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**Exploring Baudrillard' Simulation
and Simulacra in Wilde's *The
Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The
Importance of Being Earnest***

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a study on Baudrillard's theory of 'Simulation and Simulacra' in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and his well-known play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In the former, Wilde attempts to integrate his thoughts and beliefs about the role of art in society. In doing so, he provided an identical painting of the protagonist in his plot. This painting did not just imitate the main character Dorian physically but also on the spiritual level. The painting copied the protagonist so much that it became mistaken to be the real Dorian Gray. In the latter play, Wilde also inserts the idea of copies and reproduction of the real. He tends to create fake characters that resemble the real ones for the sake of specific aims that are explained in the play. In the end, he realizes these unreal characters and gives them more attention than the real ones. In both of his works, Wilde embodies the concept studied by Jean Baudrillard of hyperreality. In both of his works, the Irish author tries to comment on the issue of originality and authenticity in the modern world. This study aims to examine the characters of both of the novel and the play along with the different elements that represent hyperreality and to see to which extent Wilde's writings correspond to Baudrillard's theory.

Keywords: simulation, simulacra, hyperreality, original, copy.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى دراسة نظرية المحاكاة لبودريار في رواية اوسكار وايلد "صورة دوريان جراي" و مسرحيته "أهمية أن تكون إرنست" . لقد قام وايلد بإدراج أفكاره و معتقداته حول دور الفن في المجتمع. في القيام بذلك قدم وايلد لوحة مطابقة للبطل الرئيسي في الرواية .هذه الأخيرة لم تحاكي البطل في الشكل فقط بل أيضا طابقته على المستوى الروحي .لقد قلدت النسخة البطل حتى أخذت مكان دوريان الحقيقي. في المسرحية الأخيرة يدرج وايد أيضا فكرة نسخ و استنساخ الحقيقي. يميل وايلد الى خلق شخصيات وهمية بحيث تشبه الحقيقية الى حد ما و هذا لأهداف معينة شرحت أثناء المسرحية. يقوم وايلد بتجسيد هاته الشخصيات في الواقع مانحا اياها انتباها اكثر من الشخصيات الحقيقية. في كل من أعماله يجسد وايلد المفهوم الذي تم التحقيق فيه من قبل جان بودريار من المحاكاة و الغير الواقعية. في كل من أعماله يحاول المؤلف الايرلندي العثور على الأصل والأصالة في العالم الحديث. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة شخصيات الرواية بالاضافة الى الجوانب الأخرى التي تمثل النظرية و أيضا رؤية الى أي مدى تتوافق اعمال وايلد مع نظرية بودريار.

الكلمات الدالة : محاكاة، فوق الواقعية، الأصلي ، نسخة

Résumé

Cette dissertation propose une étude sur la théorie de Simulation et Simulacra de Baudrillard dans le roman d'Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray* et sa pièce bien connue *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Dans le premier, Wilde a essayé d'intégrer ses pensées et ses croyances sur le rôle de l'art dans la société. Ce faisant, il a fourni une peinture identique du protagoniste dans son intrigue. Cette peinture n'a pas imité le personnage principal Dorian physiquement mais aussi sur le plan spirituel. La peinture a copié le protagoniste qu'il devient erroné d'être le vrai Dorian Gray. Dans cette dernière pièce, Wilde insère aussi l'idée de copies et de reproduction du réel. Il a tendance à créer de faux personnages qui ressemblent aux vrais pour des objectifs spécifiques qui sont expliqués dans la pièce. À la fin, il réalise ces personnages irréels et leur donne plus d'attention que les vrais. Dans ses deux œuvres, Wilde incarne le concept étudié par Jean Baudrillard d'hyperréalité. Dans ses deux œuvres, l'auteur irlandais tente de commenter la question de l'originalité et de l'authenticité dans le monde moderne. Cette étude vise à examiner les caractères du roman et du jeu ainsi que les différents éléments qui représentent l'hyperréalité et voir dans quelle mesure les écrits de Wilde correspondent à la théorie de Baudrillard.

Mots-clés: simulation, simulacre, hyperréalité, original, copie.

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General introduction

The new technological development, that is present from the beginning of the industrial revolution until today, has helped human nature in more than one aspect. However, when it comes to uniqueness and originality, things are not genuine at all. In fact, the term original or authentic ceases to exist purely in the current time. In the modern time, it is noticeable that it is hard to find an object, an item or even an attitude that is not copied and repetitive. As a result, it is rather difficult to get the real out of its endless copies, or even distinguish its existence when it is displayed. This issue has taken the attention of many critics and writers. They tried to comment and criticize the absence of authenticity in the contemporary era. One of the famous critics that dedicated his writings to increase awareness about such a matter is Jean Baudrillard. He provides an important insight and a precise analysis to the massive production and its consequences. He frames his vision under the concept of hyperreality and simulation. In addition to many authors and writers that focused on this particular matter in a literary setting.

The simulacrum, as a theory that responded to the rapid socio-economic development, has provoked a great deal of criticism and comments about it. The majority of this criticism agreed upon the issues tackled by the French philosopher. For instance, author John Phillips comments on Baudrillard's perspective on the modern age when he says "*When reading Baudrillard, it is not possible to avoid the sense that we members of the twenty-first century are unlucky to live in a world dominated by the drive for completion, and which attacks multiple levels*" (qtd in Bishop 4). Phillips confirms the bad consequences of the media and the other products that were brought with the new technological improvements. Ryan Bishop, on the other hand, affirms the existence of simulation in the current age in his book "*Baudrillard Now*" 2013. He clarifies the logic behind the hyperreal and the fact that it "*Involves an increased reliance on systems of functionality that bear no relation to any real other*" (2) clearly, he regards the situation from the same angle as Baudrillard. Thus, he

confirms the loss of meaning and reality. Furthermore, the fact that simulation “*Is the principal procedure through which reality is made up, while it pretends to be merely ‘re-constructed’ or ‘re-presented’*” (Rojek and Turner 40). When taking the French sociologist's word into consideration, one realizes that It is not just the real that is threaten by the overwhelmed existence of simulated copies, but also the distinction between the real and the fake. Baudrillard states that “*To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have*” (3). Thus it will threaten “*The difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’*” (3). Something that is quite common nowadays.

Undoubtedly literature mirrors the society's perspective and happenings. Writers take the responsibility of documenting the time that they witnessed and their perception of it. Oscar Wilde as one of the most influential writers of the nineteenth century has successfully recorded the Victorian era leaving his criticism implicitly in his writings. His only published novel entitled “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*” and his play “*The Importance of Being Earnest*” are a vivid illustration of how he criticized society throughout his literary works. In fact, the last two works are the core of this dissertation. They will be investigated through the lens of ‘*Simulation and Simulacra*’ by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. Indeed, the novel is a story of young man named Dorian Gray who is offered a portrait of himself, at the very beginning of the novel. As the story goes, he realizes that his identical painting is a container of his soul. As a result, it will record and show all of his sins and mistakes. Through the story, the protagonist tries to hide his secret and enjoy his flawless youth by doing whatever he pleases. Eventually, when he attempts to destroy the painting, he dies. For that the stab was directed to him. In the novel, the copy of the protagonist is almost indistinguishable from the real character. Moreover, it draws more attention to it while the real is nearly lost. On the other hand, the play is about a man who escapes his responsibilities by creating an imaginary brother who is located in a different area from where he lives. He uses his brother to get away

from his real life and enjoy his time by saying that he is very irresponsible and he has to take care of him. In the attempt of doing so, he forms a whole different life pretending to be his bother. In the end, the fake character of his brother turns out to be real after all. The simulated item is more real than the real itself. Additionally, the fake is absorbed in reality and valued more than it. Wilde inserted virtual copies of the protagonists to comment on the double life that is led by most of the members of his society. Surely this issue is not exclusively in the postmodernist era yet it is also found in the modernist one.

As a matter of fact, many writers and critics have tackled the doubleness theme in the works of Oscar Wilde. They have been interested in the imitation drawn by the characters and their copies that are invented along the plot. First, Wilde's novel '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' has been regarded as a novel that presents Baudrillard's hyperreality by many artists. One of the many scholars that studied the novel under this particular theory is Kostas Boyiopoulos. In his article entitled '*Simulation in The Picture of Dorian Gray: Echoing Hamlet, Anticipating Baudrillard, and the Comparative*', he argues that the novel embodies the theory in more than one aspect. In his article, he refers to Baudrillard quoting his statement about the loss of reality due to the endless reproduction of the original. He confirms that "*Dorian Gray is the forerunner of this 'reproduction'*" (Boyiopoulos 10). In addition, he believes that the inserting of the book in the middle of the novel is also a simulation for that it copies the protagonist's life. In addition, the book is indistinguishable from reality itself. He writes, "*The book is a simulacrum, doubling Dorian just like the portrait does*" (Boyiopoulos 21). On the other hand, author Rebecka Klette approaches the novel from Baudrillard's standpoint. However, she focuses on the book in particular as an aspect of simulation of the protagonist life. In her article "*Artificial milieus and hyperreality in Huysmans' Against Nature and Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*", she draws a comparison between the protagonist of the novel and the protagonist of the book inserted in the novel. She argues that

“To Oscar Wilde, *Life imitates Art, rather than Art imitating Life; this can be interpreted as an early form of the theory of Hyperreality, in which Art (understood as Sign) precedes life, becoming more real than reality itself*” (Klette 1). The play “*The Importance of Being Earnest*” has also gained a lot of criticism and has been studied in various ways. When it comes to exploring simulation in the play, critics are not numerous. However, author Marwa Sami Hussein has studied the play with this view. Indeed, she wrote an article under the name of ‘*The Duality of Human Nature in Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest*’. In the latter article, she comments on the duality that the characters of the play, giving her insight into the fake characters and the real ones. Moreover, author Peter Ruby dedicated a book that holds the name of ‘*Oscar Wilde*’ in which he talks about the play and its themes and style. He assures that the novel inserts a contrast between the characters in order to shape a clash between the trivial and the serious (Ruby 125). Such a contrast is shaped specifically among the real characters and the fake ones. According to these critics, it is true that both of the novel and the play provides elements and concepts that fall into the same category as the theory of hyperreality. From this point, this paper will explore in details all the aspects that show simulation in one way or another.

This study is an attempt to explore the postmodernist theory which is *The Simulation and Simulacra* in the works of Oscar Wilde, specifically, ‘*The Picture of Dorian Gray*’ and ‘*The Importance of Being Earnest*’. Its main objective is to seek the concept of hyperreality in both of the works and to comment on its importance and its effectiveness among the readers. Through the analysis of the items that represent the simulation in the novel and the play, a set of questions will be listed. Does the novel ‘*The Picture of Dorian Gray*’ correspond to the theory of hyperreality? What are the specific items and characters that echo the theory in the novel? Can the play “*The Importance of Being Earnest*” be considered as a work that embodies the ‘*Simulation and the Simulacra*’? In order to make this research structured and

well presented, a few hypotheses will be theorized. One of which is the assumption that Oscar Wilde's do correspond to Baudrillard's concepts and ideas. Second, it is hypothesized that the characters of both of the novel and the play embodied the postmodern theory in the modern literary context. Surely, this dissertation follows a thematic analytical approach

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will deal with a theoretical background about the theory of '*Simulation and Simulacra*'. It will first investigate the shift from the modernist era to the postmodernist one. Then it will define the theory in details providing its various ordered and phenomena. After that, it will offer few examples of some of the modernist works that echo the postmodernist theory of hyperreality. Chapter two will focus particularly on the novel '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' and seek (will focus and seek) the simulation within it. It will first provide a brief background about the novel and its criticism. Second, it will display the synopsis of the novel. Then, an analysis of the main character Dorian Gray, Sybil, Lord Henry and the book will be discussed. The third chapter will shed a light on the play "*The Importance of Being Earnest*" and explore hyperreality in it. It will first give a brief review of the play and then narrate its general plot. After that, it will analyze the items of the play as follow: the character of Jack Worthing, the character of Algernon Moncrieff and the dairy of Cecily.

Chapter One

A Theoretical Background of Baudrillard' 'Simulation
and Simulacra'

Literature in the previous century has witnessed a massive development. Such a development was the outcome of two literary movements which are modernism and postmodernism. In fact, these two movements abandoned the traditional norms of writing, they both called for a new way of viewing the world. In effect, this view corresponded to the happenings that occurred in the twentieth century. Indeed, many critics commented on the consequences of such events and their effect in altering the modern individual. Baudrillard, as one of those critics, was interested in the way we perceive reality and its representation. This chapter will be devoted to explain briefly modernism as a movement and the shift that lead to postmodernism. Then, a detailed definition of the theory of '*simulation and simulacra*' will take place. Finally, examples from modern era will be presented according to the postmodernist theory of hyperreality.

1. The Break Away from Modernism

It is hard to pinpoint a specific date where literature moved from the modernist era to the postmodernist one because the contributing factors of such a change did not happen overnight. However one can describe the different reasons that shaped the shift toward the postmodern age. Specifically when taking into consideration the techniques and the thematic constructions of the novel.

1.1 Modernism

Modernism is regarded as the platform that paved the way to postmodernism to emerge. Therefore it is of use to describe the nature of modernism to understand postmodernism and what led to it. In the beginning of the twentieth century, literature witnessed a revolutionary change where subjectivity took over the mainstream. Indeed this distinctive feature was embodied in the narration of plots where writers gave up the traditional

omniscient narrator¹ and started to give a voice to their different characters. Moreover, prose and poetry were both identified with fragmented forms in addition to the direct and indirect borrowings from different precedent writings. Despite the fact that these fragmented narrations and constant allusions to the past make it difficult for the reader to comprehend the proper meaning, they actually help the audience to “*collaborate actively in the production of meaning*” (Whitworth 11). As a matter of fact, modernism mirrored the events that took place in the early 1900's. It depicted “*modern life, especially urban life, and shows ambivalence towards it*” (Whitworth 11). This period in history was mostly famous for horror and fear from the First World War. Susan Friedman suggests that “*Art produced after the First World War recorded the emotional aspect of this crisis; despair, hopelessness, paralysis, angst, and a sense of meaninglessness, chaos, and fragmentation*” (qtd. in Whitworth 224). People lost faith in God and humanity. Also, the economic problems at the beginning of the century were reflected in the modernist literature along with all of its consequences such as unemployment, depression² and civil wars. In addition to the impact of the decline of the British Empire and the emigration that occurred after.

Surely, modernist literature was built by many writers who shaped the modernist thinking and formed modernism as a whole, such as: Ezra Pound, TS Eliot, Virginia Woolf.....etc. These writers believed that the traditional style of writing is no longer valid. In his essay ‘*Tradition and the Individual Talent*’ (1919), T. S. Eliot asserts that tradition “*should positively be discouraged*” (1). He adds that it “*cannot be inherited*” (1). Therefore, modernist artists created a style of art that suits their situation and reflects their perspective

¹ a common form of third-person narration in which the teller of the tale, who often appears to speak with the voice of the author himself, assumes an omniscient (all-knowing) perspective on the story being told.

² It was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world. It began after the stock market crash of 1929, and lasted until 1939.

towards it. Undoubtedly, the effect of these writers was not exclusively for the modern era however they represent a huge reference to postmodernist writers.

1.2 The Shift toward Postmodernism

As it is mentioned earlier, locating the movements historically is rather complicated. Yet depicting its various aspects is helpful in understanding the transition between the two movements. Actually postmodernism is indefinable in a specific manner due to the fact that it celebrates relativity to a great deal, which means it is also applied to its definition as well. In such an issue, Josh McDowell wrote “*Trying to define and understand postmodernism can be a lot like standing in an appliance store trying to watch three or four television shows at once. It defies definition because it is extremely complex, often contradictory, and constantly changing*” (qtd. in Proctor 15). In addition to Bruce Proctor, who claimed that it should be described rather than defined (15).

As a movement that was driven by modernism, it surely follows most of its famous concepts that revolve mostly around rejecting conventional rules and surpassing the boundaries of society. Notably, postmodernism focuses on reflexivity³, relativity and fragmentation⁴ in constructing plots and narratives. Michel Foucault highlights the concept of relativity claiming that all of his analyses are “*against the idea of universal necessities in human existence*” (qtd. in Hicks 2). He adds that “*It is meaningless to speak in the name of—or against—Reason, Truth, or Knowledge*” (qtd. in Hicks 2). Additionally, pastiche⁵,

³ A term applied to literary works that openly reflect upon their own processes of artful composition.

⁴ An aspect in the postmodernist literature. Where plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references are fragmented and dispersed throughout the entire work.

⁵ A literary or artistic composition made up of selections from different works.

irony, and parody⁶ are strongly present among postmodern concepts. Even though postmodernism mutually shares several concepts with modernism they both differ in their attitude toward most of them, for instance, the dominant mood in modernism era is dark and gloomy, because they regard fragmentation as tragic and grievous. Such a dramatic vision is probably due to the timing for those writers and artists were just realizing the new changes that were happening at that time. As a result they considered it depressing and they mourn their loss explicitly. However, it is not the same case with postmodernism; the latter somehow coped with the new conditions. In fact, postmodernists embraced and celebrated most of the trends that were commiserated in the modern era.

Postmodernism tends to embrace the chaos and accept it totally because it considered it as an undeniable part of its world and an essential aspect of its identity. Even though the representation of such chaos was different from one individual to another, yet such diversity symbolizes postmodernism's most prominent feature. Despite the fact that each representation is distinct from the other, they are all flavored with a skeptic odor. Skepticism⁷ indeed destroyed any certainty or faith in the postmodern era. It is definitely an outcome from the spread of subjectivity at the expense of objectivity. The skeptic attitude towards facts, that are no longer facts, comes from the different perspectives and reactions concerning everything and about anything. In his book *“Explaining Postmodernism”*, Stephen Hicks claims that *“abstract themes of relativism and egalitarianism. Those themes come in both epistemological and ethical forms. Objectivity is a myth; there is no Truth, no Right Way to read nature or a text. All interpretations are equally valid”* (20). In reality, when every individual is free to explain and expose his thoughts and beliefs, one cannot simply narrow his orientation to one

⁶ A parody is a work created to mock or make fun of an original work.

⁷ The attitude of doubting knowledge and any aspect of certainty.

specific path. In such situation, confusion and perplexity are a must. Therefore the postmodernist individual develops a relative skeptic reaction towards it all. Clearly, uncertainty suggests that all truths are questionable even the fact that they are all doubtful is uncertain to some extent. With this in mind, we enter an endless paradoxical circle of questions and fear.

Particularly, skepticism contributes in the shifting toward postmodernism, the more skeptic the reaction, the further we move to postmodernism. As a matter of fact, the shift toward postmodernism occurred when sorrowful attitude toward the decline of conventional values and the deconstruction of unity turns out to be more accepting and welcoming. Writers started to use irony to make fun of the old instead of praising it endlessly. Also, they accepted the fact that they cannot create instead they recreated pieces of art under the name of pastiche. In other words, the newborn techniques are a result of a changing attitude. This new attitude embodies the transition between the two periods.

If one is obliged to describe postmodernism in one aspect they would likely choose the inability to recognize the true reality out of everything. Due to the fact that the truth has been hidden, masked and misrepresented repeatedly. Apparently, most of the important figures in the postmodern era focus on this issue in particular. They truly believe that the swiftness of this age and the domination of the media over the world have manipulated the real until it nearly disappeared. Jean Baudrillard was concerned with this matter and he specifically devoted a theory to comprehend it. This theory holds the name of “*simulacra and simulation*”.

2. Baudrillard’ Simulation and Simulacra

The French sociologist and thinker Jean Baudrillard is concerned with the relationship between reality and its representation. He seeks to examine the confusion caused between the

two. Baudrillard focused his attention “to a critique of technology in the era of media reproduction, and has come to repudiate all models which distinguish between surface and depth or the apparent and the real” (Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 182). He uses simulation and simulacra to explore such a difference. Just like postmodernist theories ‘*Simulation and Simulacra*’ struggles to settle on one single definition because it is regarded from different angles and perspectives. However one can consider Jean Baudrillard’s own definition as a comprehensive one. In his book ‘*Simulacra and Simulations*’ (1981), he chooses the following expression to define simulacra briefly “*The simulacrum is never what hides the truth-- it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true*” (1). From the wordplay he used, the definition seems multi-layered and rather confusing. However, it covers up the simulation and the simulacra in general. In the explanation above Baudrillard points out at the fact that the truth is played and Confused with simulacrum . Indeed the truth is no longer evident the simulacrum took over it entirely.

Baudrillard’s theory requires a deeper look into the modern society that is characterized by a mass of consumption and communication. The postmodern age seems like a chain with already experienced events. It is all prevailed with the lack of originality and authenticity. For Baudrillard, we live in a simulation of the original. The former is totally concealed and even forgotten because the copies provided from it are numerous. He writes “*it is no longer a question of false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real*”(Baudrillard 175). He tends to overlook the fact that the real is misrepresented and look for its true nature instead. According to him, the postmodernist society is so attached to the replacement of the real world in the media that it has lost touch with the real world which precedes this representation. The idea of the map and the territory is a vivid illustration to clarify this confusion. Baudrillard states:

If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where, with the decline of the Empire this map becomes frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts - the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing.
(166)

2.1 Orders of Simulacra

Baudrillard does not simply suggest that the postmodernist age is fabricated because one cannot recognize the fake without a sense of reality. However, he indicates that the modern individual is unable to make a distinction between what is real and what is simulated. For him, we should be aware of the orders of simulacra in order to differentiate between the real and the artificial. He debates that there are three orders of simulacra. The first stage is associated with the pre-modern era. In this stage, the distinction between the real and the fake is easy; the image is known to be Just an Illusion. The copy here is regarded to be faithful and correct. The second order of simulacra takes place in the industrial revolution .the difference between the original and the copy becomes harder and that is due to the increased manufacturing and the increasing number of the copies produced. Baudrillard confirms that the real is “*reproduced an indefinite number of times. It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational*” (167) .The original is misrepresented by the media and this misrepresentation is largely produced in the industries. In the third order, one cannot even distinguish between the real and its copy. The simulation has surpassed the real and covered it with its several copies.

The reality is lost and totally absorbed by the simulation. The later concealed and overshadowed the original completely (Baudrillard 120). This order is extremely present in the postmodern era.

2.2 Simulacra's Phenomena

Baudrillard suggests certain phenomena that explain the loss of distinction between reality and its representation. According to him these phenomena illustrate hyperreality and how it found its way through society. He listed five phenomena which are: Media culture, exchange value, urbanization, multinational capitalism and language and ideology.

2.2.1 Media Culture

The contemporary media which is demonstrated in (the television, newspaper, films internet ...) does not merely provide us with knowledge and information but also creates a specific image for each individual. The former creates a facade based on which we will communicate with each other. For example, the goods displayed in the market are purchased for their representation on the media. We already formed an image about them based on commercials. This illustrates our disconnection from reality. Baudrillard commented on this issue saying that publicity "*Is certainly no more the case than that publicity is a manipulation of need and of consumption*" (208).

2.2.2 Exchange Value

The Marxist notion suggests that capitalism neglects the value of the purchase products; it rather regards the worth of it and into what it can be exchanged. Baudrillard claims that capitalism "*separates the commodity into exchange value (price) and use value only then to have use value as the alibi for exchange value*" (03). According to Baudrillard,

everything is capitalized, the true value of the thing is lost and the material reality is gone. He asserts that “*Consumers are mutually implicated, despite themselves, in a general system of exchange and in the production of coded values*” (Baudrillard 46).

2.2.3 Multinational Capitalism

The age of the industry and the mass production concealed the process of making the goods we consume. The masking of such process results in making us disjointed with the natural fact of the labor. In addition, the majority of the postmodernist society is unable to identify the real origin of what they consume, because the industry exchanged labor with technological machines (Baudrillard 52). The labor productivity has nearly disappeared in favor of the complex industrial process. The latter separate the individual from reality on a huge level. The fact that the consumer cannot know the origin of the products he consumes helps in realizing the simulation and enhancing its effect.

2.2.4 Urbanization

With the development of the architecture and the modernization of the cities, we tend to get further and further from the natural world. Thus reality is dislocated and the idea of the real world is replaced. On the other hand, the real natural world becomes protected and alienated from the newly-created one. Baudrillard suggest that the city has replaced the real natural world that the individual knew before the industrial revolution. He clearly states that “*Everything in this city is metaphysical, including its dream-like geometry, not a geometry of space, but a mental geometry*” (Baudrillard 197).

2.2.5 Language and Ideology

Ideology is understood as a mean to hide the truth because it represents a false consciousness. It keeps us from seeing the real working of the state and the dominant group in power. The ideology is inseparable from our perception of reality. The ideology becomes a must. As a result, the modern individual relies heavily on language to shape and build his perception. The latter, according to Baudrillard has altered from the pre-industrial era until today. He argues that language “*included words that were attached to referents and were uttered in a context that held open their possible reversal by others*” (Baudrillard 4). However in the renaissance era, language started to be more attached to abstract codes (Baudrillard 4). In the postmodern era “*signs become completely separated from their referents*” (Baudrillard 4). Therefore any representation of reality that is represented by language or ideology is already structured by simulacra.

3. Applying Baudrillard’s Theory on Modernist Works

Even though the simulacrum is a theory that was initially stated and recognized during the postmodernist era, it sure can be applied to the works that root back to the modernist period. The theory and the works do not fall in the same temporal setting yet they can be related conceptually. In this vein, studying a modernist work using the hyperreality as a mode of analysis is totally convenient. Furthermore, it can reveal truths and realities about the work. Not to mention the fact that it is strong evidence that proves the flexibility of the theory. In addition, it highly manifests the relationship between the two movements. One of the most famous works that can be analyzed and decoded under the Light of Baudrillard's theory is the ‘*Invisible Man*’ 1952 by Ralph Ellison. Ellison's novel is widely acknowledged and represents a great reference in the African American literature. It brilliantly hints at the invisibility of identity; more specifically, within the black community in the United States in the

early 1900's. Indeed the novel incarnates the meaning and the experience of being hidden both on the social and the racial level. Ellison makes the narrator face the unreal reality of his environment and the people around him in order to portray racism and the cruelty of the world toward the black people ("Invisible Man").

Author Nina Dietrich discusses the concept of the many identities adopted in the novel using '*Simulation and Simulacra*' as a guide. She argues that the novel is a vivid representation of the postmodernist's concept which is "*the existence of the multitude selves*"⁸(Dietrich 3). She claims that "postmodernists believe that every person consists of multiple selves that interact and that change at any moment" (Dietrich 4). In her essay, she points out that it is not valid to present yourself with one identity only. It is more accurate to present yourself as a set of identities. While she approaches the novel she does not focus on the main character in the story, however, she regards the character Rinehart⁹ as a better representative of this concept. The narrator of the story declares shockingly that Rinehart is an adapter of many identities. Or as Dietrich puts it "To him, this experience is at once fascinating, shocking and confusing"(4). Dietrich sees that the narrator's realization of Rinehart's style of life is what makes him understand that having multiple personalities is the way to freedom. She adds that "The narrator understands the liberating effect of having multiple personalities"(Dietrich 5). Furthermore, she believes that this character is an embodiment of a fragmented self. Rinehart, indeed, holds various copies within him and he has been replaced by a copy as well. therefore it is of no surprise that the novel echoes '*Simulacra and Simulation*'. As a matter of fact, the theory itself was realized in order to tackle such issues within the modernist and the postmodernist individual.

⁸ A postmodern concept that refers to the idea that the identity of the individual is shattered and fragmented into many.

⁹ A surreal character that never appears in the book except by reputation. He possesses a seemingly infinite number of identities.

Another modernist novel that corresponds to the theory of simulation is Oscar Wilde's *'The Picture of Dorian Gray'*. In his novel he shapes critical questions about authenticity and morality. In effect he tends to create copies of his main character Dorian in order to illustrate his perspective on originality as well as on ethicality. The protagonist of the novel is embodied through three different items: his real self, a painting and a book. All of the precedent items project a specific aspect of the character Dorian. The fact that the novel introduces more than one copy of the main character suggests that the novel echoes Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, where the copy appears more real than the original itself. As a matter of fact, many theorists were interested in the imitation drawn between the real Dorian and his copies. Author Kostas Boyiopoulos believes that both of the portrait of Dorian and the book in the novel symbolize the concept of hyperreality. Moreover, he alludes to the fact that the boundaries between the authentic and the fake in the novel fade almost entirely. As a result, it is very confusing for the reader to differentiate between both and point out at the original at the end.

Chapter Two

Tracing Simulation and Simulacra in Wilde's *The
Picture of Dorian Gray*

Wilde is famous for his distinctive style. In his novel '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*', he narrated an imaginary story in which he projected his perspective on beauty, morality and superficiality. He brilliantly uses his writings to comment on aspects of society he disagrees with; such as the way society identifies originality. In effect, his standpoint corresponds with Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality. The following chapter will introduce the novel of the picture of Dorian Gray and how it corresponds with the theory of the simulation and the simulacra. It will focus specifically on the analysis of the novel using the former theory. First, a brief background about the novel and the criticism it received will be discussed, along with the author's own response to it. Second, the synopsis of the novel will take place, in order to shape a good foundation while analyzing the novel in the third chapter. In fact, the latter will be divided into three sections: Examination of the painting, studying the characters of Henry and Sybil and investigating the item of the book. Indeed, all the analysis will use Baudrillard's theory of simulation as the only tool.

1. A Background of the Novel and Wilde's Insight on it

The picture of Dorian Gray is Oscar Wilde's only published novel. At first, it was not published as a novel. In fact, Wilde put out his story in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in 1890, where it received many criticism and controversial opinions about it. The modernist writer had to defend his novel so he explained the role of an artist in society and the purpose of art in a preface that preceded the novel in its official issuing in 1891. Indeed, Wilde brought a lot of debatable issues with his novel, something that instigated the public opinion at that time. He has been accused with breaking up the Victorian values with his unusual style. Such a dispute over the novel served as a fresh dish to a lot of journalists. The latter could not miss a chance to comment on the event and spice up the discussion about it. For

example, The Scots Observer ¹⁰published a review about the novel hinting at the impropriety that Wilde suggested throughout the story. In the review, W. E. Henley directly stated that “‘*The Picture of Dorian Gray*’, which he contributes to Lippincott's, is ingenious, interesting, full of cleverness, and plainly the work of a man of letters, it is false art - for its interest is medico-legal; it is false to human nature” (qtd. in Wilde 6). As a matter of fact, The Scots Observer was not the only one who addressed the novel with harsh criticism; a lot of reviews were designed to form a bad reputation about it. However, the preface contained a lot of answers to such criticism and it surely had changed the initial perspective about the novel. Wilde set a useful background that articulate how the novel should be read and how it should be seen. He claimed that the novel is neither moral nor immoral and that one art should not be analyzed too deeply after all. Wilde plainly stated that ‘*There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all*’ (Wilde 4). The latter statement exposes his aestheticism¹¹ in both the preface and the novel.

2. Synopsis of the Novel

Wilde starts his novel by describing the setting of the studio emphasizing on the beauty of the atmosphere. He introduces his main characters depicting Dorian sitting for the painting of Basil while listening to Henry talking about life. Particularly, Henry describes beauty as a part of life that should be chased. Such a view affected the young man and it is reflected in his opinion about the painting of his portrait. He loudly expresses his envy toward the painting because it would not alter at all and it will hold its beauty forever. He wishes that

¹⁰ The Scots Observer was a British newspaper published from 1888 to 1897.it was later named The National Observer.

¹¹ Aestheticism is an intellectual and art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes for literature, fine art, music and other arts.

it would age and change throughout time instead of him. As the story goes, the protagonist meets a secondary character named Sybil. She performs at the theater where Dorian has met her. He became fond of her and of her presence on stage. He expresses his fascination about her and she confesses that she feels the same way. Out of his excitement he wanted to introduce her to his two friends Basil and Henry. He invites them to see her performing *'Romeo and Juliet'* on stage. Unexpectedly, she performs poorly, something that embarrasses Dorian and frustrates him. He harshly took that on her which breaks her heart. Later at night, he realizes that the portrait changed a bit. His wish came true; it will bear all of his changes as well as his sins. Dorian feels that he treated Sybil badly so he tries to apologize yet it was too late because she killed herself. The protagonist feels bad. However, Lord Henry convinces him that it is not his fault. Dorian realizes that life should be lived to the fullest knowing that he guards his Beauty no matter what, yet the fear to be discovered chases him. Thus, he hides the portrait away. The narrator mentions that the protagonist was under a heavy influence, which is a book that was given to him by Lord Henry. The book influences Dorian in a bad way. It mirrors his life and it pushes him to follow his desires and to continue chasing the pleasures of life. In fact, the name of this book was not mentioned in the plot, yet Wilde mentioned later that it is a French novel by Joris-Karl Huysmans, entitled "*À rebours*" (Against Nature, 1884). After years, the main character Dorian develops a bad reputation because of his behaviors. Basil, his old friend, is disappointed by the rumors. Therefore, he arranges a meeting with Dorian to see if the rumors are true. Unfortunately, Dorian confirms his bad lifestyle and declares that it is Basil's fault. The protagonist shows Basil the portrait. He is so shocked at the hideous painting that he can't even recognize it. Dorian explains to the painter his curse and puts the whole blame on him. After revealing his secret, Dorian kills Basil. In order to escape from his reputation, Dorian moves to another town. Unluckily for him, Sibyl's brother lives where he has moved. Her brother James Vane had always wanted

revenge after what has happened to his sister. Even though Dorian is caught by James, he escapes by telling him that he is too young to know his sister _he looked very young because he hasn't changed at all _James releases him. However, he realizes later that he is the real Dorian Gray. When Dorian returns back home, he decides to repent hoping that the portrait would be as it was. Yet the picture remains as ugly as it is. Indeed the portrait keeps reminding him of his horrible past. Dorian is annoyed to see that his efforts to change the picture are in vain. Hence, he tries to get rid of it forever by stabbing it. As soon as he does so he falls dead and the portrait gets back to its original status.

3. Exploring Simulation and Simulacra through the characters and the book in the novel

Wilde integrates the idea of double self within the novel in a tricky manner. The protagonist's existence takes place in two different subjects: the portrait and Dorian himself. The fact that there are two versions of the same subject makes it possible for the reader to relate the plot to Baudrillard's theory '*The Simulation and Simulacra*' especially that confusion and misperception are highly present in the story. As a matter of fact, this particular version of viewing the novel was an area of interest to many critics and scholars. One of those scholars is Kostas Boyiopoulos¹². In reality, he wrote a journal about the simulation in The Picture of Dorian Gray collecting all the facts and proofs that assure that the novel does truly correspond to the theory. He claims that the novel parallels the idea of hyperreality¹³ in two objects: the picture and the book. He states that "*Wilde's intricate reflections lead to the rejection of mimesis that lies at the heart of Baudrillard's Simulacres et Simulation*" (10). As

¹² An author and a teacher assistant in the department of English studies in Durham university.

¹³ A concept that suggests the inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality.

it is mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, the real is vanished due to the endless copies of it. Boyiopoulos believes that “*Dorian Gray is the forerunner of this ‘reproduction’*” (10). For that it is extant in more than one place and the consequences of the real Dorian’s actions are apparent in another version of him. Moreover, Baudrillard emphasizes on how the individual is fascinated by the media and the various images it provides. In his book ‘The Masses’ he claims that “the media are the vehicle for the simulation” (218) which is the same case with Wilde’s novel the picture of Dorian Gray where the portrait, an image, is the heart of the simulation. Author Boyiopoulos considers that Wilde’s “*continual laundering of models is a predefinition of what Baudrillard terms hyperreality*” (10). Undeniably, the changes that occurred in the portrait are supposed to take place in the protagonist appearance, but instead, it was on the fake façade of Dorian. Henceforth, the reader is misled and deceived by the overlap of the fake and the real and the hyperreality that is created out of this intersection.

3.1 The Significance of the Portrait in Creating a Blurred Copy from “Dorian”

It is important to mention that the narrator refers to the unclear relation between Dorian and his portrait in the early parts of the novel. When the painting is done and given as a gift to the central character Dorian, he is asked whether the portrait appeals to him; he replies that “*It is part of myself. I feel that*” (Wilde 22). As a matter of fact, Dorian is not the only character that asserts statements that indicate puzzlement concerning the reality of the portrait, Lord Henry and Basil also give the reader an impression that the simulated Dorian is real. Within the plot, Basil states that he rather stays with the real Dorian Gray, referring to the painting (Wilde 23). In another statement, Lord Henry asks a rhetorical question “. . . *which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?*” (Wilde 23).

Baudrillard's theory approves that the main reasons that threaten the real are the fact that there is no distinguishing between the fake and the original anymore. They are all the same. Just like the case with Wilde's novel. Indeed, Boyiopoulos alluded to this saying that: *"In Dorian Gray, the 'precession' of the painting marks the blurring of the boundary between the real person and his likeness"* (12). Explaining that the figure on the canvas and Dorian *"comprise a dipole entity"* (12) something that leads us directly to the idea of Baudrillard and how the copy is inseparable from the real. Obviously, both of the subjects develop a *"simulacral link"* (Boyiopoulos 13). The latter confirms that the portrait is an absolutely airtight simulacrum.

Furthermore, in the first order of simulation, which is associated with the pre-modern era, Baudrillard suggests that in that era representations and their reference are distinguishable. However, the represented precedes the original. He exemplified such a statement with the map and the territory. Wilde embodied the previous concept in his novel. He surely gives priority to the portrait for that it leads the protagonist and is the main core of the events that take place in the story. In another word, the portrait is given more attention. Not to mention the fact that all the deeds of the "original" are apparent exclusively in the painting.

Significantly, the portrait is the most confusing element and the most correspondent to the concept of hyperreality. The narrator introduces the portrait, at the beginning of the story, as something abnormal. Basil the painter announces that he cannot exhibit this particular work of his because it contains so much of him in it (Wilde 6). He adds later that *"every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist"* (Wilde 8). The fact that it includes more than a simple painting of Dorian makes it hyperreal. It is not just an imitation of his figure, but rather a simulation of Basil's perspective on Dorian.

On the other hand, the protagonist's insight of the novel was not the same as Basil's. It was only after his fight with Sibyl that he realizes the altering of the portrait. He becomes conscious that the portrait mirrors his soul where he can still hold his appearance unchanged. Wilde declares "*It had taught him to love his own beauty*" (65). He asks rhetorically "*Would it teach him to loathe his own soul?*" (65). Baudrillard proclaims that "*A simulation is different from a fiction or lie*" He explains that it "*undermines any contrast to the real, absorbing the real within itself*" (6). The changes in the portrait are not an illusion as Dorian assumed where he first sees it; it is definitely an apparent projection of his soul. Dorian is absorbed in the portrait. Author Boyiopoulos assert this when he mentions that Dorian's soul is represented in a "rotting portrait" (11). Later in the novel, after he is aware of the fact that his soul is located with a frame, he develops a strong fear to be discovered. In chapter nine, Wilde explains how scared he was when Basil asks him to give him back the portrait so he can exhibit it. He demonstrates his panic saying "*a strange sense of terror creeping over him. Was the world going to be shown his secret?*" (79). Henceforth, he decides to hide the portrait away, where he is the only one capable of observing the rottenness of his soul. Dorian could not "*run such a risk of discovery again*" (Wilde 83). Dorian has escaped reality. He is not living his life alone; his simulation on the canvas is the beholder of the consequences of his realities. Baudrillard professes that "*This is the way the masses escape as reality, in this very mirror, in those simulative devices which are designed to capture them*" (213). The latter quote confirms that the simulation of reality allows the simulated to escape the truth for that he is not really living it. When Basil was shocked at his reaction concerning the suicide of Sybil Dorian admits, echoing Harry, "*To become the spectator of one's own life . . . is to escape the suffering of life.*"(Wilde 78). The protagonist is solely an observer of what will happen to his life. By doing so, he enjoys his eternal beauty and youth. He is not bothered with life's trouble at all.

However, as the story develops, the protagonist ceases to enjoy being young forever and keeps his secret locked away. Dorian becomes bothered and troubled thinking that he might be discovered. The simulated is threatened by the simulation for that the real Dorian is the one appearing to the public, yet if the copy, that takes most of the original's aspects and characteristics, is shown to the public it will take all the attention and the original authentic Dorian would cease to exist. Therefore, Dorian tries to end this simulation as well as his suffering. He first kills his friend the painter wishing that killing the creator of the portrait would end it. Author Boyiopoulos supposes that "*Dorian's revenge motive would be Basil's symbolic 'killing' of Dorian's initial self by creating the fatal portrait*" (21). However, it only makes his suffering worse. Dorian chooses to destroy the portrait. The narrator wonders "*Why had he kept it so long? It had given him pleasure once to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night.*" (Wilde 154). As soon as Dorian stabs the picture, it returns back to its original status and all of the ugly hideous details that filled the portrait transformed to where they should be, to the original Dorian. Even though the stab was in the portrait, it was situated in Dorian's heart. Wilde depicts this scene By describing first the portrait then the dead man. He reports "*they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master . . . in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man . . . He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage*" (154). It is clear that the simulated object was way more interesting than the original. Baudrillard has alluded to that saying "*The privileged position has shifted to the object, specifically to the hyperreal object, the simulated object*" (6).

3.2 Exploring Simulation and Simulacra through the Characters of Sybil and Henry

Author Boyiopoulos argue that Dorian and the portrait are not the only characters that indicate the notion of the simulation. In fact, he believes that both of Sibyl and Lord Henry symbolize a virtual reality. He claims that “*The characters of the novel are echoic, mouthpieces of each other, copies of each other*” he adds that Sybil Vane “*exemplifies this profusion of theatricality*” (15). In addition to the fact that “*Lord Henry advocates ‘influence’*” (15).

3.2.1 Exploring Simulation through the Character of Henry

Since the beginning of the novel, Henry represents a bad influence on Dorian. Basil, unlike him, suggests a better impact on the protagonist. Actually, the latter tries to prevent Henry’s influence on his innocent young friend. He is often uncomfortable to see Dorian listening to him and learning from him. His fear of such an influence on the young lad is clear and directly spoken to Lord Henry. He warns him “*you really must not say things like that before Dorian, Harry*” (Wilde 23). However, Henry keeps talking and Dorian keeps changing his view and concepts about life. He becomes more corrupted with each statement Harry utters. The simulation of the bad influence is highly embodied in Henry’s existence in Dorian’s life as author Boyiopoulos claims. In chapter two in the novel, Wilde describes Dorian fascination by Lord Henry (15). In reality, such a fascination is the key that leads Dorian to be influenced by him. Henry's power is similar to the media’s influence. Baudrillard declares that the media in the age of simulacra represents “*an excess of information*” (Baudrillard 07). Correspondingly to Lord Henry when he provides Dorian Gray with various pieces of information filling his mind and changing his perspectives toward life. Baudrillard adds to his saying that “*This simulated reality has no referent, no ground, no source*” (07).

Just like Henry's interference in the novel, not backed up with any dependable basis. However, the young lad "*Listened, open-eyed and wondering*" (Wilde 19) letting himself under his control of thoughts due to the fact that he is captivated by his presence and well-structured speech. The character of Dorian is wonderstruck by him and he let himself be controlled by his thoughts and attitudes even though he has been warned and he realizes that he is not to be followed. In chapter four, he shouts "*Ah! Harry, your views terrify me*" (Wilde 36), yet in the following conversation, he confirms that he has a strong effect on him that he cannot help telling him everything (Wilde 38).

3.2.2 Exploring the Simulation through the Character of Sybil

Another aspect of simulation in the novel as Boyiopoulos states is the character of the actress Sibyl. She represents the importance of the theatre in Dorian's life. Author Maho Hidaka, in his book '*Play on Life: Exploring the Theatrical World of The Picture of Dorian Gray*', considers that the implementing of Sybil in the story enables the protagonist to get to know the theatre better, and more importantly, to establish himself as an actor and as an audience of his own life (qtd. in Boyiopoulos 104). It is noticeable that Dorian while talking about Sibyl to Lord Henry, refers to her as an actress only. When Lord Henry asks him with whom he is in love, He replies "*with an actress*" (Wilde 35). He is mainly fond of her in the stage acting. In fact, Sybil herself is profoundly living the characters she performs and not herself at all. Kostas Boyiopoulos confirms this assuring that "*Sybil Vane is 'never' herself but her Shakespearean parts*" (16).

Undoubtedly, Dorian is merely in love with the image of Sibyl on stage. Hence when she is herself and not a perfect supposed Juliet, the protagonist loses interest in her. She "*Casts her artificial smokescreen away. She steps into reality when she loses her acting ability*" (18). Baudrillard comments on the postmodern individual being charmed by images

on screen and being deceived by them. Indeed, the character Dorian lives the same situation; his short-term attraction toward Sibyl is simply artificial and associated with the role she acts. Throughout the plot, Harry is trying, directly or indirectly, to eliminate the influence of the actress Sybil on Dorian. Regardless of the fact that he adores acting. He says to Dorian "*I love acting. It is so much more real than life*" (83 pdf 100, at it in real one).

3.3 The Representation of the Book "*À Rebours*" in Relation to Dorian's Life

Simulation and simulacra are represented and embodied through another object which is the book that was introduced in chapter eleven. This book was a gift given to the protagonist by Lord Henry. Unlike the portrait, this aspect of simulation is from the friend who got the bad influence on him. Lord Henry sent the yellow book saying to him that it "*may interest him*" (Wilde 87). Indeed, Dorian was captured by it ever since he starts reading it. As the narrator puts it "*After a few minutes, he became absorbed. It was the strangest book he had ever read*" (Wilde 88). Wilde does not reveal so many details about the book yet it describes its nature briefly. A great deal of attention is on its influence on the main character. The narrator mentions that it is a philosophical story without a plot about one character, written in an exceptional style and rich with metaphors. He adds "*It was a poisonous book*" (Wilde 88). The narrator alludes that the protagonist is aware of this bad influence of the book. The character Dorian replies when he is asked whether he liked the book or not "*I didn't say I liked it, Harry. I said it fascinated me. There is a great difference*" (Wilde 89). Author Boyiopoulos regards that "*The book is a simulacrum, doubling Dorian just like the portrait does*" (21). Due to the fact that it contains aspects of his life, just like the painting. To him it felt like the book mirrored his life its events and his perspectives toward those events. The protagonist is confused whether he is experiencing reality or illusion.

Boyiopoulos adds “*The more he becomes enmeshed in the artificial worlds of the book, the more he is subsumed by hyperreal confusion*” (21). The book was just as important in the protagonist life as the portrait. Just like he was watching his portrait altering in front of him, he was reading his story life, he is both a viewer and a reader of his life (Boyiopoulos 21). As matter of fact, both simulations, as the theory suggests, allow Dorian to escape reality. In both environments, the sign is replacing the signifier.

The name of the book was revealed by Oscar Wilde after the publishing of the novel. He declares that the book was *Against Nature ‘À Rebours’* by Joris-Karl Huysmans. The protagonist of this book tries to escape nature by creating a simulated artificial one by his own in his home. When he is tired of the fake copies he has made, he tries to seek the original nature that looks like the one he created. This character is so similar to Dorian and his life. The narrator describes it as follows “*The whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it*” (Wilde 89). The story in the book, the simulated, has preceded the original. Baudrillard articulated this in his book *‘Simulacra and Simulations’* by the map and the territory illustration referring to the first order of simulacra. He states that “*The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory*” (166). Despite the fact that the protagonist is aware of the poisonous effect he chooses not to free himself from it. Dorian asks Henry “*You poisoned me with a book once. I should not forgive that. Harry, promise me that you will never lend that book to anyone. It does harm*’ (Wilde 151).

It is possible to say that the portrait is a simulation of the protagonist that is simulated by the yellow book. The boundaries between the three precedents are all blended in consequently that you cannot tell where the original copy is. In the novel, it is clear that the copy is favored over the original since the protagonist is totally influenced by the book and he prefers to own more than just one copy. He is not satisfied with one copy of the simulacra, but

rather copies of it so he can escape reality and live in his imitated world endlessly. Such an act make the artificial environment appears more real than the original. Author Boyiopoulos confirms this when he announces that Dorian Gray becomes “*The poisonous book whose textual condition infinitely infects out through the stratified levels of reality*”(22). Stressing out on the fact that the book infects reality even though it is not real. In reality, Wilde adds another layer of simulation when he reproduces the novel of ‘*À rebours*’ (Against Nature, 1884) and includes recorded activities from his existence, in the “*fin de siècle*” (Boyiopoulos 23).

Ultimately, ‘*The Picture of Dorian Gray*’ suggests, from the beginning, that the story is about the picture, the simulacra, and not the protagonist Dorian. However, the novel contains more than one aspect of simulation: (the picture, Sybil’s actionetc.) for that they were all mirrored. Boyiopoulos believes that the simulation can be recognized by the awareness of its doubling (23). He alludes to the fact that the simulated characters “*Pop out of existence*” (Boyiopoulos 23) as soon as they try to get rid of it. For instance, as soon as Sybil stops acting and acts herself she kills herself. Also, Dorian, he dies when he tries to end his simulation. Kostas Boyiopoulos describes hyperreality as quicksand “*once the characters realize it they attempt to break free only to sink in it even deeper*” (23).

Chapter three

The embodiment of Simulation and Simulacra
through the Protagonists of The Importance of
Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde tends to use art as a tool that allows him to comment on society and convey his philosophical views on its practices. *'The Importance of Being Earnest'* is one of his well-known plays that permitted him to express his thoughts and opinions about several issues in the Victorian society. Within the play, he used the aspect of double life that is led by most of the characters to illustrate the two-facedness and hypocrisy. He tends to virtualize the alternative versions at the beginning of the play, however, at the end, he realizes them at the expense of the real ones. Such an attempt is similar to the theory of hyperrality provided by Jean Baudrillard. Hence, the following chapter will deal with the play entitled "*The Importance of Being Earnest*" by Oscar Wilde and how the simulacrum is echoed within its narrative. First, a brief background of the novel and its feedback among critics will be discussed. The second part will present the plot of the play with its acts. Finally, the correspondence of the theory and the play will take place in the third part. The latter will be divided between the following three items: the character of Jack Worthing, the character of Algernon Moncreiff and the dairy of Cecily

1. A Brief Background of the Play and its Criticism

'The Importance of Being Earnest' is a witty and a farcical play that doesn't only criticize the Victorian conventions but also comment on the human condition. The play wears the humoristic mask in order to convey themes like social classes and issues of identity. In fact, it was widely acclaimed among critics. For instance Peter Raby¹⁴ regards that it is "*Wilde's supreme achievement in drama*" (120). On the other hand, W.H Auden¹⁵, in his essay on *'The Importance of Being Earnest'*, describes the play as "*The only pure verbal*

¹⁴ Emeritus professor at the department of English, university of English. His main interests are Drama and theatre, especially in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries

¹⁵ an Anglo-American poet and one of the leading literary figures of the 20th century.

opera in English” (qtd. in Raby 120). Auden believes that Wilde’s use of language in this specific piece of art allowed the characters to be bound to both the plot and the classy language. He explains that Wilde “*Created a verbal universe in which the characters are determined by the kinds of the things they say*” (qtd. in Jordan 149). The play was first performed in 1895 at the St James's Theatre in London. It created a great deal of discussion among audience at that time. Apparently, it did not tackle any serious political or social issue on the surface, something that made the public confused and eager to know the indirect hidden messages inserted in the play. As a result, interpretations and commentaries were numerous. Actually Wilde helped a great deal in increasing the confusion among the public for the playful use of language in general and the misleading subtitle specifically. Wilde has chosen the subtitle “*A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*” where it is clearly not a trivial at all. Both of the title and the subtitle suggest a sarcastic commentary on the Victorian values. Indeed the name Earnest, which indicates being serious in intention (“Earnest”) alludes to the description of the British individual in the late nineteenth century, which makes the title more paradoxical and misleading. In her article entitled “*The Duality of Human Nature in Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest*” author Marwa Sami Hussein¹⁶ suggests that “*Though the Victorian age is known as being one of high seriousness, its [the play] satirical writings show the hypocrisy and pomposity of the age*” (28). Basically, she asserts that the play is directed to the Victorian audience mocking their style of life in an amusing way. The latter issue was tackled by Katharine Worth¹⁷, she regards that Wilde “*Wilde anticipated a major development in the twentieth century, the use of farce to make fundamentally serious (not earnest!) exploration in the realm of the irrational*” (qtd. in Rby 129). Indeed Wilde uses a witty language as an instrument to fulfill such an aim.

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¹⁷ A British academic, Professor of Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London.

4 Synopsis of the Play

The plot of the play is distributed throughout three acts. Each of these acts takes a different location: first the Algernon Moncrieff's flat, then The Garden of the Manor House and finally the Morning-Room at the Manor House. In the first location Wilde introduces the two main characters Jack Worthing the so-called "Earnest" and Algernon Moncrieff. From their conversation they both admit that they live a double life real and fictional, where in the fictional one they avoid social obligation and life responsibilities. Jack, who initially lives in the country where he is in charge for his little cousin Cecily Cardew, claims that he has an irresponsible brother named Earnest in the city that he should look after as well. Jack attempts to do so in order to escape from his responsibilities. For the same reason, his friend Algernon creates an imaginary sick friend named Bunbury. Jack happens to be in love with Algernon's cousin Gwendolen Fairfax. He proposes to her in the first act and she accepts for that she is in love with him as well. However her mother disapproves due the fact that Earnest was just found in a bag and his parents are unknown. Similarly, his friend Algernon becomes fond of Jack's beautiful cousin and increasingly wanting to meet her. In the second act, which is considered the climax of the play, Jack decides to announce the death of his brother Earnest and end the double life he is living. Unfortunately for him, Algernon comes to his house in the country and introduces himself as Earnest, his idle, trouble-maker brother. Cecily falls in love with Algernon assuming that he is Earnest. Jack is troubled and shocked to see his imaginary dead brother alive. After that, Gwendolen arrives where Jack and Algernon are. Apparently, she runs from home in order to meet her lover Earnest. She first meets with Cecily whom she finds very friendly and sweet. They chat in order to know each other more. Gwendolen learns a lot of new things about her fiancé Earnest. Therefore, she is a little annoyed until Cecily

tells her that she is to be engaged to Earnest, Gwendolen becomes irritated and informs her that she is the one engaged to Earnest. The two ladies keep fighting until Jack and Algernon came and cleared up the misunderstanding between them. The ladies are shocked and disappointed to find out about their lovers' real names and the lies that they conveyed. In the final act, Gwendolen's mother follows the characters to the third location. Lady Bracknell is surprised to find out that Algernon is engaged to Cecily. However, after she learns about her wealth she accepts it totally. On the other hand, Jack takes advantage of this situation and informs Lady Bracknell that he will approve this marriage only if she approves his marriage to Gwendolen, yet she disagrees. Their argument is ended by the entry of Miss Prism. Lady Bracknell recognizes her as their former maid who took their child for a walk and never came back. Miss Prism confirms this and apologizes for leaving the child in a bag by mistake in a railway station. After they discuss about it with Jack, they found that he is actually Lady Bracknell's nephew and Algernon's brother. Subsequently he is accepted to ask for Gwendolen's hand. Having been discovered to be the elder son of Moncrieff he takes the name of his father which happens to be Earnest.

5 The Role of Jack Worthing in Embodying Simulation and Simulacra

Jack Worthing, being the protagonist of the play, is introduced in the first act along with his friend Algernon. Jack pretends to be named Earnest in the city where he meets Algernon. However, in the country where he practices his real life, he goes with his real name. Indeed, this is expressed in the initial conversation between Earnest and Algernon. When the latter asks him what is his occupation in the country he states "*When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people*" (Wilde 668). It is of no doubt that the character Jack is present within two characters in the play. Moreover, he tends to conceal the character that he embodies in the country. He tries to hide his address

from his friend in the city. When Algernon confirms the name of his country saying “*Shropshire is your county, is it not?*” (668) Jack acts surprised, he replies “*Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?*” (668). It is obvious that he doesn’t remember the lie that he told him before. Furthermore, he attempts to distract him by asking other questions about the surroundings. In another dialogue between Jack and Algernon, Jack denies that he knows anyone with the name Cecily, who is in fact his cousin, he says “*Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily! I don't know any one of the name of Cecily*” (669). He is clearly terrified to be discovered. As a matter of fact, the made up character Earnest is putting a sight out of the original one Jack. Indeed, Jack is maintaining his fictional character to keep balance of his life in the country as well as in the city. He utilizes the hyperreal Earnest as an excuse for his getaway from his duties. Author Marwa Sami Hussein confirms this by stating that “*His fictional brother is the excuse to escape his responsibilities and indulge in the sort of behavior he pretends to disapprove of his brother*” (36). Actually, the reply of Earnest is quite correspondent to what Baudrillard has stated in his book “*Symbolic Exchange and Death*”. He claims that “*It is now a principle of simulation, and not of reality, that regulates social life*” (120). Thus, it is of use to say that the character Jack uses simulation in order to adjust both of his lives.

When Jack reveals his secret to his friend Algernon he claims that he has told him the whole story with all honesty, he declares “*That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.*”(671). As a reply, Wilde inserts one of his famous quotes through the speech of Algy. He says “*The truth is rarely pure and never simple*” (671). Surely, he anticipates Baudrillard and his doubt about the truthfulness of the truth. The French theorist depicts the truth as filled with fake imitation and artificial copies. He states “*Simulation is the ecstasy of the real*” (187).

Another aspects in the play that equally matches with Baudrillard's theory is the fact that Earnest's lover Gwendolen Fairfax is truly found of Jack but only when he is being Earnest for that she has developed an affection for the name itself. As soon as Jack declares his adoration she declares back:

For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [Jack looks at her in amazement.] We live, as I hope you know, Mr Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you. (675)

Her announcement reveals so much about the play's concept which is similar to the theory of simulation. She says that she has fallen with the idea of his before even meeting him. According to the idea that she has previously formed from the media of the Victorian era (magazine, newspapers and theatres) she has shaped her ideal husband. The name Earnest, for her, has been a fascination and an attraction that is fully affected by the media. In this vein, Baudrillard comments on the effect of the media on the public and its impact in shifting the attention to the fake. He says "*Now the media are nothing else than a marvellous instrument for destabilizing the real and the true*" (217). The media made Gwendolen believe that anyone with the name Earnest is someone with confidence and presence. On the other hand, she believes that the name Jack is a dull name that has no rhythm (676). Gwendolen's belief is due to the influence of the media. Baudrillard confirms that the media is the responsible for educating the public, whether the information provided are valid or invalid. It is totally not an issue because even if the materials are not authentic, they will be presented in a faithful way

(218). Thus the public is destined to trust whatever they are given. In reality, her attitude towards both of the names Jack and Earnest is a representation of the public attitude towards reality and its simulation. Obviously, nowadays the original is rather neglected and forgotten while the simulated is given all the praise and the approval. Wilde asserts that the truth is never delivered and never offered to the public. He says through the character Jack “*The truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl*” (680). Of course the former process is done by the media.

The character Jack succeeded in deceiving both of his surroundings in the country and in the city. In the country, he creates a serious image of himself pretending to be someone with a severe attitude, where in reality he is not that serious all the time. Cecily states that he is “*so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well*” (684). In addition, he creates a bad image of his unreal brother whom he would adapt when he is in the city. Chasuble, one of his mates in the country, believes that he is not the kind that wants to have fun a mess around yet “*That unfortunate young man his brother seems to be*” (686). Whilst in the city, where he pretend to be his wicked bother, he behaves very well and he leaves a good impression in everyone. In describing him, Gwendolen says “*Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception*” (698). Notably, the fictional character Earnest has different faces of its own. Hence the original character of Jack is lost within the copies he is dissimulating.

As the story goes, the protagonist Jack Worthing found himself obliged to end his fictional brother so he decides to announce his death. As he do that the simulated character of Earnest becomes real, embodied by his friend Algernon. Even when he attempts to get back to the origin, the simulation takes over him and he cannot get rid of it. Author Kostas Boyiopoulos suggests that the assumption of the simulation that keeps it going (23). Likewise,

the character of Jack keeps assuming that he has a brother until it is really embodied in reality. In another passage in the play, after revealing the identities of Jack and his mate, the character of Jack claims that in the christening of his name he will “*Take the name of Ernest.*” (703). By doing so, he is neglecting his realistic name converting it to the simulated one. At the end of the play, the audience discovered that Jack was Earnest all the time. Apparently, he is a lost child of the family and he should be named after his father Earnest.

Despite the fact that the name of Earnest suggests honesty and truthfulness, the character of Jack presents fraudulence and deception. It is ironic that at the end of the play he turns out to be what he is pretending all the time. Though he was discovered to be lying, eventually, he manifests his simulated brother Earnest (Hussein 31). Ultimately, Earnest is more valid than its simulator. Wilde concluded his play reminding the audience with significance of being Earnest. Thus, he stresses on the value of the simulation. Obviously, the latter ends up being actual and real. As Baudrillard assumes “*The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true*” (166).

6 Exploration Simulation and Simulacra through the Character of Algernon

Similar to his friend Jack, Algernon also likes to escape his responsibilities by creating a non-existent other. In his case, he likes to refer to his hyperreal friend as Bunbury. Moreover, Algernon does not create a fictional character, yet he realizes the character of Earnest in the country. Algernon confesses that he has an imaginary friend only when Jack reveals his secret to him. In fact he was so amazed to learn about Earnest that he felt the need to introduce Bunbury as well. He says “*I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know*” (Wilde 671_672). He clarifies the nature

of Bunbury, when Jack asks him about it, *“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”* (Wilde 672). The character of Algernon is more adapting to the simulated world than the character Jack because it lives simulation in two levels. Not only he uses Bunbury to escape reality and seek pleasure, but also he assumes to be Earnest in order to fulfill his aim in meeting Cecily and marrying her. Interestingly, while he is acting out the hyperreal persona of Earnest, he keeps using his initial simulated Bunbury to back up the validity of his secondary simulation. He deceives Cecily into believing that he is very kind for that he takes care of his sick friend Bunbury. She informs her uncle Jack that Earnest has been telling her about Bunbury, she says, referring to Earnest, that *“There must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain”* (Wilde 691). Henceforth, Algernon is fully absorbed in the world of hyperreality.

The character of Cecily struggles to settle on one simulated image for Earnest. Just like Gwendolen she is influenced by the media in shaping an ideal image for such a name. However, the feedback she constantly receives from her uncle Jack slightly altered her imagination. She declares when she first sees him *“I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened”* (Wilde 686). Yet she changes her mind very quickly after a short explanation from Earnest. That is to say, the effect of the mass media is way more powerful than any other influence. Baudrillard asserts the fact that the culture that the media is spreading is a culture that popularizes the simulation (1). Wilde tends to make the speech of Cecily and Gwendolen almost the same emphasizing on the role of the media and the public opinion in making *“each individual feels unique while resembling everyone else”* (Baudrillard 11). Cecily declares: *“It had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest”* (Wilde 695). She adds just like Gwendolen *“There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence”* (Wilde 695). Additionally, she despises the

name Algernon; hence he is obliged to keep pretending to be earnest in order for Cecily to keep liking him.

Wilde tends to make the characters acting in parallel making the dialogue between Jack and Gwendolen and the one between Algernon and Cecily almost the same. Not to mention that he puts all of these characters in the same position nearly. Both of Jack and Algernon create a hyperreal character and realize it in order to get the attention of their lovers. The latter seems to be very fond of the simulated world that is provided by the media.

7 Anticipating Simulation through the Dairy of Cecily

The dairy of Cecily is introduced in the second act; it was first presented as a journal in which Cecily inserts all of the interesting events in her life. However, after she meets with Algernon, the audience discovers that the diary does not merely document Cecily's life. The diary is Cecily's alternative world. She creates a world of her own where events and happenings do not correspond to reality. When Earnest confesses that he loves her and he is willing to marry her, she says "*We have been engaged for the last three months*" (Wilde 694). According to her, they have been engaged in her simulated world that exists in her dairy. Although she ends her engagement with him she keeps receiving letters and gifts from the hyperreal Earnest in her diary. That is to say, she ends this engagement in the diary but she did not end the hyperreality she invented. The hyperreal life in her diary is threatened by her real life. Yet she cannot end this simulation for that it is the one that keeps the real going. Her life is dependent on her diary even though it is different from it. In this vein Baudrillard suggests that:

The sign is haunted by the nostalgia of transcending its own convention, its arbitrariness; in a way, it is obsessed with the idea of total motivation. Thus it

alludes to the real as its beyond and its abolition. But it can't "jump outside its own shadow": for it is the sign itself that produces and reproduces this real.
(Baudrillard 95)

In another context, Wilde shows that Cecily depends so much on the imaginary world that she created. After Gwendolen acknowledges Cecily that she is to be engaged to Earnest, Cecily gets shocked and tries to show her that she is his fiancée already. To prove her wrong, Cecily refers to her diary as a concrete evident that the engagement happened in real life. She utilizes the simulation in order to validate reality. Therefore, hyperreality is more valued and more real than the real itself.

General conclusion

To restate, the main objective of this dissertation has been to explore simulation and hyperreality as defined by Jean Baudrillard in the work of Oscar Wilde, specifically in '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' and '*The Importance of Being Earnest*'. As we have analyzed both of his works and discussed them in details we come to conclude that the simulation presents a huge part of the themes that Wilde aimed at. The latter is plainly recognizable through the aspect of providing more than one version of the protagonist in the novel as well as in the play.

The fact that the novel of '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' offers several items, in which the protagonist is shown and exposed, makes the reader wonder about the aim of the author behind his work. Indeed, when relating the novel to the theory of Baudrillard, it is clear that the novel's objective is to comment and criticize the overwhelmed copies of everything in the modernist society. Such criticism displays the truth about the modernist and the postmodernist individual and the way he is caught up in the mass production. Indeed, this issue was the core of Baudrillard's studies. In addition, the play '*The Importance of Being Earnest*' is Wilde's most criticizing work; he hides behind comedy to insert indirectly themes and aspects of society that he did not agree with. Actually, he used mirrored dialogue between characters and virtual copies of the main characters in order to highlight the hypocrisy of members of his society. In effect, they all led a double life in one way or another. These copies are intertwined to an extent that it is hard for the reader to point at the real character at the end of the play.

Even though the theory and the works that are analyzed in this dissertation were not initiated in the same era, the theory can be applied to Wilde's works in a velvet glove. The works and the theory are flexible and that is what distinguished modernism and postmodernism from other movements in literature or in art in general. The shift that occurred between the two movements was discussed in the first chapter, followed by a definition of the

theory of the '*Simulation and Simulacra*', in addition to certain selected works, from the modernist era, that correspond to the theory. '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' was discussed and analyzed according to the theory in the second chapter. As for the third chapter, the play "*The Importance of Being Earnest*" has been studied in order to extract the aspects of simulation within it.

Oscar Wilde's works are concerned with issues and problems within the Victorian society and are aimed to raise awareness among his audience. Similarly, Baudrillard tries to shine the light on aspects of the postmodern public that have negative consequences. As it has been assured through the investigations done in this thesis, Oscar Wilde's writings can be related to the postmodernist theory that revolves mostly around the loss of originality and the dominance of the fake. For further research in this vein, one can analyze other works of the Irish Author according to the '*Simulation and Simulacra*'.

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