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Oscar Wilde's Hair: Phobic Reactions and Novel Self-Fashioning at the Turn of the Century

Nikhil Gupta

Oscar Wilde's self-presentation through bodily ornamentation—particularly his long hair reaching down to his broad shoulders and framing his clean-shaven face—provoked uneasy responses from onlookers during his 1882 American tour. Upon arrival in New York, Wilde had no need to lecture his Gilded Age audiences on aestheticism to raise questions of appearance and style for them. One of *Puck* magazine's recurring fictional editorialists, "Fitznoodle in America," voices his sense of disorientation after seeing Wilde on stage in New York at the start of the tour:

I am sure, in the eyes of the Amerwican assemblage, which always has a painfully supweme aw sense of the widiculous, he must have presented a perfectly absurd figgah, what with his peculi-ah expression, and his picturwesque head of hair falling down on his shouldahs from both sides of his cwanium, like the pictchahs of my ancestahs pwevious to the Westorwation.¹

Instead of making the strange more familiar through some line of ancestral resemblance, Wilde's hair marks him as stubbornly alien. More specifically, he appears out of sync according to Fitznoodle, who judges the aesthete's hairstyle as predating the Restoration or "Westorwation." Here the editorialist's cartoonish accent unintentionally reminds us of America's own westward-looking geopolitical consolidation taking place at the time of Wilde's visit—a project that Wilde's indeterminate cultural image threatens to unhinge. Wilde "and his picturwesque head of hair" point back to an earlier, English empire that, after the

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74 Restoration, expanded to Ireland and then across the Atlantic to North America. The “Amerwican assemblage,” this “absurd figgah” reminds us, was once a colony—as “wideliculous” as that may be for Americans to imagine in 1882. The American and British presses would continue to ridicule the long-haired Wilde in caricatures and cartoons, converting the Irishman into a protean figure registering any number of cultural fears and stereotypes: he could be racialized, feminized, or animalized from page to page. These efforts to guard notions of cultural belonging, however, forced their public depictions of masculinity and Anglo-American whiteness into some rather ridiculous contortions even as they tried to straighten out the internal contradictions that Wilde’s presence brought to the surface.

While on tour, Wilde grew to understand the self as the consequence of both an individual’s stylizing his appearance and his audience’s efforts to make sense of and respond to such adornments. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Wilde experiments with this concept of selfhood by presenting a figure whose public face never changes; the eponymous character’s persistent sameness forces others to recognize him even though they expect to find some difference in his appearance. The shocking stability of Dorian’s image is so extreme that it tests the ability of others to see the same man standing before them year after year; the consistent identity between Dorian’s repeated appearances over time becomes itself a novelty. Turning his attention back to the stage, Wilde explores another version of the self that puts pressure on the limits of recognition, one that is consistently identifiable because of its insistence on fashioning new characteristics. In *Salome* (1894) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), hair highlights and models Wilde’s belief in the self’s origin in the stylistic gestures of the individual and its transformation in response to public recognition. Like hair, the self begins beneath the surface but is only recognizable after it is shaped, styled, and crafted in the open where others can see those changes. The self that American audiences would identify in the aesthete, lecturer, and author eschews anything like originality, as Wilde’s public persona makes no claims to the self’s being traceable to any bedrock of authenticity. Like hair, his version of the self continues to grow and take new shape; as soon as it becomes recognizable, some new novelty can be teased out of it. To Wilde’s thinking, novelty differs from originality in the former’s hinging on an audience’s reaction to the self as an unanticipated performance. It matters little if the audience recognizes the self as authorized officially by the individual; the audience needs only not to have seen this novel self performed before. Furthermore, an individual can deploy one novel self after another without any priority attached to either—a possibility at odds with the notion of an original self. This understanding of self-fashioning also resists representation through caricature, which relies on an audience’s immediate, unmistakable, and indisputable recognition of the individual being portrayed based on traits assumed to be inseparable from that individual. The self that is imagined by Wilde remains identifiable despite the addition of surprising features or the removal of particularly recognizable characteristics—changes that make the self all the more novel. Indeed, Wilde availed himself of an opportunity to resist caricature when he cut his hair short in 1883. Hair demonstrates Wilde’s version of selfhood so

wonderfully because of its existence within and without the body. Its capacity for being associated with the body in varying degrees allows it to represent a part of or at times an alternate version of the self that bridges or collapses oppositions—a concept that played out on stage and in newspapers during the Irish artist's American lectures on British aestheticism and eventually came to inform Wilde's characteristic witticisms of the 1890s.

The 1882 American Tour and Wilde's Otherness

Hairstyles, of course, change with the times, and by 1882 men were wearing their hair much shorter than they were at the end of the previous century. During the Regency period, men's hair was typically cut short and modeled after classical Roman styles. Eventually, beards and sideburns replaced, in the Victorian period's gendered imaginary, the tall wigs and embellishments of the eighteenth century. Susan Walton has argued that English beards and mustaches were tied up in ideological arguments about manliness in the face of international threats around the time of the Crimean War: "It was as if the clean-shaven, smooth-talking, 'modern' arts of negotiation and diplomacy were being pushed aside; instead the public called for an older bewhiskered version of John Bull, the archetypal full-blooded Briton with pugnacity and 'spunk' who stood up to bullies and barbarians."² While the bushy Victorian beard would eventually lose its association with martial valor by the century's end, the mustache, Walton emphasizes, would remain a mandatory "marker of the British soldier" up until 1908 ("From Squalid Improprity," 240). Men's facial hair increasingly embodied English notions of national vigor and security in the second half of the nineteenth century; in the same period American doctors, according to Kimberly A. Hamlin, debated the relationship between facial hair and the boundary separating gendered identities as bearded female patients disrupted their understanding of "what exactly it meant to be female."³ Celebrities like Viola M. and the Laos-born Krao not only drew huge crowds "flock[ing] to see bearded ladies on display at circuses and sideshows," but also raised the question of "[w]ho counted as 'human'" within the Darwinian view of evolution at the turn of the century ("The Case of the Bearded Lady," 955, 976).

Wilde's look in 1882—clean-shaven and long-haired—bears little resemblance to this Anglo-American trajectory of masculine appearance, thus accounting in part for Fitznoodle's discomfort with the self that Wilde, the Oxford graduate and London celebrity, presented on stage at New York. Beyond his hair, Wilde's costume also set the visiting lecturer apart from his middle-class audience. Madeleine Ginsburg points to "the 'aesthetic' jacket and knee-breeches which . . . so shocked the ribald Philistines of America," and Joan Nunn describes this outfit as having a "somewhat 18th-century style" about it.⁴ Not only was this sartorial anachronism visually disorienting to a lecture-goer like Fitznoodle, but, as Jonathan Goldman reminds us, it "also evoke[d] a bygone age of sumptuary laws, when only a select few could attire themselves so flamboyantly."⁵ When Wilde stepped onto American soil, he confused his audience's sense of gendered, economic, and temporal orders alike.

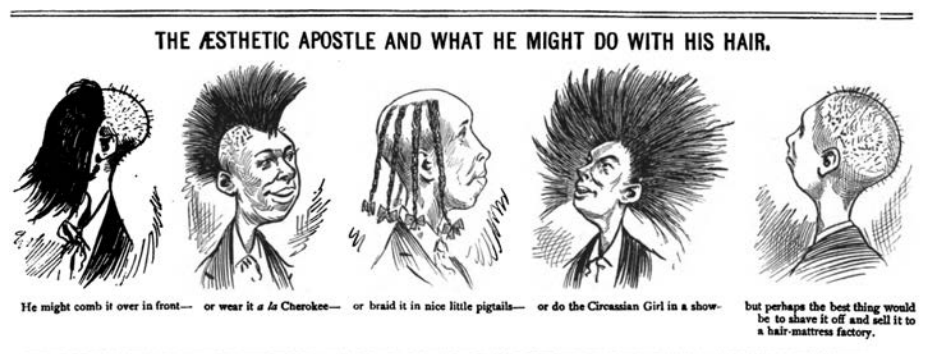
76 The temporal disjunction signaled by Wilde's appearance also brings the discourse surrounding the author's self-fashioning and public reception into the broader discussion of the problems of identity and belonging taken up by postcolonial studies. The Irish-born Wilde has increasingly become an important figure for scholars investigating Ireland's place within the British Empire, especially its literary landscape. Though he enjoyed the education and social privileges of the Anglo-Irish class, Wilde also belonged to the generation that followed in the wake of the Great Famine's devastation, and he learned his characteristically witty verbal posturing at the salons hosted by his mother, who under the penname "Speranza" authored poems calling ardently for Ireland's independence.⁶ Both Declan Kiberd and Terry Eagleton have underscored the utopian position that Wilde held between English and Irish cultures—a no-place from which he could point out the "shallowness of such categories" as stage-Irish and stage-English identities, both of which he turned inside-out in his performances as an artist and in his dramatic writing.⁷ As Eagleton puts it, "The misery of colonial non-identity could thus be turned to advantage, converted into a utopian alternative to the politics which had produced it."⁸ Phobic reactions from the popular press to Wilde's appearance on the American stage remind us that the racial status of the Irish was also caught up in a similar set of prejudices and stereotypes across the Atlantic. "Assailed by nativists and racists once they arrived in New York," Kevin Kenny explains, "the Irish found themselves fighting battles over identity that were not, after all, that dissimilar from the ones they and their ancestors had long been fighting in Ireland."⁹ Pointing to the rise of comic weeklies like *Puck* and *Judge* in the 1870s and 1880s, L. Perry Curtis Jr. concludes that the "simile of the simian Celt . . . crossed the Atlantic . . . and became as closely identified with corruption, clericalism, and organized violence in America as in the British Isles."¹⁰ Wilde's 1882 US tour, therefore, appears as a particularly telling moment in modernity when the racial discourses of England and America participated equally in degrading the image of the Irish as cultural misfits in the larger Atlantic world. Gregory Castle has analyzed Wilde's performance on the American lecture stage and in newspaper interviews in order to show its addressing the divided colonial subjectivity of the Irish in a manner reminiscent of modernist aesthetics: "Like modernists later on, he seized on the principles of combination and differential repetition and used them to create 'original effects' rather than 'original ideas.'"¹¹ Fitznoodle's difficulty with locating Wilde within his present moment of men's hairstyles and their relationship to national character is, as it turns out, incredibly apt: as early as 1882, Wilde projected a self that conjoined different modes of otherness and layered oppositions atop each other, moving strategically between English, Irish, and even American codes of signification while his appearance confusingly evoked times other than the present of Anglo-American culture. Ireland's early colonial experience allowed Wilde to understand and embody the multiplicity of identity and fractured temporality that would later become the trademarks of modernist and postcolonial literature.

To the extent that the field of postcolonial studies examines the difficulty of separating the ties that bind oppressive colonial legacies to national aspirations and liberated futures, hair proves a fitting place to discover the forms of power that underlie

supposed markers of difference and that belie interconnections within variations.¹² As empires like Britain's expanded in the eighteenth century, hair, according to Angela Rosenthal, "was perceived as registering ethnic divides, separating the controlled hair of the 'superior' European from, on the one hand, the alleged unkempt hairiness of Africans, or, on the other hand, the 'beardless' men of the Americas and Asia."¹³ The legacy of such imperial codifications survives to this day. Kobena Mercer understands hair as one of the primary markers of aesthetic value that continue to circulate as "signifiers of a fundamental polarization of human worth"; indeed, "within racism's bipolar codification of human value, black people's hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigma of blackness, second only to skin."¹⁴ Wilde's hair, however, renders his racial and gendered identity indeterminate within the logic of *fin de siècle* Anglo-American culture, and so it frustrates the binary thinking that is premised, according to Rosenthal and Mercer, on more predictable and recognizable forms of bodily aesthetics.

Ornamented the right way, the self as Wilde understands it can bring forth a formerly unrecognizable posture from beneath the surface of the body's appearance, allowing it to be identified with positions that previously may have been off limits. According to Rosenthal, hair possesses a particular "*representational* power" that comes from its "liminality"—from its always pointing back to "the body whence it came" ("Raising Hair," 2). Not only does this liminality suggest that the boundaries of cultural difference are less solid than they appear, but it also highlights the difficulty of completely identifying hair with the interiority of the body in which it originates. We only ever see hair *in medias res*, once it has grown past its origin, after it has gained a novelty of its own visible to the public world. Wilde's performance of the long-haired persona that traveled across America and circulated through its newspapers and magazines in 1882 prefigures the stance the author would take toward generating texts. Paul K. Saint-Amour argues that by both plagiarizing and offering up stories of his own for retelling by others, Wilde presents a version of artistic creation premised on the non-identity of author and text, one "limning a community through circulation rather than reinforcing private ownership through accumulation."¹⁵ Similarly, hair allows the individual to present novel versions of the self to the world, at times serving as a metonymic alternative to the original body, at others providing opportunities for variation, combination, or unintended interpretation. Hair thus helps Wilde to imagine ornamenting and performing the self in the surprising, transformative style so typical of his epigrammatic language: markers of belonging and otherness and signs of opposition turn out to be more intertwined than they initially appear in both Wilde's art and his bodily appearance on stage.

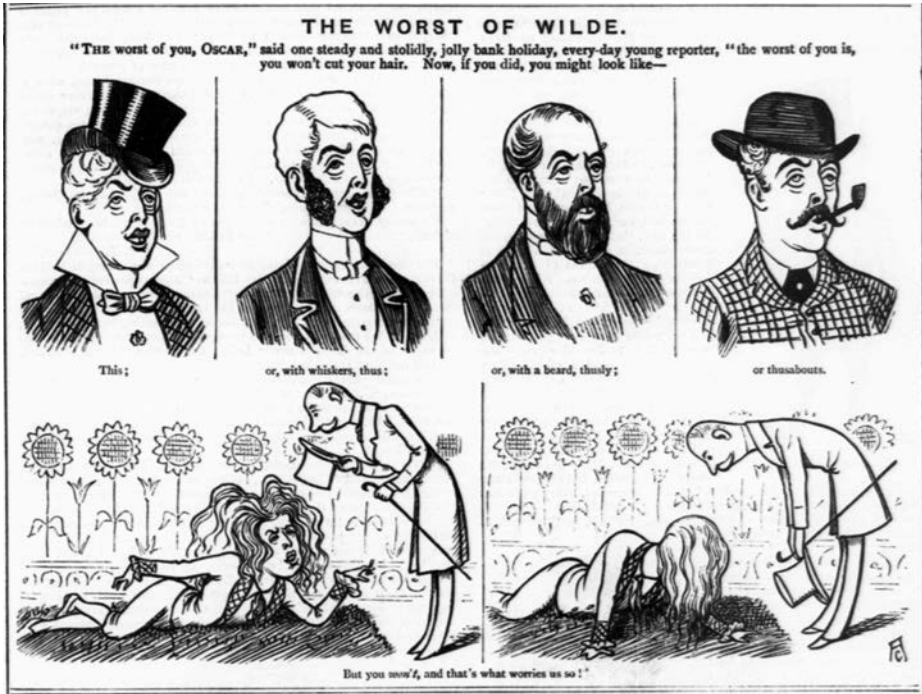
After his tour traced the trajectory of the nation's westward expansion, Wilde proclaimed, "I have already civilized America," in essence coopting the cultural power of America's own imperial project.¹⁶ In response, the popular press in America took it upon itself to imagine Wilde as groomed according to its own more entrenched codes of appearance and style. A few months after his arrival in America, a cartoon from *Puck*, "The Aesthetic Apostle and What He Might Do With His Hair," suggests several possible hairstyles for Wilde: "He might comb it over in front— . . . or wear it



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Fig. 1. “The Aesthetic Apostle and What He Might Do With His Hair,” *Puck*, January 25, 1882, 330.

a la Cherokee— . . . or braid it in nice little pigtails— . . . or do the Circassian Girl in a show— . . . but perhaps the best thing would be to shave it all off and sell it to a hair-mattress factory” (fig. 1).¹⁷ In place of the author’s own self-stylings, the *Puck* cartoon substitutes versions of an othered Wilde that were more familiar on the continent he happened to be crossing: a racialized subject (“a la Cherokee”), a feminized subject (“braid it in nice little pigtails”), and even a combination of the two in the form of P. T. Barnum’s fabricated image of colonial female beauty (“the Circassian Girl in a show”). Any of these alternatives would have been easier for the readers of *Puck* to fold into the violent trajectory of America’s growing conception of itself. Consequently, the Wilde of this cartoon holds much the same disturbingly exotic place in America’s imagination as the curiosities of a travelling circus—such as bearded women like Viola M. or Krao—but still the cartoonist questions whether that is a safe enough remove: “perhaps the best thing would be to shave it all off” and erase these uncanny signs of difference completely. In lieu of accomplishing such a feat, the cartoon relies on bullying Wilde into stylistic contortions, the force of which reveal how powerfully caricature seeks to control racial and gendered differences by making them unquestionably recognizable.

Like the cartoon from *Puck*, one from the English journal *Judy* reproduces one substitute Wilde after another. Here the successive imagined figures align so neatly in terms of height and orientation as to make their alterations seem nearly automatic. The cartoon’s ideological force transforms Wilde’s face into an artificial mold for supposedly more authentic masculine guises. This sequence of looks suggests that masculinity is a genre, recognizable by its outer trappings and conventions that reduce any novel source material to caricature—in this case, Wilde’s lampoonishly masculine face gazing at its audience. Instigating these changes to Wilde’s appearance is a “steady and stolidly, jolly bank holiday, every-day young reporter” who admonishes Wilde and insists that “the worst of you is, you won’t cut your hair” (fig. 2).¹⁸ The speaker of this comic goes on to speculate on the various ways in which Wilde might groom himself and how he might look with shorter hair, a mustache, or a beard. Finally admitting defeat, however, the speaker laments, “But you won’t, and that’s what worries us so!” Instead of offering the panorama of ridiculous hairstyles suggested by the *Puck* cartoon, the proposals here



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Fig. 2. "The Worst of Wilde," *Judy, or the London Serio-comic Journal*, March 8, 1882, 111.

point to explicitly masculine makeovers for Wilde, but they are similarly framed as a phobic proliferation of enforced barbering. The discord that Wilde's hair strikes with imagined male sexual propriety is made even more explicit in the cartoon's final two frames: his back arched and hair blown out, Wilde lies sprawled across the ground posturing in front of a gentleman who tips his hat and bows concernedly. Mirroring the typical sexual binary attached to imperial discourse, the flowy-haired Wilde appears ready to be both ravished and cared for—to be civilized—by Victorian masculinity. Furthermore, the *Judy* cartoon's final two panels break the pattern of serially reproduced close-ups on Wilde's head and instead point to a larger space—the domestic interior—that the journal "worries" Wilde's self-styled persona will ultimately subvert. This perhaps explains the relief that the public showed upon the reading of Wilde's verdict outside the Old Bailey in 1895: amidst the hum of approval, a woman was heard to have shouted, "E'll 'ave 'is 'air reglar now!"¹⁹

In its efforts to make sure he does not somehow consume masculine civility with his threateningly abnormal sexual energy, the *Judy* cartoon finally depicts Wilde in an exhausted pose, his hair falling down in front of his face in the last panel. Echoing the first suggestion from the *Puck* cartoon, this final frame imagines Wilde's hair as coming between him and the masculine gaze. Figured as an obstruction, Wilde's hair keeps the "jolly bank holiday, every-day young reporter" from seeing another man in front of him. For the American readers of *Puck* and the English readers of *Judy*, these cartoons highlight an anxiety over seeing their possible reflections in the long-haired

80 Wilde. A version of this biting truth is revealed in the preface of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.²⁰

As Vincent J. Cheng reminds us, “the Irish response” to being racialized and simianized by the English was “often the rage of the Irishman precisely at seeing his face represented in the English mirror as Caliban, and the parallel rage of not seeing in one’s reflection oneself as one’s own master.”²¹ However, this famous paradox from the preface is not just about Irish identity; it also speaks to British and American reactions to otherness. In the case of the cartoons from *Puck* and *Judy*, British and American viewers register an equal and opposite rage at seeing their structures of identification sliding into and out of each other in Wilde’s contentious hair. The *Judy* cartoon requires seemingly little effort to come up with its masculine versions of Wilde and lays them out serially in the same pattern as *Puck*’s ridiculously imagined menagerie of uncivilized figures. Structurally, the two cartoons become mirror images of each other. What really worries these audiences is their ability to see in Wilde both the imagined ideals of themselves and the real, historical other against which they bolster their cultural codes of mastery. The speakers of these cartoons both see and do not see themselves in Wilde, and their phobic reactions are a result of the confusion his hair inspires. Serving as preferable alternatives to Wilde and his excessively long hair, both the mohawk-coiffed “Cherokee” and the bearded Victorian gentleman become equivalents, the pigtailed girl and the mustachioed banker become conspiratorial agents, all partners together in the effort to maintain the boundary against Wilde’s self-fashioning. These cartoons show us how easily certain oppositions or versions of self and other can, through sleight of hand, become doubles for each other when faced with some third term, like Wilde, that threatens their opposition through its own indeterminacy. The large, imposing Irishman with long, lavish hair risks overturning the entire structure of identification in American and British culture because his public persona defies the usual categories these imperial ideologies rely on.

The insights these caricatures reveal regarding hair’s liminal status—and its uses—not only inform the version of selfhood that the Irish aesthete presented on stage during his 1882 lectures; they also imprint Wilde’s major works of the 1890s and mark them as responses to the oppositional logic by which Anglo-American imperial culture restricts self-fashioning. In what follows, I read *Dorian Gray*, *Salome*, and *Earnest* as Wilde’s further explorations into the effects of novelty and recognition on identity. *Dorian Gray* takes up the problem of the self’s remaining perfectly recognizable in every detail for an implausible duration; precise repetition inspires a form of novel misrecognition at the abrupt conclusion of the text. In *Salome*, Wilde’s heroine uses language that col-

lapses oppositions, and the play's treatment of hair confuses or switches the positions of the desiring self and the object of desire. Though the protagonists of *Earnest* are animated by incongruous motives, they end up pretending to be the same fictional character, and again hair highlights the self's position between natural origins and social reception. Hair comes to demonstrate, for Wilde, the possibility of the self's advantageously embodying contradictory positions, such as the Irish had long practiced in both England and America.

Dorian Gray dramatizes the distinction between self and other, reality and ideal, private imagination and public appearance that the *Puck* and *Judy* cartoons seek to maintain, and the novel invests that division with all of the fear inherent in the gothic genre. The novel's plot works to keep separate reality, on the one hand, and fantastical image, on the other. Dorian's illusory youth is maintained by his hiding the truth of his age and experience in the portrait stored away in his attic. This device pushes the possibility of recognition to its limits when others expect Dorian to have aged—to have grown in some small way unrecognizable from his earlier self. The terrifying tension of this plot nearly breaks—and nearly kills Dorian—when the reality of his experiences threatens to force its way into plain sight. James Vane returns from his adventures in empire to avenge his sister's suicide, which he rightly suspects Dorian to have caused. Vane, however, abandons his initial plan to kill Dorian after realizing that the man responsible for his sister's death “so many years ago” must look much older than the “lad of twenty summers” whom he tracks down (*Dorian Gray*, 159). Later on, after Dorian swoons and faints at his country house, he eventually wakes, and “a thrill of terror ran through him when he remembered that, pressed against the window of the conservatory, like a white handkerchief, he had seen the face of James Vane” (165). This spectral figure, however, ends up being far less of a threat than the painting—that secret double of Dorian's experience, which registers in its ugly distortions of Dorian's appearance the pain Sibyl Vane suffered at his rebuff. Soon after his haunting presence at the window, James Vane dies in a *deus ex machina* hunting accident, his identity revealed when Dorian lifts a “spotted handkerchief” off his dead face (172). Upon returning to town, Dorian pulls the purple hanging from in front of his painting and thinks, “The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long?” (183). Terrified of his secret being exposed, Dorian stabs the painting before his other life hidden within the picture can replace his recognizable public image. Even when his servants find Dorian's dead body, they struggle to identify him and to understand what has taken place:

When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was. (184)

The fully aged Dorian remains unrecognizable until the servants notice his richly adorned fingers. If his “loathsome” appearance at the novel's close is supposed to

82 serve as a punishment for his immoral behavior over the years, the significance of this transformation is left unspoken by the onlookers in the final scene. Dorian's physical appearance is, in fact, inscrutable without his jewelry to hint at the identity of the dead body. Perceiving Dorian's true history is wrapped up in—and perhaps takes a second seat to—recognizing the ornamentation that characterizes him for others.²² Wilde's gothic thriller derives all of its energy from keeping separate what ought to be identical, and so as soon as the novel's primary oppositions of inner truth and outer appearance are revealed as intimately related or confusedly intertwined partners, the novel ends.

In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains the gothic subject as following a particular spatialized model: "It is the position of the self to be massively blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access."²³ Her description of the doubleness that barriers and interfacing surfaces create in gothic novels articulates the pattern of Dorian's experience:

The self and whatever it is that is outside have a proper, natural, necessary connection to each other, but one that the self is suddenly incapable of making. The inside life and the outside life have to continue separately, becoming counterparts rather than partners, the relationship between them one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication. This, though it may happen in an instant, is a fundamental reorganization, creating a doubleness where singleness should be. And the lengths there are to go to reintegrate the sundered elements—finally, the impossibility of restoring them to their original oneness—are the most characteristic energies of the Gothic novel. (*The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, 13)

Not only does the plot device of the hidden portrait work towards this purpose, but so too do the spotted handkerchief and the purple hanging that, like the wall of Wilde's hair covering his face from the viewer's eyes in the *Puck* and *Judy* cartoons, shield Dorian from confronting the truth of his experience somewhere beyond his ideal version of himself. Recognition and misrecognition, however, will become increasingly crucial parts of Wilde's artistic vision as he moves away from the gothic mode of *Dorian Gray* and arrives at the aestheticist lyricism of *Salome* and the epigrammatic wit of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In both of these later plays, Wilde's characters incorporate the oppositions they bring together, and hair—already an important source of contention in his public persona—features prominently in the scenes where Wilde's language reveals the combination of physical display and public identification that makes possible the self's further transformation.

Ornamentation, Iokanaan's Hair, and the Dance of the Seven Veils

Wilde's *Salome* luxuriates in the adornment of its language and the adornment of its characters' bodies. In its depiction of Herod's beheading John the Baptist (Iokanaan) and Salome's performing the dance of the seven veils in exchange for the head of the prophet, the play collects, repeats, and catalogues words, turning them over for the audience to show them off like prizes. Set in the far reaches of the Roman Em-

pire—echoing Ireland's culturally peripheral place in the later British Empire—the play colonizes its own language. On the stage, Wilde's characters are simultaneously hidden and revealed, ornamented by hair, veils, and the palace's décor, all of which covers parts of their bodies while opening others up to confrontation. The climactic scene of Salome's bringing Iokanaan's head to her lips prompted the first image Aubrey Beardsley drew in response to Wilde's play.²⁴ Published in the first issue of *The Studio*, "J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Iokanaan" was one of the first drawings to introduce the illustrator to the public, and it led Wilde to describe Beardsley as "the only artist, who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance."²⁵ Ironically, this image takes up hair, blood, and violence to the body far more than it does the stripping of veils associated with the infamous dance in Wilde's play. Critics have long debated the relevance of Beardsley's illustrations to the 1894 English edition of *Salome*, but an early reviewer of those first images presented in *The Studio* points out the alarming role of hair in Beardsley's vision of the play's denouement:

In this drawing, Salome, arrayed in a strange headdress in which the locks and ball of hair take the vague form of a hideous spider, on her knees, holds before her wizened face the severed head of the Baptist; a head with snaky locks like those of Medusa, from which falls a stream of blood which, as it touches the ground springs up again as a marvelous lily. It is like a spider's web, this drawing, with fantastic lines and spirals wandering about at hazard. But the horror lies in the headdress of Salome: the hair falls before her as she kneels, runs over her back and springs from her head like the legs and body of a gigantic spider or scorpion.²⁶

Reading this image in terms of the play's uncertain rendering of sexuality and perversity, Joseph Donohue argues that there is "no clear line between heterosexual and homosexual concerns in *Salome*. Beardsley's perverse celebration of Iokanaan as a Medusa-like seducer of Salome, who is herself depicted as a treacherous threat, effectively captures the pervasive ambiguity of sexuality and sexual attraction in this dense, paradoxical play."²⁷ Just as striking as the blurring of life and death achieved by this kiss is the way hair switches and qualifies the gender roles of these figures. Indeed, hair veils and confuses the positions of seducer and of trophy in Beardsley's image. The decapitated Iokanaan becomes the medusa-like threat, turning Salome into the inert victim, but she still terrifies the viewer through her own hair, which "falls," "runs," and "springs," defying the static prison of the medusa's prey. Beardsley reminds us that hair in Wilde's public life as well as in his artistic vision mediates between positions of power, gender, and sexual identity, and much of the text of *Salome* works towards obscuring and confusing any set oppositions within those structures.²⁸ Interiority and exteriority become difficult to maintain in both the play and its illustrations, which are themselves liminal adornments to the play—much like hair's relationship to the body.

Part of what makes the hairline drawings of Beardsley so appropriate to Wilde's *Salome* is their suddenly and surprisingly tracing a movement from the outside surface of bodies and objects to the interior of others. Furthermore, it is difficult for viewers of Beardsley's images to tell where hair ends and where veils, dresses, fans, or the larger

84 spaces surrounding figures begins. Wilde further confuses exteriority and interiority by setting the main action of *Salome* in the outdoor terrace, thereby highlighting the sense in which Salome disrupts the logic and internal balance of Herod's court even as she becomes the symbol of the Tetrarch's imperial power. Moving in and out of sight, she alternates between being Herod's colonial possession and being an unrecognized poison to his paternalistic rule. The first lines she speaks denote a restless resistance to her sense of entrapment: "I will not stay. I cannot stay."²⁹ Preoccupations with the barrier or enclosing surface also structure the positions of power and locate the sources of desire just as they do in *Dorian Gray*. Wilde even depicts Salome's request of Iokanaan's head as linked to the plate or surface on which it will be set:

SALOME: [*Kneeling.*] I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger . . .

HEROD: [*Laughing.*] In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, thou that art fairer than all the dangers of Judæa? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? . . .

SALOME: [*Rising.*] The head of Iokanaan. . . . It is for my own pleasure that I ask the head of Iokanaan in a silver charger. (*Salome*, 55–56)

While the beheading of Iokanaan severs those elements that ought to have access to one another—inside and outside, inner psychological life and bodily materiality, gazing subject and desired object—the silver charger also serves up the part of Iokanaan's body that would, in Victorian culture, normally be exposed even when clothed. The hair, neck, and face that constitute the head-turned-trophy call attention to the constant vulnerability entailed by the slightest instances of offering up the body—even its most obvious surfaces—to public view.

To the extent that she is seen or wanted, Salome instigates certain oppositions within the public world of the play, but as a desiring subject Wilde's heroine is able to hold together oppositions, contradictions, and forces of attraction and repulsion through the language she uses to describe her own personal sense of pleasure. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in her searching and itemizing gloss on Iokanaan's physical attractions, including, notably his hair. Mediating between the poles of allure and rejection, hair becomes the focus of Salome's desire at the very center of these three episodes that Chad Bennett has shown to be structured by a "rhetorically parallel figuring and disfiguring" of Iokanaan's appearance.³⁰ Like the cartoons that catalogued different hairstyles for Wilde, Salome enumerates simile after simile to describe first Iokanaan's body, and ultimately his mouth, but between the two she describes the prophet's hair through an extensive inventory of poetic figures:

SALOME: It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Iokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the wine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide themselves by day.

The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair. . . . Suffer me to touch thy hair.

IOKANAAN: Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOME: Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns placed on thy head. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair. . . . It is thy mouth that I desire, Iokanaan. (*Salome*, 22–23)

Beyond its ornamental function, hair proves vigorously productive, inspiring a metonymic chain that moves between nature and artifice, deep longing and visual appeal. Whereas the graphic structure of the *Puck* and *Judy* illustrations worked so hard to imagine Wilde through an oppositional logic of exclusion, *Salome's* language transforms the reiteration of poetic images into a cycle of attraction that endlessly finds beauty in new objects (e.g., from body to hair to mouth). Salome's linguistic captivation moves past Iokanaan's stubborn "dislike" for her and becomes a magnetic force that counters Caliban's rage at seeing and not seeing himself in the looking glass. In fact, Salome does more than simply react to the sight of Iokanaan as he might appear on the mirror's surface; she refashions her own desiring self through each iteration of simultaneously adoring and abhorring Iokanaan.

As the price paid for the dance of the seven veils within Wilde's text, Iokanaan's decapitation seems to curtail the dissolution of boundaries that Salome achieves through her captivated language. However, starting with Beardsley's depiction of Iokanaan's head and the ambiguous blood or hair that transforms into a lily in "J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Iokanaan," haircuts, undressing, and beheadings also take on a synecdotal or metonymic resonance that registers a dynamic inner psychological life through changes in bodily ornamentation or through the transformation of the body into a prize—into pure ornament—throughout his illustrations of the English edition of *Salome*. Though no mention of Salome's veil-stripping dance is made in the accounts of John's beheading in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, this performance-as-reward has become the most salient feature of the Salome story since Wilde's retelling of it. When the beauty and riveting appeal of Salome's dance becomes wrapped up in and indistinguishable from the gruesome and appalling beheading it requires, this performance signals the beginning of a relationship in modernism between beauty and illicit desire that continues on through texts like *Ulysses* and *Lolita*.³¹ The text of Wilde's play, however, offers little in the way of describing this genealogical point of departure, famously announcing it in brackets as a stage direction:

SALOME: I am ready, Tetrarch.
[*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils.*]

HEROD: Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me. (*Salome*, 54)

86 While Bennett points out how “Wilde’s terse stage direction . . . tells us nothing about the dancer’s body or the motions it will perform,” Helen Davies argues that the dance “exists in the text as a perpetual absence” (“Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*,” 302).³² Far from emptying this dance of meaning—or leaving it as a notorious “blank,” to use Elizabeth Richmond-Garza’s word—Wilde’s text makes room for the spatial nature of performance and of this dance in particular.³³ He also had already given voice to the structuring principle of this dance in Salome’s figurative inventory of Iokanaan’s body, hair, and mouth. Just as her discourse there both made and unmade Iokanaan’s appearance, her dance allows Salome to fashion herself in the same way. Dancing the dance of the seven veils, Salome is no longer a person with a biography or history, nor is she herself identical to the famous dance; she is the one who moves into and within the space of pure style that the dance imagines. Perhaps Wilde insists that Beardsley’s hairline drawing captures the effect of this dance so well because both turn the space of the Tetrarch’s imperial realm of politics, law, and morality into a space for witnessing everything that is beautiful about the body—without, of course, any of the oppositional logic relied on by either caricature or empire in their marking of difference. Though the text of the play may not adorn this transformation with language, Wilde presents the dance as a space that teases the audience with the possibility of identifying the self that is simultaneously presented and screened by the veils passing before her.

Hair in Beardsley’s illustrations blurs individuals and objects, transforming them into new positions for the self, and Salome does this too when she immediately reincorporates Iokanaan’s head into the space of her dance. In the play’s most spectacular inversion, Salome seizes her prize to kiss it, thereby bringing it back together with the physical and beautiful form she has come to represent. Like James Vane’s terrifying Dorian, the disembodied head’s entering the space of the dance horrifies Herod, who according to the stage directions “*hides his face with his cloak*” upon first seeing that union until ultimately he leaves to hide himself within the palace walls (*Salome*, 64). Though his daughter will not do so, the Tetrarch will keep separate the broken body from those that are healthy, the fragmentary from everything whole, the other that rebukes him from the self he achingly wants to claim as his. Throughout the play, Iokanaan has served as a figure of resistance to authority, a challenge to spoken praises, requests, and commands. When displayed upon the silver charger, the head that has suffered its own change of shape becomes an image that challenges our aesthetic sense of form. Indeed, the height of discomfort that Iokanaan’s head instigates is so great that at the instant when Salome kisses its lips and brings that dislocated figure back into a moment of solidarity with all that is beautiful, the play calls for a cloud to pass in front of the moon and darken the stage. Though the kiss may not be visible, Salome speaks aloud, “I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth” (*Salome*, 67). As the inverse to the dance that Wilde leaves only to be seen or imagined without any description in his text, this unseen kiss fills that space with language as dangerous as it is full of appeal. Salome’s words here suggest a fulfillment of her earlier frustrated attempts to touch Iokanaan’s body, hair, and mouth as she finally presses her lips to his. Within the political world of the play, however, these words also close off desire,

which Herod can only understand through the more brutal logic of demand and possession that undergirds his imperial authority. A final ray of moonlight reveals Salome holding Iokanaan's decapitated head, and upon seeing this Herod orders his soldiers to kill her. With none of the liminality that hair offers in Beardsley's depiction of the climactic kiss, the shields beneath which Salome is crushed serve as the final barrier to her showing us what it means to be so captivating as to bring even opposites together.

Hair and Multiple Selves in *The Importance of Being Earnest*

The Importance of Being Earnest utilizes the same structural separation of real experience from fictive image at work in *Dorian Gray*, but here Wilde's comedy is fueled by throwing oppositions surprisingly into one another's path rather than keeping them apart. Thus, the characters in *Earnest* succeed in overcoming the obstacles to desire that beset Salome. Over the course of the play, Jack and Algernon both navigate the play's late-Victorian social landscape, the former endeavoring to marry Algy's cousin and the latter seeking the hand of Jack's ward. Furthermore, both characters create fictional alter egos to escape the demands of their daily lives as Englishmen who claim all the benefits of responsible citizenship in the capital of imperial culture. They disguise themselves, in fact, to achieve their own secret ends. This practice, referred to as Bunburying in the play, mirrors the device of the portrait in *Dorian Gray*.³⁴ As Algernon explains to Jack:

I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know. . . . You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.³⁵

Algernon and Jack's Bunburying relies upon many of the dichotomies created by Dorian's portrait: health and illness, duty and profligacy, the sophisticated sarcasm of the town and the quaint sincerity of the country. These are, as Kiberd has noted, all to be inverted in the course of the play: "for Wilde, an authentic life must recognize all that is most opposed to it," and so, "in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, each person turns out to be his own secret opposite. . . . Whatever seems like an opposite in the play materializes as a double" (*Inventing Ireland*, 38–39). Algy even becomes Jack, or at least a version of Jack that they both come to embody, namely the town-dwelling Ernest whose personage Algy coopts in order to visit Jack's country house. The play's humor turns on Wilde's ability not only to deliver Ernest to a setting where he does not belong but also to confront Jack with his own fictive creation.

Jack and Algy flourish in their embodiment of the possibilities of both losing and repossessing the self that Wilde had begun exploring during his American tour. In con-

88 trast to Dorian's self-destructing from his putting off any recognition of the relationship between self and other, and unlike Salome's being punished for collapsing oppositions, Jack and Algy come into their own by instigating the play's multiple doubles to come face to face. Indeed, by the play's end Jack inherits his lost parentage, and Algy—to the great delight of his aunt—stands to gain Cecily's £130,000. Wilde's play rewards them for creating selves that skillfully refuse any single, foundational identities. Wilde even points to his own success with such tactics in an exchange between Algy and Cecily, one which echoes the indeterminacy his hair caused others to find in his theatrical posturing while on tour in America:

CECILY: You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGERNON: Yes, darling, with a little help from others. (*Importance of Being Earnest*, 331)

Coming in the midst of Cecily's revelation that she has authored and accepted a proposal from Algy, whom she believes to be Ernest, without Algy's having known a thing about their engagement, this equivocation surrounding Algy's "naturally" curling hair demonstrates Wilde's understanding of the natural as something that is always managed artistically before we have access to it. "Nature," Vivian expounds in Wilde's "The Decay of Lying," "is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation."³⁶ Certainly, Algy's identity relies more heavily on the novel response it incites—on "help from others" like Cecily, the fiancé he did not know he had—than it does on any authentic or original sense of self. As Mercer has explained,

As organic matter produced by physiological processes, human hair seems to be a "natural" aspect of the body. Yet hair is never a straightforward biological "fact" because it is almost always groomed, prepared, cut, concealed and generally "worked upon" by human hands. Such practices socialize hair, making it the medium of significant "statements" about self and society and the codes of value that bind them, or don't. ("Black Hair/Style Politics," 34)

Algy's hair—both naturally curling and socially bolstered—drives this point home. He acknowledges that his hair's curls create an effect that goes beyond what he can produce "naturally"; the self that this hair makes so desirable to Cecily is, of course, always also a result of Algy's performance, his embodiment of some other persona.

Similarly, Wilde was always less interested in what his long hair offered on its own than in the pose it allowed him to adopt before others. Richard Ellmann cites this same exchange from *Earnest* while commenting on Wilde's real-life change of hairstyle in the second period of his career, when he self-presented as an artist "who has nothing whatever in common with the gentleman who wore long hair and carried a sunflower down Piccadilly" (*Oscar Wilde*, 220). Just when his hair was becoming a cliché, he cut it. The public's perception of Wilde's hair in 1882 helped the artist to imagine the malleable limits of the self that would later expand fortuitously in *Earnest*. As epigram-

matic style does in the language of Wilde's text, hair reveals the arbitrariness of social conventions like gender and sexual identity, and the body those conventions try to structure becomes a text that can be manipulated, written and rewritten.

The wit of Wilde's epigrams in *Earnest*, where his command over language reveals itself most brilliantly, brings about an array of meanings, identities, and realities for his characters, helping them to maneuver around social expectations and economic obstacles. This is a particularly vital achievement for the Irish artist in whose mind, Eagleton argues, language "compensates for a history in which you are more determined than determining, more object than agent" (*Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, 333). In his version of stage comedy, Wilde finally found a style that would support such agency; the epigram transforms, giving rise, in the words of Luke Gibbons, "to what was not there before," so nobody in *The Importance of Being Earnest* need suffer the perils that ultimately doom Dorian and Salome.³⁷ Algy and Jack surpass Salome in embodying the oppositions and contradictions that audiences would normally demand be kept separate.

In contrast to Algy, Jack, and Wilde's unbounded theatricality, the 1882 *Puck* and *Judy* cartoons tenaciously guard the boundaries of recognizable masculine identity. For all their effort, however, the caricatures' restrictive structure of identification appears to be threatened not so much by the gender crossings of Wilde's famously long hair as by their own inability to recognize the possibility of inversion within their own set terms. Moving inwards from *Salome's* setting on the far-flung edge of one empire to the very center of another in *Earnest's* depiction of London society, Wilde forces his audience to recognize its own "secret opposites," which normally lie so close to home in imperial culture that they escape notice. As Gwendolyn puts it in *Earnest*:

Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. (*Importance of Being Earnest*, 334)

Here, the possible unhinging of gender roles that so "worries" the every-day young reporter in the last panels of the *Judy* cartoon seems already to have played out. Wilde's comedy has long been understood to subvert British culture from within its own constructs, but in remembering and subverting the popular press's depiction of his hair, *The Importance of Being Earnest* suggests that Anglo-American efforts to imagine identity through gender norms and racial categories neglect the strategies for self-fashioning that allow Algy and Jack to thrive. Instead, the speakers of the *Puck* and *Judy* cartoons choose Dorian's course: in their assaults on Wilde, they merely expose and attack their own loathsome visages.

90 Notes

1. Fitznoodle in America, "Aesthetics and Beauty," *Puck*, January 11, 1882, 312.
2. Susan Walton, "From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability: The Revival of Beards, Moustaches and Martial Values in the 1850s in England," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 30, no. 3 (2008): 229–45, 241.
3. Kimberly A. Hamlin, "The 'Case of a Bearded Woman': Hypertrichosis and the Construction of Gender in the Age of Darwin," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2011): 955–81, 955.
4. Madeleine Ginsberg, *Victorian Dress: In Photographs* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 19; and Joan Nunn, *Fashion in Costume: 1200–2000*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 137.
5. Jonathan Goldman, *Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 29.
6. For a longer discussion of the influence of Lady Wilde, her politics, and her salons on her son and his notion of celebrity, see David M. Friedman, *Wilde in America: Oscar Wilde and the Invention of Celebrity* (New York: Norton, 2014), 18–26.
7. Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 36.
8. Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (New York: Verso, 1995), 337.
9. Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Pearson, 2000), 71.
10. L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 64.
11. Gregory Castle, "Misrecognising Wilde: Media and Performance on the American Tour of 1882," in *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 85–117, 94.
12. In his century-mixing personal style, Wilde raises the problems of temporal indeterminacy and ambiguous definition that Marjorie Howes argues lie at the heart of postcolonial studies: "The postcolonial appears to demand a temporal definition: the literal meaning of 'post' in this and other terms like 'postmodern' is 'after.' But defining the postcolonial as after the colonial turns out to be more complicated than one might think. For one thing, it is not always easy to tell when colonialism ends, even if we take formal independence as the major criterion. . . . Another question that has caused some debate among scholars concerns the precise connotations of 'post.' To what extent does the postcolonial represent a new departure from the colonial? To what extent should we think of it as the aftermath of the colonial, marked by the legacy and effects of colonialism?" ("Yeats and the Postcolonial," in *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Marjorie Howes and John Kelly [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 206–25, 213–14).
13. Angela Rosenthal, "Raising Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 1–16, 2.
14. Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," *new formations* 3 (1987): 33–54, 35. In a similar vein, Neal A. Lester has explained how the borders of gendered and racial difference even remain policed and institutionalized for children based on their hair. See Neal A. Lester, "The Why and the Where of Hair," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 37, no. 2 (2013): v–xvi.
15. Paul K. Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 96.
16. Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 205.
17. "The Aesthetic Apostle and What He Might Do With His Hair," *Puck*, January 25, 1882, 330.
18. "The Worst of Wilde," *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, March 8, 1882, 111.
19. See H. Montgomery Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: The Aftermath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1963), 1.
20. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2007), 3.
21. Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152.
22. Kevin Ohi has pointed out a similar separation within the novel along the lines of genre. He argues that the moralized terms of *Dorian Gray*'s gothic narrative are countered by the aestheticist discourses that run parallel to the novel's fantastic and supernatural plot. See Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave, 2005),

62. If the gothic narrative authors Dorian's transformation into a morally bankrupt character—one figured grotesquely by Basil Hallward's painting—then the aestheticist emphases on influence and internalization suggest different and competing courses, according to Ohi, for the styling of Dorian's self (*Innocence and Rapture*, 117–21).

23. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 12.

24. See Aubrey Beardsley, "J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Iokanaan," *Best Works of Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: Dover, 1990), 18.

25. Quoted in Steven Price, "A Short History of *Salome*," in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 328–36, 334.

26. "Some Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley," *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, September 1, 1893, 259. For discussions of the relationship between Beardsley's images and the content of Wilde's play, see Elliot L. Gilbert, "'Tumult of Images': Wilde, Beardsley, and *Salome*," *Victorian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1983): 133–59; Susan Owens, "Aubrey Beardsley and *Salome*," in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, 110–24; and James A. W. Heffernan, "Love, Death, and Grotesquerie: Beardsley's Illustrations of Wilde and Pope," in *Book Illustrated: Text, Image, and Culture, 1770–1930*, ed. Catherine J. Golden (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 195–240.

27. Joseph Donohue, "Distance, death and desire in *Salome*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, 118–42, 129.

28. Beardsley explored these themes of power, sexuality, and gendered ornamentation in his own poem, "The Ballad of a Barber," which happens to echo an earlier poem by a friend of Wilde's, "The Barber" by John Gray. See Karl Beckson, *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose* (Chicago, IL: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1993), 6, 105.

29. Oscar Wilde, *Salome* (1967; rpt., New York: Dover, 2014), 10.

30. Chad Bennett, "Oscar Wilde's *Salome*: *Décor*, *Des Corps*, *Desire*," *ELH* 77, no. 2 (2010): 297–323, 306. Bennett discusses Wilde's utilizing the technique of the blazon in these speeches, as well as in the anti-blazon responses *Salome* makes to Iokanaan immediately following each of his refusals to be persuaded by her discourse.

31. This relationship between beauty and illicit desire finds its way into James Joyce's *Ulysses*, where the allures of the city keep Leopold Bloom occupied and away from the home in which his wife is having an affair even as the novel inevitably pulls him back to Molly at 7 Eccles Street. Fittingly, Joyce evokes Wilde and the sense of doubleness that colonial identity creates for the Irish in the first pages of the novel: "—The rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in a mirror, he said. If Wilde were only alive to see you! Drawing back and pointing, Stephen said with bitterness: —It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant" (James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler [New York: Vintage, 1986], 6). A few decades later, Vladimir Nabokov takes up the relationship between power and sexuality that *Salome* initiates in his *Lolita*, where an illicit sexual attraction brings together two characters that represent the shifting positions of power between Europe and America; see Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel Jr. (New York: Vintage, 1991).

32. Helen Davies, "The Trouble with Gender in *Salome*," in *Refiguring Oscar Wilde's Salome*, ed. Michael Y. Bennett (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 55–70, 65.

33. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, "The Double Life of *Salomé*: Sexuality, Nationalism and Self-Translation in Oscar Wilde," in *Refiguring Oscar Wilde's Salome*, 21–36, 23.

34. Michael Y. Bennett sees a similar parallel between the function of bunburying in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Salome*'s shifting identity inside and outside of Herod's palace. Wilde's heroine, he argues, "splits herself, revealing different parts of herself in different situations depending upon the differing gazes. *Salome* is a canny bunburyer: however, only *Salome* bunburies (splits in two) to escape the gaze of others in order to preserve parts of herself" (Michael Y. Bennett, "A Wilde Performance: Bunburying and 'Bad Faith' in *Salome* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*," in *Refiguring Oscar Wilde's Salome*, 167–83, 176–77).

35. Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, ed. Richard Allen Cave (New York: Penguin, 2000), 301.

36. Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 290–320, 312.

37. Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, IE: Cork University Press, 1996), 8.