1930s. The Chinese Green Star Press based in Chengdu circulated Zhong Lin's translation in 1934, and on the eve of Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Shanghai Qi-Ming Publisher collected the translation of *Salome* by Wang Hongsheng and Shen Peiqiu into the anthology *World Famous Drama* (《世界戏剧名著》). Some Chinese translations, such as Tian Han's and Xu Baoyan's versions, were accompanied by Aubrey Beardsley's cover design and illustrations for *Salome* (see fig. 14). The most frequently reproduced pictures in China were 'The Peacock Skirt', 'The Dancer's Reward' and 'The Stomach Dance'.

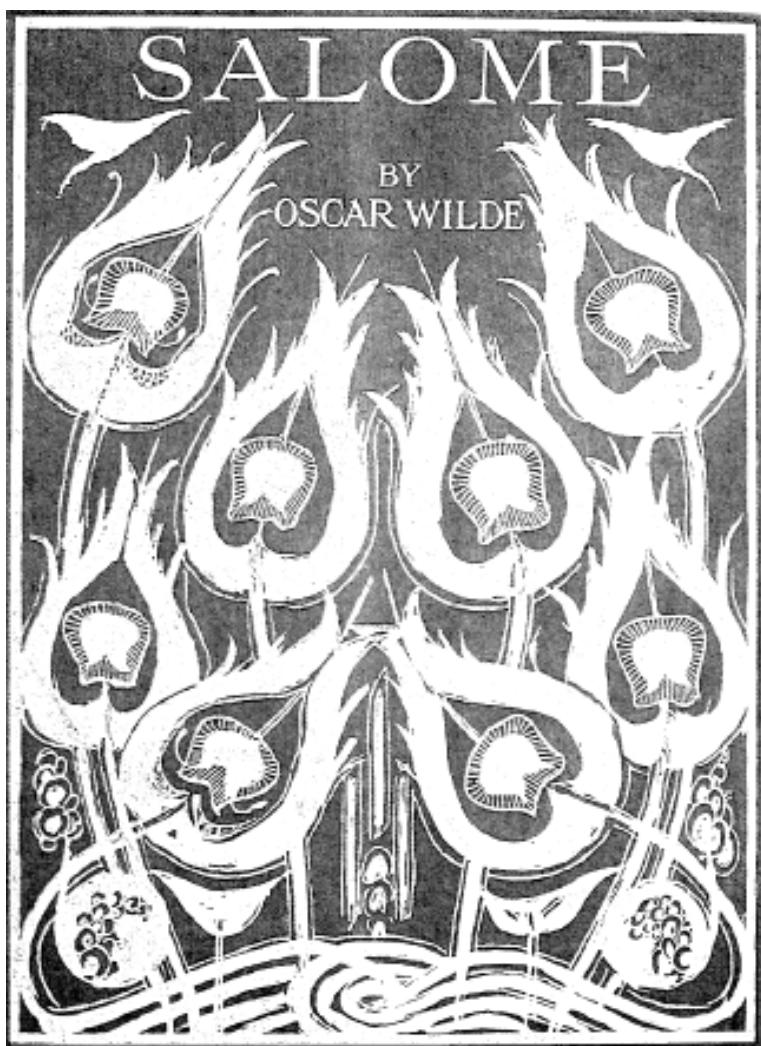


Fig. 14: The cover of Tian Han's *Salome* issued by Zhonghua Press in 1923

Regarding the performance of *Salome*, it can be said that Tian Han had made the most significant contribution to the promotion of this play on the Chinese stage. During his stay in Japan (1917-1919), he watched *Salome* performed in Tokyo's theatres several times. After translating the script into Chinese in 1921, he embarked on staging it in China. As the director of South China Troupe (南国社), one of the most famous and reputable theatrical companies in modern China, he used his prestige to gather the most talented actors and actresses with renowned musicians and choreographers for the production of *Salome*. The actress playing Salome was Yu Shan,²⁶⁶ and the actor playing St John was Zheng Junli.²⁶⁷ The pianist Xian Xinghai and the violinist Wu Zuoren cooperated to play the music for Salome's 'dance of seven veils', the basic melody of which adopted Beethoven's minuets.²⁶⁸ Wu Zuoren also designed the scenery. Tian Han himself acted as the director of this production. On 6 July 1929, Tian Han and his South China Troupe successfully premiered *Salome* at a Nanjing theatre.²⁶⁹ The journalist and literary critic, Shi Jihan recorded the enthusiastic response of the Chinese audience to this performance. In the review 'The Visit to the Performance of South China Troupe', he described that 'the theatre could only accommodate three hundred people, but an audience of more than four hundred attended, badly crowded!' He complained about the high price of the tickets, 'a ticket cost one silver dollar, too expensive', but he

²⁶⁶ Yu Shan (1908-1968) is a Chinese actress famous for playing Salome and Carmen. She studied at Shanghai National Conservatoire, and graduated from Nanjing University. She is fluent in English.

²⁶⁷ Zheng Junli (1911-1969) is a reputable Chinese actor, director and movie theorist.

²⁶⁸ Xian Xinghai (1905-1945) is a famous musician in China, who studied music in Paris. His representative work is *chorus of the Yellow River*, an epic opera. In *Salome*, he played the piano. Wu Zuoren (1908-1997) played the violin in *Salome*, but he is more famous for his oil paintings.

²⁶⁹ Nanjing was the capital of Republican China during the 1920s and 1930s.

continued to write ‘I couldn’t resist watching this play, and, alas, I found there were so many people having the same feeling with me’.²⁷⁰ Shi Jihan concluded the review with the praise ‘the scenery was well fitted to the story, and the actress of Salome, Miss Yu Shan’s performance was excellent’.²⁷¹ Similarly, Shen Songquan, a writer and critic, recalled the experience of watching *Salome* in his reminiscence, ‘the actress of Salome, Yu Shan performs extremely well, and her melodious voice is full of passion’.²⁷² The poet Liang Shi-Qiu is said to have called the actress Yu Shan’s name in his dream after watching *Salome* (Song Y.Q. 442). Tian Han and the South China Troupe continued to perform *Salome* in the 1930s in the theatres of Shanghai and Ningbo.²⁷³ In these performances, the Chinese audience were most impressed by Salome embracing the head of John the Baptist and calling the name of her lover. For example, the Chinese aesthete Ye Lingfeng (1904-1975) regarded the fatal kiss as the pinnacle of *Salome*. This play gained a great success in all the cities where it was staged, and Salome became a representative literary character in Chinese modern drama.

The success of the performance of *Salome* on the Chinese stage should firstly be attributed to the outstanding performance team organised by Tian Han: the actress of Salome, the actor of St. John, the musicians, and the director Tian Han himself were all theatre stars in China, especially the actress Yu Shan. She enjoyed high popularity among the audiences, as described by the writer Wang Yian, ‘she is gorgeous, and her performance is vivid’.²⁷⁴ The second cause of this

²⁷⁰ “戏院里的位子只有三百，可是观众已经超过了四百”“尽管票价很贵，1个银元，但是无法抵御想去看的诱惑”，see ‘The Visit of South Troupe’s Performance of *Salome*’ (《南国演剧参观记》，1929)，quoted in Guo, p.129.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² See *The History of Modern Chinese publication* (出版史料) 2nd Issue, 1991, quoted in http://www.lantianyu.net/pdf49/ts070032_9.htm [Cited 01 July 2010].

²⁷³ Ningbo is a city of Zhejiang Province in East China, and one of the first trade ports open to the Western business after the opium wars.

²⁷⁴ “容貌既美，表现又生动”，quoted in *Selection of Tian Han’s works*, p.245

success could be the theatres' professionally market-orientated operation of advertisements.



(Fig. 15: 'Salome embracing the Head of John the Baptist', a picture of the performance in Nanjing, illustrated from the magazine *Good Friends* in October 1929)



(Fig. 16: 'Miss Yu Shan performing Salome', a picture of the performance in Nanjing, illustrated from the magazine *Good Friends* in October 1929)

Nonetheless, in the director Tian Han's opinion, the success of the performance of *Salome* demonstrated the triumph of iconoclasm and the Chinese public's enthusiasm for individual freedom. When Tian Han established the South China Troupe in Shanghai in 1926, he declared the aim of this organisation was to 'unify the promising young people who care about the contemporary society to launch the revolutionary movements in arts'.²⁷⁵ He asserted that 'all the members of South China Troupe are the people who love peace and freedom, standing on the side of the oppressed and protesting on their behalf'.²⁷⁶ Tian Han explained his intention in staging Wilde's *Salome*:

It has been seven or eight years since my translation of *Salome* was successfully published. Now we have found the best performers for the roles of Iokanaan, Salome and Herodias [...] this play obviously contains the challenge to the existing society and its morality, so we decided to perform it.²⁷⁷

In the context of early twentieth-century China, the morality that *Salome* challenged was the traditional Confucianism. Tian Han recommended this one-act tragedy to the Chinese public because he believed it could be turned into a cultural and political resource for the New Culture Movement. The image of *Salome* in Tian Han's comprehension could be seen as the literary stereotype of the New Women seeking the freedom of marriage, independence of personality, and realisation of the individual's full development. *Salome* represented resistance to the patriarchal society and the challenge to a traditionally silenced subject in the Confucian Chinese society: the rights of women. Tian Han's reading of *Salome* should be associated with 'woman's question' during the first few decades of the

²⁷⁵ “团结能与时代共痛痒之有为青年，作艺术上之革命运动”，see Tian Han, *The Collection of Tian Han's Works* (Volume 15), p.159.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷⁷ “这剧本对于反抗既成社会的态度最明显”，see *The Collection of Tian Han's Works* (Volume 14), p. 197.

twentieth century in China. The Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement who emphasised progression and enlightenment saw the liberation of women as an essential part of the social issues of the modernisation and democratisation of the nation. Confucianism was considered to oppress women and natural humanity, so China needed to struggle to create a new gender ideology inspired by the Western cultures. In literature, the traditional womanhood of ‘virtue, morality, chasteness and gentleness’²⁷⁸ was being rejected; instead, the ‘New Woman’ was equated with the positive aspects of modernisation. As Sarah Stevens argues, a New Woman is ‘educated, political, and intensely nationalistic’, ‘cultural reflections of the New Woman archetype highlight the transformation of an oppressed Old woman into a New Woman, thus representing the necessary transformation of the Chinese nation’ (83). As a leader of the New Culture Movement in modern drama, Tian Han promoted the transformation of society and cultivation of one’s character through arts and literature in order to build an ideal young China. Tian Han admired Wilde’s *Salome* because this drama successfully depicted a woman full of passion who never makes a compromise with her love. He was impressed with her persistence, and considered her death to be a noble gesture. In the postscript of his translation of *Salome*, Tian Han commented, ‘the most obvious attitude of the play is no compromise with the existing society, to rebel against the authority without hesitation, never surrender to power!’²⁷⁹ He hoped that the Chinese public would be influenced by ‘Salome’s spirit’, namely, ‘eyes are fixed upon the object, ears are not distracted by other voices, seek what you love and prepare to die for it’.²⁸⁰ He appealed to the Chinese audience, ‘my fellow citizens, who love freedom and equality, please

²⁷⁸ ‘Virtue, Morality, Chasteness and Gentleness’ in Chinese language are *Xian, De, Zhen, Shu* (贤\德\贞\淑).

²⁷⁹ The postscript of his translation of *Salome* was published in *Young China* in March 1921

²⁸⁰ “目无旁视，耳无旁听，以全生命求其所爱，殉其所爱”， see *The Collection of Tian Han's Works* (Volume 1), p. 6

learn from Salome's persistence and fearlessness to pursue what you love and cherish!'²⁸¹

As a socially-minded intellectual of the enlightenment, Tian Han politicised Wilde's *Salome* to justify its performance, entitling this decadent play with a new interpretation of cultural reformation. He transformed the play into a national and patriotic discourse upon serious social questions. He claimed that *Salome* could inspire the Chinese people to get rid of the restrictions of rotten Confucianism. The passion, independence and persistence of Salome were the qualities that traditional Chinese women lacked. However, Tian Han's interpretation of *Salome* was questionable. For example, he interpreted the lines in *Salome*, 'The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red [...] There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth' (CW 590). This is an analogy used by Salome to eulogise St. John's handsome appearance, but Tian Han considered that 'the red blasts of trumpets' meant 'art, in Wilde's way, is the red trumpet that declares the arrival of the new age'.²⁸² Tian Han replaced the *fin-de-siècle* decadence with the conception of 'new age' of the Enlightenment. To further support his argument, Tian Han claimed that '*Salome* is Wilde's masterpiece, which was forbidden in Britain at that time [...] Wilde even threatened to immigrate to France for the censorship, which shows Wilde's spirit of freedom, rebellion, and resistance'.²⁸³ Tian Han focused on the revolutionary meaning of *Salome*, while he totally ignored the sensual and erotic dimensions of this play. Moreover, Tian Han advocated 'art for society's sake' and 'literature for proletarians'. He argued that modern dramas could be used to articulate the hopes and interests of the underprivileged,

²⁸¹ "爱自由平等的民众呵，你们也学着这种专一的大无畏的精神以追求你们所爱的罢！"
See *The Collection of Tian Han's Works* (Volume 14), p.343

²⁸² *Ibid*, p.341

²⁸³ *Ibid*.

oppressed lower classes, but the high price of the ticket of *Salome* (one silver dollar) could exclude most of the working classes from entering the theatre.²⁸⁴

ii Chinese Criticism, Imitations and Transformation of *Salome*

Tian Han's prestigious reputation in the New Culture Movement lent authority to his interpretation of *Salome* as the story of a New Woman who defies authority and conventions, and this became the mainstream interpretation of this play in China throughout the 1930s. Many Chinese left-wing intellectuals considered that *Salome* represented idealism, independent personality, the freedom of love and marriage, and other elements of the Enlightenment. The critics showed great enthusiasm for *Salome*. They admired the play and believed that it best illustrated Wilde's aestheticism.

For instance, Shen Zemin (1900-1933), a critic and writer of the New Culture Movement, discussed *Salome* in his essay 'A Critical Introduction to Wilde' in *Story Monthly* in 1921. He argued that this play 'expresses beauty through horror', 'Salome is a crazy dreamer, embodying a rebellious decadence in an age when contemptibility is not condemned and carnality is not shame'.²⁸⁵ He analysed:

Salome is the symbol of Wilde himself [...] Salome's passion is Wilde's passion, in writing *Salome*, Wilde is actually writing himself; to write Salome's doomed fate is to write his own fate.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ In Shanghai of the 1920s, the average rate of a blue-collar worker's wage was a half silver dollar per day. The monthly income of a working family (usually four to five people) was 14 silver dollars.

²⁸⁵ “表现华美于恐怖之中的。莎乐美是一个狂热的梦，表现当一个卑鄙不足为恶，肉欲不足为羞的时代中一种反叛性的堕落”，See Shen Zemin, 'A Critical Introduction to Wilde', *Story Monthly* (12:5, 1921). *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 1 July 2010].

²⁸⁶ “莎乐美的激情就是王尔德激情[...] 莎乐美的命运就是他自己的命运”，*ibid*.

Shen concluded that ‘the death of Salome symbolises an end of a decadent period’.²⁸⁷ The critic and socialist theorist Zhang Wentian (1900-1976) and the translator and literary critic Wang Fuquan (1900-1956) serialised their co-authored article ‘Introduction to Wilde’ in the supplement to *Republic Daily News* in April 1922. They commented that *Salome* was ‘a piece of extremely excellent work of love tragedy’. They compared *Salome* with D. G. Rossetti’s works, pointing out that ‘*Salome* describes the clash between flesh and soul’.²⁸⁸ They argued that the tragedy was ‘the most lifelike love story amongst Wilde’s works’.²⁸⁹ The critic and writer Xu Mingji (1900-1981) contributed a review of *Salome* to the magazine *Story Monthly* (18:10, October 1927). He contended that ‘this play describes the conflict between flesh and soul, and the tragic fate of flesh’. He saw ‘an unlimited passion’ and ‘an echo of semi-sacred mood’ in *Salome*. He concluded that ‘the death of the young Syrian, the death of St. John, and the death of Salome, are all for love and being loved’.²⁹⁰ Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987), a notable writer, essayist, translator and literary theorist, wrote ‘Oscar Wilde’s Aestheticism’, which was collected in his anthology *The Disciplines of Literature* published by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1928. In this article, Liang claimed that ‘Salome symbolises the modern Western civilisation’, because ‘everything (in the West) is as glorious and ambitious as the Princess Salome, [...] all (in the West) are burning fiery fire and driven by semi-crazy desire as the Princess Salome’.²⁹¹ Liang created the term ‘the Spirit of Salome’, which means the absolute rejection of the past, arguing that ‘the modern Western

²⁸⁷ “沙乐美的死是一个颓废时代的终局”, *ibid.*

²⁸⁸ “恋爱悲剧的妙品”, “灵肉冲突”, see Zhang and Wang, ‘Introduction to Wilde’, *Supplement to Republic Daily* (April 1922), *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 1 July 2010].

²⁸⁹ “王尔德著作中 [...] 最逼真的恋爱悲剧”, *ibid.*

²⁹⁰ “无限制的热情的共鸣”, “半神圣的情绪的响应”, “描写灵肉的冲突结果是肉的悲惨的命运”, “大尉的死, 约翰的死, 莎乐美的死, 一切为了爱和被爱而走在死的路上”, see Xu Mingji, *Story Monthly* (18:10, October 1927), p.91

²⁹¹ “莎乐美是现代欧美社会的塑型”, “一切都如莎乐美公主一样的艳丽, 进取[...] 一切都如莎乐美公主一般在内心里燃烧着热烈的火, 半疯狂的追求”, see Liang Shiqiu, *The Collection of Liang Shiqiu*, Volume 6, p.454.

society of the Industrial Revolution is full of the spirit of Salome'.²⁹² In August of the same year, the poet Jia Ling wrote the essay 'Remembering Salome', which was collected in his anthology *Dream* circulated by Shanghai Chun-ye Publisher. Other critical articles on Wilde's *Salome* included the romantic poet Zhu Xiang (1904-1933), who praised *Salome*, saying 'whoever reads *Salome* will definitely become interested in this play [...] it is a perfect and unique piece of work in terms of scenery, structure, plot and rhetoric'.²⁹³ The novelist Mao Dun (1896-1981) recommended *Salome* to Chinese readers. He argued that Salome was 'an aesthete, hedonist and individualist', and this play of 'new romanticism' should be carefully studied.²⁹⁴

Salome's passionate and fatal kiss impressed the Chinese readers and 'the kiss of Salome' was reproduced in Chinese modern literature. Liang Shiqiu wrote a series of poems with the title 'On Beardsley's Paintings' in 1925. One poem was devoted to Salome, 'Only the head kissed by your lips/will smile forever, turn into immortality'.²⁹⁵ The poetess Bai Wei (1894-1987) internalised Salome, identifying herself as Chinese Salome, and writing the Wilde-style sentence 'endless love, beauty and pleasure/ to kiss and die on the red lips of lover' in her three-act poetic drama *Lin-Li* in 1925.²⁹⁶ She was recognised as a New Woman, who defied her family's arrangement to marry a man whom she disliked. In her private letters to her true lover Yang Sao, she passionately confessed her love: 'Oh, Honey! I must kill you if you don't kill me! I have to kill you! I am Salome, a more poisonous

²⁹² “莎乐美的精神，与旧社会的一切对照，蔚为工业革命后现代欧美社会的洋洋大观！”
Ibid

²⁹³ “一个人读过了《沙乐美》，决定是免不了发生兴趣的，[...] 这出剧本是一件完美的艺术品，奇特的艺术品”，see Zhu Xiang, *Zhong-Shu-Ji* (《中书集》), Shanghai: Life Publisher, 1934, pp.413-14

²⁹⁴ “莎乐美是唯美主义者、快乐主义者、个人主义者”，see Mao Dun, 'Oscar Wilde's *Salome*', *Chinese Translation of Western Literature* (《汉译西洋文学名著》), Shanghai: Chinese Culture Service Press, 1935. *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 2 July 2010].

²⁹⁵ “唯有你的嘴唇吻过的人头/将永久的含笑，亘古的不朽”，see Liang Shiqiu, p.113

²⁹⁶ “无限的爱美与欢愉，/要死在爱人接吻的朱唇上”，quoted in Tian B, X., p.190, the script of the drama was first published by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1925

Sa-lo-me. Nothing is happier than dying on your charming lips'.²⁹⁷ She clearly borrowed references and inspiration from *Salome*. Another female writer Yuan Chang-Ying also designed the Wilde-style lines in her tragedy *Peacock Flying towards Southeast* (《孔雀东南飞》) in 1929, saying that 'I am willing to kiss you and die in the sunshine that is burning bones'.²⁹⁸

Salome's violent passion and unwavering persistence made her a stunning and captivating icon to the Chinese intellectuals because in classical Chinese literature such a character had never appeared. During the New Culture Movement, Confucian asceticism was challenged by a powerful wave of 'gender liberation' based on the modern European dualistic concept of human sexuality. 'The open discussion of sexuality' became a sign of liberation from the 'shackles of tradition' among modernising elites (Liu 47). The tragedy greatly influenced Chinese dramatists against this socio-cultural background. During the 1920s and 1930s, at least ten Chinese dramatists found inspiration from Wilde's *Salome*, and they created more than twenty imitated plays, forming a series of 'Salome themes' in modern Chinese drama. The representative playwrights included Wang Tongzhao, Guo Moruo, Ouyang Yuqian, Wang Duqing, Xu Baoyan, Su Xuelin, among others.

For example, in Wang Tongzhao's drama *The Victory after Death* (《死后之胜利》) in 1922, the influence of Wilde's *Salome* can be traced. The hero of the drama, the painter Mr He, talked to the heroine:

When I was in school, I once read the script of Wilde's *Salome*. Salome is an extremely beautiful girl, isn't she? She was willing to kiss the head of her dead lover to satisfy her eccentric admiration for beauty. How stunning and sublime! [...] death can

²⁹⁷ “啊，爱弟！你不杀我我要杀你。我非杀你不可！我是 Salome 哩，我比 Salome 还要毒哩。死在你美不可思议的嘴上比什么都好”，see Bai Wei, *The Last Night*, Hebei: Education Press, 1994, p190

²⁹⁸ “我愿和你吻死在白焰炙骨的太阳光里”，
See <http://isbntw.ncl.edu.tw/isbn/admin/pdf/96029818.pdf>, [Cited 1 August 2010]

also be eulogised, death is the last winner. The corpse of warrior on the shield on battlefield is the dwelling place of endless victories. The tomb of lovers is also the palace of victory.²⁹⁹

In the play, both the hero and the heroine are the avatars of art, beauty and love. When the hero died at the ending of last act, the heroine embraced his head and kissed his bleeding lips.³⁰⁰ Guo Moruo admired ‘the Spirit of Salome’, claiming ‘if we want to revive China, we must completely liberate Chinese women’.³⁰¹ He was inspired by *Salome* and wrote the drama *Imperial Concubine of Fragrance* (《王昭君》) in 1924 by assimilating its patterns and themes: the Chinese Emperor Yuan kissed the decapitated head of the painter in order to feel the pleasant smell left by the Princess Fragrance. Ouyang Yuqian’s five-act tragedy *Madam Pan* (《潘金莲》) in 1927 adapted a traditional fallen woman in Chinese classical literature into a Salome-style New Woman of rebellious and independent personality, who bravely sacrificed her life to seek true love. Wang Duqing’s tragedies *Princess Yang* (《杨贵妃》) and *Diao-Chan* (《貂蝉》) published in 1927 portray the legendary Chinese beauties as New Women who showed contempt for conventional authorities and sacrificed themselves for love and beauty. Xu Baoyan’s play *Daji* (《妲己》) in 1929 emulates the plot of Wilde’s *Salome* but is rewritten as a Chinese story. The Queen Daji, a literary character in Chinese ancient myth famous for her evilness and irresistible beauty, plays a role similar to that of Salome in this play. Daji disliked the cruel and fatuous king; instead, she fell in love with the intelligent and righteous Prime Minister Bi-Gan. Yet, the

²⁹⁹ “我在学校时代，曾读过王尔德的《莎乐美》的剧本。莎乐美不是至美无比的姑娘吗？她宁愿与死人之头接吻，以偿她对于美的特异的嗜好。这是何等的奇异与庄严啊！[...] 死未必不可赞美，死也是最后的胜利者。战场上武士的盾上之尸，便是无穷的胜利寄宿之地。情人的坟墓，也是胜利的宫殿呢”，see Wang Tong-Zhao, *The Victory After Death*, Shanghai Commercial Press, 1922. *Dachengdata*. Web [Cited 1 August 2010]. Wang is a writer, poet and playwright in modern China.

³⁰⁰ “吻其血唇”，*ibid*.

³⁰¹ “我们如果要救济中国，不得不彻底解放女性”，see *The Complete Collection of Guo Moruo’s Dramas* (volume 1), p. 192

latter resolutely rejected her devotion. She thus lured the king to kill the minister and dig out his heart. In the end, when she was kissing the heart passionately, a warrior loyal to the prime minister assassinated her. Su Xuelin's fiction *Kuna's Eyes* (《鸠那罗的眼睛》) published in the monthly journal *Literature* (5:5, November 1935) starts with the quotation from Wilde's *Salome*: 'Ah! Thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now' (CW 604). This fiction is also about a *femme fatale* and her deadly love. Wilde's influence is evident throughout her work.

These Chinese literary works inspired by Wilde's *Salome* discussed the richness of humanity and expressed revolt against traditional Confucian didacticism. While *Salome*'s beauty, passion, and rebellious character were imitated in these dramas and stories, she was redefined with a positive and rational attitude that reflected the ideology of the enlightenment. The Chinese intellectuals saw in *Salome* the ideal of the New Woman in the zealous pursuit of modernisation. Rejection of arranged marriage, together with the education of women, formed the most significant elements of the social movement for the emancipation of women, which began in the late nineteenth century and reached its peak in the 1920s. Chinese intellectuals borrowed ideas from *Salome* and redefined this literary character to serve the Chinese causes. They appreciated it because of its overt defiance against patriarchal authority. The enthusiasm for *Salome* was entangled with the social movements for women's liberation and individual freedom. As such, the Chinese imitations of the 'Salome theme' also involved reinterpretation and creation.

The reception theory of Hans Robert Jauss argues that literary works are received against an existing horizon of expectations consisting of readers' current knowledge and presuppositions about literature, and that the meanings of works change as such horizon shifts. Historical changes not only affect the solitary reader but also the reading public. The audience does not passively accept a text,

but interprets the text based on his/her individual cultural background and experience. In essence, the meaning of a text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader.³⁰² To apply Jauss's theory to the case of China, it is observed that there was a tendency among the Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement to borrow references from the West and adapt foreign cultural resources to support their own social and political claims. The reading, staging and emulation of *Salome* were associated with the Chinese experience of modernisation and the enlightenment. Comparing the interpretation of *Salome* in Victorian Britain and early twentieth-century China, it shows that when the Chinese intellectuals read *Salome*, they overlooked the religious dimension of this work, which was rooted in European traditions; at the same time they invested *Salome* with political significance relevant to the Chinese society of the 1920s and 1930s. The image and connotation of *Salome* in China had no erotic or decadent implication, but represented idealism, insistence on freedom, resistance to oppression, and independent personality defiant against authority. The Chinese writers saw in the character of *Salome* an essential resolution to their own social problems. They redefined *Salome* through interpretation and adaptation. The advocates of freedom of marriage had a specific political purpose: it was a part of the cultural movement of personal liberation from the patriarchal and hierarchical Chinese system. The zeitgeist of modern China was to rebuild new 'national essence'. Confucianism and its moral system were refuted because they were thought to oppress the vitality and creativity of the Chinese people. The Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement were enthusiastic about introducing Western dramas and literature to the public, seeing such form of cultural communication as the passage to the liberation of the Chinese nation. In cross-cultural interpretation, the socio-cultural context and

³⁰² Further detailed arguments of Hans Robert Jauss's Reception Theory see *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* and *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

taste of the receiver influenced the understandings of the literary work. The cultural and social gaps between the British and Chinese readers contributed to these striking differences in the understanding and cultural value of *Salome*.

In conclusion, *Salome* in China was transformed into a pioneer of women's rights. She became a cultural and political icon that challenged the traditional Confucian concept of womanhood. The Western irrational *femme fatale* turned to represent the Enlightenment which contained rationalism in the Chinese context, questioning Confucian asceticism. In other words, *Salome* participated in the Chinese narration of modernisation. It was absorbed into the construction of the Chinese new cultural identity. Chinese readers politicised Wilde's works such as fairy tales and society comedies to suit their purposes of social reform. The reception of *Salome* was not exceptional: it reflected the desires of a modern China in transition; it told more about social values and zeitgeist than the literariness of the work. Chinese intellectuals refashioned the decadent *Salome* into a non-conforming spokeswoman who reacted against traditional gender-related Chinese conventions and Confucian ethics. Such comprehension of Wilde's *Salome* might be controversial, but it did result in the promotion of this *fin-de-siècle* tragedy in China of the early twentieth century.

Summary:

Occidentalism in the Reception of British Aestheticism in East Asia

The second part of this thesis observes the introduction, translation, criticism, emulation and adaptation of Wilde's works in Japan and China during the early twentieth century when both countries were in turbulent social and cultural transition. It explores the causes of Wilde's success in East Asia, the criteria for translating his works, the social and class backgrounds of his audiences, the performances of his plays in theatres, how he exerted influence on Japanese and Chinese modern literature and cultures, and how Japanese and Chinese intellectuals appropriated him and British aestheticism for their own purposes. Although Wilde suffered fatal public disgrace after his trials, as Anne Varty notes, 'it was not until the 1930s that Wilde could even be discussed in polite circles' (ix), he was highly appreciated as the British aesthetic movement personified in both Japan and China during the first half of the twentieth century. Japanese and Chinese intellectuals held an enthusiastic response to Wilde's theories, and his works received numerous reviews and were repeatedly translated.

The reception and adaptation of Wilde in East Asia were associated with social and cultural issues that the Japanese and the Chinese have confronted during their modern histories. Specifically speaking, Wilde was interpreted in the context of Occidentalism in East Asia, in other words, Wilde was comprehended and accepted as an authentic Western writer who embodied the Western culture and the Western spirit. The idea of 'the West' served not only as a real model of civilised alternative, but also as a repository for ideal images projected out of the imagination of the Chinese and the Japanese themselves. Occidental exoticism of Western culture was modified as a reference for constructing Oriental modernity.

‘The West’ was a metaphor for modernisation and enlightenment, qualities that ‘the East’ sought to emulate and possess. Japanese and Chinese intellectuals usually understood and presented ‘the West’ as a monolithic and homogeneous entity, disregarding the varieties and multi-culture within this conception. ‘The West’ afforded modern Oriental intellectuals who pursued the modernisation of indigenous cultures an enabling and convenient model to emulate, compare and imagine. To compare the East and the West in dichotomies was prevalent in Japan and China during the early twentieth century. The perceived differences between the East and the West, and the binaries such as traditional and modern, backward and advanced, oppression and liberation, collectivism and individualism, were almost interchangeable. With European and American literature, philosophy, and social sciences being translated on a large scale, ‘the West’ was understood as the authoritative theoretical source. Modern Japanese and Chinese literature were closely associated with the appropriation of Western theories. In particular, the Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement had an obvious tendency to idealise Western culture as a strategy to challenge traditional Confucianism.³⁰³ The anti-traditional stance in modern Chinese literature was derived more from China’s socio-political conditions than from artistic considerations. Nonetheless, for both Japanese and Chinese intellectuals during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to embrace Western models, concepts, values and ideas embodied the hope of updating national identities compatible with modernisation for their own countries.

In this socio-cultural context, Wilde was viewed as one of the most significant and greatest Western writers in Japan. He enjoyed a high reputation

³⁰³ On some occasions, the Chinese admiration for the Western civilisation even led to the internalisation of the notion of Western superiority. For example, the leading Chinese intellectual and politician of reform Liang Qichao (1873-1929) claimed ‘only the white peoples, particularly England with its liberal polity, had been able to spread modern civilisation’ (qtd. in Daruvala 8).

among Japanese intellectuals. Wilde critics and translators included a number of eminent Japanese writers, novelists, poets and dramatists. In China, Wilde was almost synonymous with British aestheticism. His work had a huge impact on modern Chinese culture. Many of Wilde's translators and critics were reputable writers and playwrights in their own right. There were commonalities and differences between Japanese and Chinese readings of Wilde.

First, in both Japan and China, the circulation of Wilde's works gathered in commercial metropolitan cities -- Tokyo in Japan and Shanghai in China, where the most dynamic, the most educated, and the richest communities were concentrated. The introduction, translation and criticism of Wilde were associated with the modern publishing industry including magazines, journals, newspapers, and publishing houses. The mass media was newly established in East Asia but soon appeared thriving. Moreover, *Salome* was among Wilde's most influential works and was frequently performed in Japanese and Chinese commercial theatres. The performances of Wilde's plays, including the successful production of his society comedy *Lady Windermere's Fan* in China, belonged to modern urban popular culture.

Secondly, the reading of Wilde was shaped by cultural movements which aimed to modernise national cultures. In Japan, the movements included New Poetry Movement, Children's Literary Movement, I-Novels Movement, and New Drama Movement. In China, it was best represented by the New Culture Movement which advocated modernisation and modernity through 'literary revolution'. The movements in Japan and China served similar purposes -- promoting humanitarianism, individual freedom, and women's liberation as well as democratic politics. In both countries, vernacular literature was recommended because it was seen to be more accessible to the public than the classical literature. In the comprehension of Japanese and Chinese intellectuals, Wilde's works embodied the ideological plea for democracy and individualism. His

humanitarianism eulogised freedom and love. His trials and sufferings made him a martyr for the aesthetic movement and moral liberation. Through translation and adaptation, Wilde's works and British aestheticism were appropriated as an ideological resource for socio-cultural reform, and thus participated in the Japanese and Chinese narrations of modern cultural identities. It is noticed that the cultural reforms in Japan and China were engendered by educated elites in modern universities, such as Tokyo University, Waseda University, and Beijing University. Many of the intellectuals had studying or living experiences in Western Europe or North America. They conceived of literature first and foremost as a means of social and cultural improvement.

Thirdly, Wilde and British aestheticism were introduced to Japan and China as part of the efforts to westernise indigenous cultures in the atmosphere of Anglophilia, but some Japanese and Chinese intellectuals finally nationalised this Occidental culture through resetting the context to the East or revising it with traditional Japanese and Chinese tastes.

Due to the different cultural traditions, international positions, socio-political conditions, and the processes of modernisation, there was also some distance in understanding Wilde and British aestheticism between Japan and China. For example, 'The Nightingale and the Rose' was the most translated of Wilde's fairy tales in Japan, while in China it was 'The Happy Prince'. *De Profundis* exerted a great influence on Japanese modern literature, but this epistle was almost ignored in China. Chinese critics avoided making explicit the nature of Wilde's offence, while the Japanese attitude towards homosexuality seemed more tolerant.³⁰⁴ The most significant difference, perhaps, was that Wilde was

³⁰⁴ 'In the puritanical atmosphere of the New Culture Movement, Wilde's homosexuality [was] a substantial factor in alienating the more serious-minded of the literary revolutionaries' (McDougall 85). China traditionally had tolerance towards homosexuality. However, since the late nineteenth century, Western sexology was introduced to China through translations of Magnus Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis, Iwan Bloch, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud,

involved in ideological combat much more directly and fiercely in China than he was in Japan. Although his 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' sparked controversies in Japan, his socio-political influence was much larger and powerful in China. Chinese intellectuals usually had been burdened with an enormous sense of moral and social responsibility. As Zhou Xiaoyi argues, 'aestheticism in literature and art is never free from modern Chinese writers' social concerns' ('Oscar Wilde' 96). British aestheticism was often redefined as New Romanticism within the discourse of Enlightenment values to oppose traditional Confucianism. The Chinese intellectuals promoted aestheticism as criticism of Chinese social reality. To some extent, compared with Wilde in Japan, the Chinese interpretation of Wilde and the aesthetic writings was less 'decadent' and more socially-oriented. Meanwhile, Japanese aesthetes exploited aestheticism to reconsider radical Westernisation. This perspective of reading Wilde was not seen in China.

In conclusion, since Wilde was first introduced to Japan in 1891 and to China in 1909, Wilde's name has been crucial to the cultural and political consciousness of East Asia. Wilde and British aesthetes assimilated and adapted Chinese and Japanese arts and cultures as stimulation for British aestheticism and the aesthetic movement; Chinese and Japanese intellectuals transmitted and revised Wilde's works and British aestheticism to renew their national cultures, and launched their own creation of 'Oriental Wilde'. The translation and adaptation of Wilde and the aesthetic literature represented an integral part of the cultural modernisation and the creation of modernity in East Asia.

and Edward Carpenter, which gradually changed the Chinese attitude towards homosexuality. Although there was no public condemnation of, or official crackdown against homosexuality in China, generally speaking, homosexuality was seen as 'decadent' and not approved.

Conclusion:

Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism and the Global Circulation of Modernity

The British aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century involved interior decoration, fashion, the visual arts, theatre, entertainment, and literature, advertising the notion of 'art for art's sake'. The fundamental theories of British aestheticism could be traced to the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant and other German Philosophers who separated the sense of beauty from practical interests. Nonetheless, the British aesthetes, Walter Pater, D. G. Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, William Morris, J. M. Whistler, Ernest Dowson, A. C. Swinburne, and Aubrey Beardsley, made aestheticism into a socio-cultural movement.

The British aesthetic movement was associated with Britain's progress of modernisation and experience of modernity, particularly with the rapid urbanisation, and the growing of middle classes. The scientific and technological developments, the industrial revolution, the widespread economic and social changes caused by capitalism and market economy, greatly influenced the cultural characteristics of nineteenth-century Britain. It is noticed that the aesthetic movement in Britain occurred at the same time as the successful expansion of the British Empire to the Far East during the second half of the nineteenth century. The consumption of Chinese and Japanese commodities promoted by the Victorian aesthetes in the aesthetic movement coincided with Britain's attempts to liberalise international trade with the Far East, either by military enforcement as the opium wars with China or through diplomatic negotiation as the 'Friendship Treaty' with Japan. The establishment of British hegemony in the Far East in the late nineteenth century made the mass consumption of Oriental commodities possible: porcelain, furniture, tea, silk textile, landscape paintings, *ukiyo-e* prints,

lacquer, leather paper were for the first time accessible to the British middle classes. The Chinese and Japanese examples were introduced to the British public through art dealers, import shops, museum exhibitions, art academies, world fairs, publications on interior decoration, reports in newspapers and magazines. Oriental aesthetic values were fused with Victorian functional needs. The revival of chinoiserie and fashion for Japonisme in the aesthetic movement stemmed from a desire to improve the quality of design in manufactured goods, which were intertwined with the demand of the middle classes for house decoration caused by urbanisation. Oriental commodities and decorative traditions were widely used in household decoration and garden structures. For example, Japanese wallpaper provided a suitable background for Chinese blue and white porcelain. Meanwhile, the middle classes' growing purchasing power created the prosperous arts market flooded with applied arts. Chinese and Japanese artistic commodities were not used in high culture but associated with bourgeois culture, which was closely linked with the market economy, the cultural industries, and the mass media. The admiration for Japan as aesthetic utopia was based on the consumption of commodities, and led to commodity fetishism. The Victorian appreciation of Chinese and Japanese art was contingent upon an unshakeable confidence in the ultimate superiority of Western civilisation. The British aesthetes believed cultures of the Far East had been unchanged since ancient times. Sometimes, the aesthetes deliberately ignored reality in favour of their own imagination about elusive exotic utopia. The idealisation or romanticisation of Japan or 'Cathay' implied 'the two forms of modernity'. Matei Călinescu argues that modernity can be seen as both a new historical stage of Western civilisation and as an aesthetic concept (41). The aesthetic modernity includes the rejection of the historical modernity, or modernisation (Călinescu 42). Japanese utopia represented the passion of aesthetic modernity for an imagined preindustrial European paradise. Nonetheless, the modern cultural industries commercialised aesthetic modernity, and the aesthetic

movement exploited and reinforced the imperialist illusion of the Orient in Britain. Furthermore, Wilde was brought to the attention of a large reading public through the popular dissemination of George Du Maurier's satirical cartoons and Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operetta *Patience* (1881). Wilde's society comedies were all written for the commercial theatres. The British aesthetic movement defined the place of art in a modern consumerist society through consuming the Oriental commodities and cooperating with the cultural industries.

Meanwhile, the aesthetic movement in Britain began as a reform impulse. It was part of a larger critique of the Industrial Revolution, which had radically changed Britain following the Napoleonic Wars, and it paralleled political events that had firmly established the power of the middle class with the Second Reform Bill of 1867. William Morris and Wilde questioned a series of modern problems, especially alienated labour, the increasing separation of labour from the notion of pleasure. As surplus value and profit become the primary motive of production, a commodity can only realise itself within the terms of capitalist production. As such, it becomes merely a means of existence, alienated from its own self-realisation. Wilde opposed abstract labour, and argued aestheticism was not only about a specific style of painting or a taste of design but also about an aesthetic attitude and aesthetic lifestyle, as the Chinese coolies in America exhibited. The translations and new interpretations of Oriental classics in English enhanced the communication of ideas. Wilde's 'socialism', which emphasised 'self-culture' and 'self-development', borrowed ideas from the Chinese sage Zhuangzi as well as Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer and Walter Pater. Moreover, the adoration of interior decoration, fashion and dress implied the transposition of 'nobility' from masculinity to femininity. During Wilde's journalist career, he made the effort to strengthen the voice of women. The aesthetic movement contained political significance in a democratising society.

The aesthetic movement embraced consumerism, popular culture, and social reform. There were close affinities between aestheticism and Britain's modernisation-- industrialisation, urbanisation, colonial exploitation, and democratisation. As Wilde claimed in 'The English Renaissance of Art',

It has been described as a mere revival of Greek modes of thought, and again as a mere revival of mediaeval feeling. Rather I would say that to these forms of the human spirit it has added whatever of artistic value the intricacy and complexity and experience of modern life can give (J. Jackson 3).

In the British aesthetic movement, commodities and ideas from the Far East participated in shaping British modernity, and Wilde's writings about the Orient reflected and promoted the characteristics of being modern in Victorian Britain.

On the other hand, the British Empire transmitted modernity to the Far East, and helped Chinese and Japanese transformation from traditional feudal countries into modern nation-states. The globalisation of Britain's empire was also the global circulation of modernity. Anthony Giddens argues that the essence of globalisation is the universalisation of modernity, which process involves universalisation of the nation-state as the political form, and the universalisation of the capitalist system of commodity production (63-64). The British Empire and other Western powers entailed capital investment around the globe, and gave strong impetus to the economic growth of the coastal cities in the Far East. International trade and industrialisation produced a new social class in East Asia -- urban middle classes; and a new culture-- Westernised urban cosmopolitanism. The non-European cities, which were traditionally thought of as merely outposts of imperial centres and simply passive recipients of Western civilisation, actually experienced complex cosmopolitan cultures in their own right. The Oriental urban classes witnessed the accelerating cultural fascination with Western social

practices, life-styles, material goods, and technologies. Through globalisation, to the middle classes in metropolitan cities such as Tokyo and Shanghai, the lifestyle of advanced Western capitalist societies, premised on individualism, consumerism and affluence, appeared desirable and seemingly attainable (Howes 3).

In the colonial era, Japan and China had unusual experiences. When most of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific had fallen under the domination of the Western powers, Japan and China were among the few non-colonised states. Japan was never colonised, but it had lost part of its sovereignty in the 1850s and 1860s. The success of the Meiji Reformation turned Japan into the unique non-white imperialist nation. China did not become a direct Western colony, as most parts of Asia and Africa did. Yet it did not adapt and modernise enough, as Japan did, to be accepted as a member in the imperialist club. To Japan and China, modernisation was initially imposed by the intruding Western powers, notably the British Empire, around the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the Japanese and the Chinese elites actively pursued and expanded the enforced modernity in spite of the resistance from domestic conservative groups.³⁰⁵ Through adaptation, appropriation and assimilation of modernity from the West, Japan and China embarked on the programmes of modernisation themselves, and hence began to construct their own modern national identities since the late nineteenth century.

In this socio-historical context, the reception and interpretation of British aestheticism in the Far East were associated with Japanese and Chinese struggling for modernisation, and their experience of modernity during the early twentieth century. First, the modern cultural industries in East Asia promoted the dissemination of British aestheticism. In Tokyo and Shanghai, the publishing business was flourishing. Numerous newspapers, magazines, and modern presses

³⁰⁵ Such as Confucian scholars in China and Samurai deprived of privileges in Japan

for the urban middle classes appeared.³⁰⁶ The large urban population supplied the potential audience for popular literature and cultural commodities. Prosperous cultural industries offered modern intellectuals career opportunities in publishing, editing, translation and journalism. In Japan, almost all the publications on Wilde were issued in Tokyo, and the leading aesthetic journals of the 1910s and 1920s were all Tokyo-based; in China, more than 90% of the translations of Wilde's works were published in Shanghai, and almost all the reviews on Wilde were published in Shanghai newspapers and magazines. Wilde's society comedies and *Salome* were produced in Western-style theatres in Japanese and Chinese major cities for entertainment, and promoted consumer fashion.

Secondly, the translation and criticism of Wilde and British aestheticism in East Asia were often linked with modern educational institutions. For example, the Japanese journals which greatly promoted Wilde's works, *Imperial Literature*, *Waseda Literature*, *Mi-Ta Literature*, were organised by professors and lecturers of arts and humanities at Tokyo imperial university, Waseda University, and Keio University. In China, the president of Beijing University, Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) listed five principles of education, of which aesthetic education was one. He shared the belief with John Ruskin and William Morris that art could improve social morality and cultivate qualified citizens. The journal *New Youth*, which played a significant role in publishing Wilde as playwright in China, was founded by a group of professors at Beijing University. Japanese and Chinese universities preferred to recruit intellectuals who obtained their degrees in British or American universities. Modern educational institutions were the seedbeds of reform and revolution in East Asia.

Thirdly, the comprehension and adaptation of British aestheticism coincided with the social reforms and democratic movements in East Asia. The

³⁰⁶ Tokyo acted as the capital of the Japanese empire, the indisputable political, economic and cultural centre of Japan. Shanghai was the largest financial centre in the Far East in the 1920s.

popularity of Wilde occurred in the 1910s and 1920s, when Japan was enjoying 'Taisho democracy' (1912-1926), and China had a multi-party congress (1912-1928).³⁰⁷ British aestheticism was transformed into liberalist theories to emancipate children and women from the oppression of patriarchal system. Wilde's writings were appropriated into a broader cultural campaign for individual freedom and human rights. Wilde was seen to have sympathy for the oppressed, disadvantaged and voiceless sectors of society. *Salome* was used to challenge traditional concepts of womanhood. Therefore, Wilde's writings were appropriated in modern democratic politics in East Asia, which supported subaltern groups or communities to obtain fair social positions.

The notion of literary and critical modernity was intertwined with the idea of social and political modernity in East Asia. The approbation of British aestheticism among the Japanese and Chinese intellectuals was entangled with the complex social trends of economic development, class mobility, popular education, women's liberation, and the democratic movements during the early twentieth century, in other words, the interpretation of British aestheticism was part of the Oriental self-narration of modern transformation. Wilde was a cultural icon with an influence across literary, political and social fields, engaging in Japanese and Chinese histories of modernisation.

In conclusion, Wilde's cosmopolitanism and the global circulation of Wilde's writings encapsulated the dialectics of 'empire' and 'nation-state', 'advanced' and 'backward', 'centre' and 'margin', 'coloniser' and 'colonised', 'Occidental' and 'Oriental', and 'globalisation' and 'naturalisation'. Wilde's works were produced by cultural globalisation. The dissemination of Wilde's works to East Asia was part of the global expansion of British culture. The reception of Wilde's works in East Asia was reconstruction and transformation of

³⁰⁷ 'Taisho democracy' referred to the democratic politics under the rule of the Emperor Taisho from 1912 to 1926. When the Republic of China was established in 1912, China adopted Western-style constitution of democracy and separation of powers until 1928.

Occidentalism in the Oriental context. All were about encounters with ‘others’. British aestheticism was associated with the process of modernisation. In both Britain and East Asia, modernisation was embodied in urbanisation and industrialisation, as well as the growth of markets, the rise of middle classes, the popularity of education, the diversification of values, and the development of social democracy and human rights. However, different processes of modernisation in Britain, Japan and China impacted the transition of Wilde’s literary and artistic influences across national and linguistic borders. The aesthetic movement represented intercultural assimilation and processes of acculturation, cooperation between consumerism and the cultural industries, and participation in political reform and the democratic movements. British aestheticism was a metropolitan culture, an urban bourgeois culture, and a cosmopolitan culture, expressing, pursuing and reconfiguring modernity. The British Empire expanded modernity to East Asia as part of the globalisation of capitalist market, but globalisation was also the spread and universalisation of sets of modern values, practices and institutions through isomorphic processes. Homogenous modernity formed the foundation for the circulation of aestheticism, while the different interpretations of aestheticism were the result of acculturation to new conditions. Wilde’s cosmopolitanism and his international readership demonstrated the cultural, social and political interconnectedness between Britain and East Asia. In a global perspective, Wilde’s works enriched modernity of both Britain and East Asia.

Glossary

1. Names of Chinese People in the Thesis

Bai Wei 白薇

Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培

Cao Yu 曹禺

Chen Duxiu 陈独秀

Chen Gu 陈赅

Du Heng 杜衡

Geng Shizhi 耿式之

Gui Yu 桂裕

Guo Moruo 郭沫若

Guo Xiang 郭象

Guo Youshou 郭有守

Hong Shen 洪深

Jia Ling 迦陵

Kong Xiangwo 孔襄我

Liang Qichao 梁启超

Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋

Lin Chaozhen 林超真

Lin Yutang 林语堂

Ling Biru 凌璧如

Liu Fu 刘复

Lu Si'an 陆思安

Lu Xun 鲁迅

Mao Dun 茅盾

Mu Mutian 穆木天

Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩

Pan Jiaxun 潘家洵
Qiu Peiyue 裘配岳
Shao Xunmei 邵洵美
Shen Peiqiu 沈佩秋
Shen Songquan 沈松泉
Shen Zemin 沈泽民
Shen Xingren 沈性仁
Shi Jihan 施寄寒
Su Xue-Lin 苏雪林
Teng Gu 滕固
Tian Han 田汉
Wang Duqing 王独清
Wang Fuquan 汪馥泉
Wang Gulu 王古鲁
Wang Hongsheng 汪宏声
Wang Jing 王靖
Wang Tong-Zhao 王统照
Wang Yian 王易庵
Wen Yiduo 闻一多
Wu Zuoren 吴作人
Xian Xinghai 冼星海
Xiao Shijun 萧石君
Xu Baobing 徐葆冰
Xu Baoyan 徐葆炎
Xu Mingji 徐名骥
Xu Peiren 徐培仁
Xu Zhimo 徐志摩
Xue Qiyang 薛棋瑛

Yang Yisheng 杨逸声
Ye Lingfeng 叶灵凤
Ye Shengtao 叶圣陶
Yu Shan 俞珊
Yuan Chang-Ying 袁昌英
Yu Dafu 郁达夫
Zeng Xu-Bai 曾虚白
Zhang Jin-Fen 张近芬
Zhang Jin-Zhen 张近真
Zhang Kebiao 章克标
Zhang Wentian 张闻天
Zhang Youji 张由纪
Zhao Mingyi 赵铭彝
Zhao Jiabi 赵家璧
Zhao Jingshen 赵景深
Zhen Ying 震瀛
Zheng Junli 郑君里
Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎
Zhong Lin 钟霖
Zhou Zuoren 周作人
Zhuangzi 庄子
Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜
Zhu Weiji 朱维基
Zhu Xiang 朱湘

2. Names of Japanese People in the Thesis

Abe Kentarou 阿部謙太郎
Abe Tomoji 阿部知二

Akagi Syouzou 赤城正蔵
Amanuma Hoson 天沼匏村
Ando Katsuichirou 安藤 勝一郎
Arahata Kanson 荒畑寒村
Arishima Takeo 有島武郎
Chiba Kameo 千葉亀雄
Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉
Hagawa Kenkiti. 葉河憲吉
Hata Toyokiti 秦豊吉
Hinatsu Kounosuke 日夏耿之介
Hirata Tokuboku 平田禿木
Hiroshige 広重
Hokusai 北斎
Honma Hisao 本間久雄
Ikuta Tyoukou 生田長江
Isobe Yaitirou 磯辺弥一郎
Iwano Houmei 岩野泡鳴
Izumi Kyouka 泉鏡花
Kamitika Itiko 神近市子
Kamiyama Soujin 上山草人
Kaneko Kenji 金子健二
Katayama Masao 片山正雄
Kawakami Sadayakko 川上貞奴
Kawakami Tettarou 河上徹太郎
Kimura Akio 木村秋果
Kinei 芹影
Kitahara Hakushu 北原白秋
Kobayashi Aiyuu 小林愛雄

Komiya Toyotaka 小宮豊隆
Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿
Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村
Kusuyama Masao 楠山正雄
Masuda Tonosuke 増田藤之助
Miki Tadashi 三木正
Miyahara Koichiro 宮原晃一郎
Mori Gaiho 森皚峰
Mori Ogai 森鷗外
Moriguchi Tari 森口多里
Morita Souhei 森田草平
Murakami Sizujin 村上静人
Naitou Arou 内藤濯
Nakamura Kitizou 中村吉蔵
Natsume Soseki 夏目漱石
Nishida Kitarou 西田幾多郎
Nishimura Koji 西村孝次
Nishinomiya Toutyou 西宮藤朝
Nitta Tasukui 新田佐逸
Nogami Kyusen 野上白川
Noguchi Yone 野口米(次郎)
Onozawa Von H 小野沢百八
Osanai Kaoru 小山内薫
Osugi Sakae 大杉栄
Sasaki Naojirou 佐々木直次郎
Sato Haruo 佐藤春夫
Satomi Ton 里見弴
Shimamura Hougetsu 島村抱月

Shimazaki Touson 島崎藤村
Sugiyama Sannana 杉山産七
Takayama Yuuka 高山豊花
Tanabe Juji 田部重治
Tanami Mishiro 田波御白
Tanizaki Junichiro 谷崎潤一郎
Tsubouchi Shoyo 坪内逍遙
Tsugi Hiko 貴志二彦
Tsuijun 辻潤
Uchida Roan 内田魯庵
Ueda Bin 上田敏
Unuma Tadashi 鵜沼直
Wakatsuki Siran 若月紫蘭
Wake Ritsujirou 和気律次郎
Yaguchi Tatsu 矢口達
Yamamura Bocho 山村暮鳥
Yamanouchi Shuusei 山内秋生
Yano Houjin 矢野峰人

3. Chinese Newspapers, Magazines and Journals

Bei-Xin 《北新》
Children's Magazine 《蒙学报》
Children's Monthly 《小孩月报》
Children's Pictorial 《蒙养画报》
Children's World 《童子世界》
Cosmic Wind 《宇宙风》
General 《一般》
Golden House Monthly 《金屋月刊》

Good Friends 《良友》
Human World 《人间世》
Jia-Yin 《甲寅》
Kids' Library 《幼童文库》
Modern Women 《今代妇女》
New News 《时事新报》
New Trends 《新潮》
New Youth 《新青年》
People's Bell 《民铎》
Pupils' Library 《小学生文库》
Republic Daily 《民国日报》
Story Monthly 《小说月报》
Students' Magazine 《学生杂志》
The Eastern Miscellany 《东方杂志》
The Morning Daily Supplement 《晨报副镌》
Truth, Beauty, Sincerity 《真美善》
Women's Magazine 《妇女杂志》
Youth's Magazine 《少年杂志》
Yu-Si 《语丝》

4. Chinese Press and Publishing Houses

Chinese Culture Service Press 中国文化服务社
Chinese Green Star Press 中华绿星社
Chunye Publisher 春野书店
Commercial Press 商务印书馆
Daguang Press 大光书局
Datong Press 大通图书社
Golden House Bookshop 金屋书店

Guang-Hua Publisher 光华书局
Modern Publishing House 现代书局
Pu Press 朴社
Qi-Ming Publisher 启明书局
Shen-Zhou-Guo-Guang Publisher 神州国光社
Sheng-Huo Publisher 生活书店
Shou-Kuang Press 受匡书局
Tai-Dong Press 泰东书局
World Book Press 世界书局

5. Japanese Newspapers, Magazines and Journals

Articles World 『文章世界』
Bright Star 『明星』
Chugai English Newspaper 『中外英字新聞』
Freedom 『自由』
Imperial Literature 『帝国文学』
Keio University Review 『慶應義塾学報』
Literature 『文学』
Literature World (Bun-Gaku-Kai) 『文学界』
Masks 『仮面』
Mi-Ta Literature 『三田文学』
Modern Thoughts 『近代思想』
National Economics 『国民經濟雜誌』
National Library Publication Society 『国民文庫刊行会』
National Literature 『国民文学』
New Fiction 『新小説』
New Trends 『新潮』
New Trend of Thoughts 『新思潮』

New Voice of Drama 『演劇新声』
Pleiades 『スバル』
Sun 『太陽』
Taste 『趣味』
The Flower of Heart 『心の花』
The Light of East Asia 『東亜の光』
Theatre Pictorial 『演芸画報』
Tokyo Two Six News 『東京二六新聞』
Universe Magazines 『六合雑誌』
Waseda Literature 『早稲田文学』
Water Pot 『水甕』
White Birch 『白樺』

6. Japanese Press and Publishing Houses

Bamboo Publishing House 植竹書院
Bun-Shun Press 文藝春秋社
Enomoto Publisher 榎本書店
First-Book Press 第一書房
Gendai Press 現代社
Hakusui Press 白水社
Hiyou Press 平原社
Iwanami Press 岩波書店
Koshiyama-Do Publisher 越山堂
Kyokou Press 極光社
Nanzando Publishing House 南山堂書店
Ryokodo Press 梁江堂書店
Shobunsha Publications 昭文社
Shoubun-do Press 尚文堂

Shunyo-Do Press 春陽堂

South-North Press 南北社

Syun-You-Dou Press 春陽堂

Ten-Yuu-Sya Press 天佑社

The Pioneer Press 開拓社

Transformation Press 改造社

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