Conclusion

Oscar Wilde lived in a period when homosexuality was denounced as a sin or crime. The trial and imprisonment of Wilde paint a drastic picture of sexual repression and hostility towards same-sex relationships in the Victorian England. He did not ever admit his alternative sexual orientation. This denial resulted in the suppression of his homosexual desires. It has always been a social practice to suppress the socially forbidden sexual desires. Society even dislikes this sensitive area being touched upon. Victorian society was particularly against the idea of discussing individual’s sexual life. However, as Freud proposes, “sexual impulses play a peculiarly large part in the causation of nervous and mental disorders. They have contributed invaluably to the highest cultural, artistic and social achievements of the human mind” (A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 26-27).

During the gradual building up of human civilization, primitive impulses, like sexual desire, were sacrificed for common good. They were sublimated to socially valuable objects; that is such basic energies were converted from its sexual goal and directed towards socially permissible channels. The structure thus built up by suppressing the basic sexual instincts is insecure. There is an invariable danger that a struggle of such repressed sexual impulses may occur, resulting in the liberation of the sexual impulses and a return of them to their original goal.

Modern civilisation demands sexual repression, as a result of which the individual may turn to perversion and other forms of deviation which run counter to the requirements of civilised sexual morality. “...neurosis is described as a negative of the perversion... it is understood as a failed suppression of perversion, one which is no less injurious to both the individual and to civilisation” (Dollimore 183). In its path to
perversion libido withdraws from the Ego and its policies, renouncing everything learned under Ego’s influence, it becomes refractory. With the emergence of perversion, the normality of sexuality, which is gained through its repressive organisation, falls apart. Instead of turning to perversion, the energy of sexual instincts is sometimes displaced or sublimated into some cultural activity. Giving expression to one’s deviant sexual desires using some accepted literary forms or images is thus a mechanism through which repressed libidinal wishes find free outlet.

The return of the repressed may not always necessarily happen as violent sexual behaviour or other sexual disorders. Its manifestation could also be in the form of slip of tongue, slip of pen and misreading. Freud observes that, “It often happens that a poet makes use of a slip of the tongue or some other error as a means of artistic expression. This fact in itself proves that he thinks the error, for instance, a slip of tongue, has a meaning; for he constructs it intentionally” (A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 40). Artists are people who avoid perversion by sublimating their impulses in their work. “Freud believed that sublimation of unsatisfied libido was responsible for producing all art and literature. That is, he thought that artists discharged their infantile sexuality by converting it into non-instinctual forms” (Storr 92). In a way art is essentially escapist, since it is an indirect way of obtaining instinctual satisfactions, which he would have otherwise renounced. The artist’s creative activity is his unsatisfied libido manifesting itself in escapist phantasy. Freud observes that,

An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy. He finds a way back to reality,
however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truth of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality. (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* 224)

Wilde being an artist, the sublimation of his repressed desire has happened through the slip of pen, or he has used his literary world as a space to unleash his repressed desires. Psychoanalysis paved a way for digging such covert sexual undertones in the text formed as a result of the sublimation of the author’s libidinal desires. During the twentieth century, psychoanalysis asserted great influence on art and literature.

Freud’s concept of the unconscious, his use of free association, and his rediscovery of the importance of dreams encourage painters, sculptors, and writers to experiment with the fortuitous and the irrational, to pay serious attention to their inner world of dreams and day-dream, and to find significance in thoughts and images which they would previously have dismissed as absurd or illogical. (Storr 91)

The thesis titled *Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde’s Creative Oeuvre* examines how Wilde has made use of same-sex pairs as a tool in his works to liberate the repressed sexual desires of his Unconscious.

Chapter 1 explores the explicit same-sex pairs in Wilde’s works. There are instances of Wilde having boldly portrayed same-sex pairs in his works. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* made all the related controversies because of its overt treatment of homosexuality as one of its major themes. It is observed that Wilde has made
numerous revisions to the novel, deleting in particular some explicitly homosexual sentiments in it (Cauti xv). Even after the deliberate deletion of such explicit passages, the novel can very well be interpreted as a homosexual allegory of doomed, forbidden passion. Similarly The Importance of Being Earnest portrays a male-male bonding with the generally accepted connotation of Bunburrying as a gay code word. Wilde’s short story “The Model Millionaire” is another work other than The Picture of Dorian Gray in which the representation of same-sex pair has got something to do with an artist’s aesthetic enjoyment. In the short story, “The Devoted Friend” there is an explicit pairing between two individuals. However, unlike The Picture of Dorian Gray, here the homoerotic elements are not overtly displayed. In “The Star Child”, “The Sphinx without a Secret” and Vera there are only subtle references to male-male bonding which only a critical eye can decipher. “The Happy Prince” is his only short story where the pairing is between two non-human entities. Explicit same-sex pairing could be traced in some of his poems as well.

The second chapter deals with the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing in Wilde’s works. Here, Wilde makes use of everyday symbols which have social permission for representation in literature, in order to speak about the repressed desires which are normally prevented from getting projected into the social space. In the short stories, “The Selfish Giant” and “The Remarkable Rocket”, the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing works on the principle of psychoanalysis which attribute phallic connotation to tall and erect objects. In Salome and “The Canterville Ghost”, Wilde has attempted attribution of homosexuality in human and non-human entities respectively. ‘Ghost’ and ‘Salome’ are two personifications of homosexuality that appear in “The Canterville Ghost” and Salome respectively. In An Ideal Husband and The Picture of Dorian Gray, the symbolic signification of homosexuality operates
on abstract ideas. If homosexuality is associated with a fraudulent scheme in *An Ideal Husband*, it is associated with Dorian’s narcissistic attraction towards the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde has used symbols in abundance to deal with the idea of homosexuality in his poems also.

The third chapter explores the ways in which the literary characters and situations can be analysed using various principles and theories of psychoanalysis. Different components of psychoanalytic theory are employed as tools to examine the presence of unintended depiction of same-sex pairing in the literary text. In *Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime*, the bonding is between Lord Arthur and his Conscience. “The Fisherman and his Soul” *A Florentine Tragedy* and “The Decay of lying” are fictional demonstrations of Freud’s concept of Ego, Superego and Id. The same-sex pair in *A Woman of no Importance* redefines Freud’s concept of Oedipus complex from a gay perspective. “The portrait of Mr. W.H” also depicts the same-sex pair with a play of the Conscious mind and the Unconscious mind.

No same-sex pairing could be traced in some of his short stories and plays, but these works throw light upon the writer’s temperament. “The Nightingale and the Rose” showcases his distrust in women and disgust in heterosexual relationships. Similarly, “The Birthday of the Infanta” pictures a heartless girl who fails to see the Dwarf’s love and shows no sympathy at his death. “The Young King” presents a young man who challenges the traditional customs and conventional practices of society. He reminds us of Wilde himself, who through his ways of living like a dandy has made people raise their eyebrows. *Lady Windermere’s Fan* does not have a strong same-sex pair, but it has a chapter exclusively discussing men’s party. *Lady Windermere’s Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* are the plays in which female-female bonding can be traced. Myrrhina, the temptress woman who tempts
Honorius, the hermit in Wilde’s incomplete play *La Sainte Courtisan* projects his distrust in women.

Though some powerful and central female characters have taken life from Wilde’s pen, reflection of misogyny in his works cannot be ruled out. The fallen woman, Mrs. Erlynne (*Lady Windermere’s Fan*); gossiping, Lady Hunstanton; neurotic, Lady Caroline; vicious female rake, Mrs. Allonby; possessive mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot (*A Woman of No Importance*); treacherous, Mrs. Cheveleyl (*Ideal Husband*); demonic femme fatale, Salome (*Salome*); temptress, Myrrhina (*La Sainte Courtisane*) have all taken lives from Wilde’s pen. Wilde being the progressive editor of the ‘Women’s World’ has lent a sympathetic voice to the discourses on New Women. However, his sympathy was more towards the enslavement of the individual than women’s causes. Lady Chiltern’s (*Ideal Husband*) involvement in political association brings in the image of the suffragettes. Reference to Gwendolen’s (*The Importance of Being Earnest*) participation in University lectures echoes the New Women’s eagerness to embrace new educational opportunities. Hester (*A Woman of No Importance*) though a moral bully, is a social threat to Victorian life.

The portrayal of women in his poems exposes his attitude towards women and heterosexual relationships. Women in his poems mostly stand for symbols of chastity and represent unconsumed love. Though he brings images of virgins and praises their physical charm in abundance, he evades their physical proximity. Sometimes he attributes divinity to women which makes it easier to describe them as virgin and chaste. In some of his poems, Wilde brings the images of divine and godly women who are virgin. Wilde even portrays them as passionless and incapable of lustful emotions. In a way, this act of negating lust in women is a manifestation of Wilde’s own failure in falling for their feelings. There are poems which exhibit Wilde’s
hostility towards women and his distrust in heterosexual relationship. This includes poems in which he presents them as unfaithful, treacherous and even wicked.

Wilde has hardly tried the portrayal of female bonding except for some instance like Gwendolen and Cecily (The Importance of Being Earnest). Male-male bonding on the other hand can be seen in abundance, which validates the point that a free play of Unconscious has happened through Wilde’s pen. In a letter to Ralph Payne he admits that “Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be – in other ages, perhaps” (Shewan 113). He has always felt the need to defend himself against the charges of immorality. His insistence on concealing his alternative sexual orientation resulted in the return of the repressed.

The recurring pattern of concluding the narrative line with the death /suppression of homosexuality carves an archetypal model which is in accordance with the social insistence on heteronormativity. “Augustine regarded sin as intrinsic to human nature and always bound up with perversion, transgression and death; the perversion of free will leads a man to transgress, and it is transgression which brings death into the world” (Dollimore 131). Wilde seems to have followed the aforementioned law of transgression in equating perversion with death. In most of his stories the bonding of the same-sex pair is shattered with the death of one of them.

Basil Hallward who worshipped physical beauty far too much dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous vanity; Dorian Gray having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure kills himself; Alan Campbell shoots himself after having succumbed to the calls of sin (The Picture of Dorian Gray); Hans’ blind devotion to his friend ruins his life (“The Devoted Friend”); Bird’s ‘unnatural’
affection for the statue takes both of their lives ("The Happy Prince"); Guido having failed to solve the moral conflicts is strangled to death by Simone (A Florentine Tragedy); the fisherman who listened to the call of strange love meets with his death ("The Fisherman and his Soul"); the Czar’s blind faith in his minister results in his death (Vera); the Duke being a threat to her love, Beatrice kills him (The Duchess of Padua); Mr. Podger is killed by Lord Arthur to settle his moral conflict ("Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime"); the Ghost is put to eternal sleep to save the society ("The Canterville Ghost"); the Giant is given a peaceful death ("The Selfish Giant"); and Salome who posed a moral threat to the society is mercilessly killed (Salome).

Concluding the story with the death of one partner of the pair is in accord with the moral demands of society. Since the existence of a homosexual pair is not ‘normal’ in a society that upholds moral values, it becomes convenient for the writer to erase the pair from the realm of signification. The existence of a homosexual pair poses a threat to the cultural stability of society. Hence, the death of one of the partners is socially justified as an act of expelling the sinner from the impermissible space. Death, thus, functions as an anticathexis in blocking the cathexes from being utilised. Cathexis and Anticathexis are two features of libido. “Cathexis refers to Id’s dispersal of energy while the anticathexis serves to block inappropriate uses of this energy” (Cherry). When the libido affects cathexis in the form of same-sex pairing, death acts as an anticathexis to oppose it.

The libido is blocked, as it were, and must seek an escape by which it can find an outlet for its cathexis (charge of energy) in conformity with the demands of the pleasure-principle: it must elude, eschew the ego... The ideas to which the libido now transfers its cathexis belong to the unconscious system – namely, condensation and displacement...
opposition against it in the ego follows it as an anti-cathexis (counter-charge) and forces it to adopt a form of expression by which the opposing forces also can at the same time express themselves. (A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 368-69)

If not death, marriage is the alternative social settlement suggested to solve a social threat like homosexuality. For instance, Trevor-Hughie (“The Model Millionaire”), Jack-Algernon (The Importance of Being Earnest) and Gerald-Lord Illingworth are the pairs resolved with alternative marriage proposals which are in accordance with the social norms. Algy and Jack form the same-sex pair in The Importance of Being Earnest. They were both living secret lives which they together decide to stop. It is only their mutual presence that makes the secret life worth living for both of them. So if one decides to put an end to it the other naturally decides the same. When Jack decides to ‘kill’ his invented brother so that he can propose Gwendolen, he advises Algy to do the same with Mr. Bunbury so that both of them will be relieved of their double life at the same time. Jack’s marriage with Gwendolen and Algy’s marriage with Cecily puts an end to the secret lives of Jack and Algernon and to their same-sex bonding as well. Mr. Podger and Lord Arthur form the pair in “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime”. Mr. Podger’s presence reminds Arthur of his indulgence in sin. He postpones his marriage with Sybil in order to solve the problem he was indulged in. Finally, he kills Mr. Podger; and the death unties all the tangled knots and he is set free. Having no hindrances in his path of getting married to Sybil, he rushes to marry her. Once he is relieved of the ‘pair’ Arthur embraces Sybil and begins a new life. Gerald and Lord Illingworth form the pair in A Woman of No Importance. Gerald gets out of his blind admiration for Illingworth and decides to get married to Hester, which puts an end to the budding relationship between Gerald and
Lord Illingworth. Suggesting marriage as a solution to solve the problem of same-sex bonding is in accordance with the social assumption that homosexuality can be ‘cured’ by forcing him/her to heterosexual marriages.

Wilde always had a fascination for the art and culture of ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman lives. In many of his poems he has used images and ideas from ancient classics and myths to contrast the bleak Christian world with the bright pagan world. For him the ‘pagan’ world represents unrestricted expression of sexuality, where as Christian world represents the hardcore social and religious values. He escapes to this world of wonders with the help of his literary imaginations, but makes it a point to come back to face the harsh realities of the Victorian world, which alone will offer him social recognition and acceptance.

For Nietzsche as for Wilde, a conceptual and historical interface between Classical and Christian cultures became a surface suffused with meanings about the male body. In both German and English culture, the Romantic rediscovery of ancient Greece cleared out – as such recreated – for the nineteenth century a prestigious, historically underfurnished imaginative space in which relations to and among human bodies might be newly a subject of utopian speculation. Synecdochically represented as it tended to be by statue of nude young men, the Victorian cult of Greece gently, unpointedly, and unexclusively positioned male flesh and muscle as the indicative instances of ‘the’ body, of a body whose surfaces, features, and abilities might be the subject or object of unphobic enjoyment. (Sedgwick136)
Not just the recurrent pattern of concluding the story with the death or marriage of one of the partners, but the consistent return to Christian images in the poems as well can be observed as anticathexis blocking the cathexes from being utilised.

Wilde’s life and trial has unconsciously produced an important social effect, “since the publicity given to homosexuality and the indignation of all thinking men at home and, even more so, abroad, at the savagery of his sentence, resulted in a gradual but profound change in the public attitude towards this particular sexual eccentricity” (Woodcock 162). The suppression of gay/lesbian feelings is not just a Victorian phenomenon but a universal issue which was challenged by the Gay Liberation and LGBT Rights. For instance, early twentieth century morality did not admit the easy acceptance of homoerotic undertones in the war poems (WW I). Consequently there was a general reluctance to admit the presence of homoerotic elements in these poems. Hence, the meaning of ‘love’ in the poem could be read as brotherly affection or it could be interpreted as carnal desire. Thus the homosexual subtexts in the works served as an effective modus operandi for the gay writers at a time before homosexual feelings found expression as a counter discourse.

Public tolerance of homosexuality has increased considerably, but the social attitude cannot be claimed to have completely changed. Donald E. Hall observes that it is impossible for one to shatter his/her past sexuality completely and miraculously construct a new order of sexuality on the ruins of the old one. He is optimistic and enthusiastic about the upcoming, but gradual changes: “We have to be patient and persistent and yet find ways to retain our political enthusiasm” (13). About the future of Queer Studies he says, “... we need a new reading strategy – a hermeneutics of sexuality – and a theoretical base that allows for a radically different future achieved
incrementally through critical conversation and continuing political engagement” (13).

Yogyakarta Principle is a significant attempt made to incorporate gender diversities in the global state of affairs. Yogyakarta Principles is a set of international principles formulated in 2006, related to issues regarding gender identity. It is a “universal guide to human rights which affirm binding International legal standards with which all States must comply” (“Yogyakarta Principles”). It is an effort to claim “gender diversity and sexual orientation freedom as core principles within international law and shared human experience” (Hall 90). The Principle considers sexual orientation as a person’s sexual relationship with “individuals of a different gender, or the same gender or more than one gender” (91). Gender identity “may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth” but it is a person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender” (91). Hall, who is quite optimistic about global queer rights, observes that “Yogyakarta Principles are not the final word on the application of human rights law to sexual and gender diversity; they are a preliminary articulation that will allow us to converse on any number of nuanced situations and challenges” (95).

The problems of people with alternative sexual orientations remain the same, irrespective of the period in which they lived. Arundhati Roy has discussed a valid philosophical situation of the cultural limitations and complexities of language in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017) through a mother’s anxiety about her child’s existence as a transgender:

In Urdu, the only language she knew, all things, not just living things but all things- carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments- had a
gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby. Yes, of course she knew there was a word for those like him – Hijra. Two words actually, Hijra and Kinnar. But two words do not make a language. Was it possible to live outside language? ... (8)

On 6 September 2018 India also witnessed a historical turn when Supreme Court stroke down the 1860 colonial law that criminalised homosexuality:

De-fanging a 158-year-old Victorian era law that hounded the rainbow crowd, the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement on Thursday legalised consensual sexual relations among gay adults by partially striking down Section 377 – a momentous event, perhaps that first step towards the gradual embrace of the LGBTQ community and hesitant acquiescence into alternative sexuality. (Mahapatra 1)

The historical decision made India the twenty sixth country in the world where homosexuality is legal.

This research thesis helps to reread the works of Wilde with an attempt to validate the homoerotic undertones as a literary device. The research not just offers a new paradigm to define the works of Wilde; instead it proposes a methodology to examine how the suppressed desires of the unconscious find expressions as symbolic images in literature, particularly in the case of gay writers. It is high time we discarded the lineaments of identity and began to imagine a form of subjectivity that bestow with the commonsense certainties of gender.
The thesis sets a model for attempting similar research in the works of other writers with alternative sexual orientation. It also opens up the possibilities of analysing how gay writers in general use same-sex pairing as a device to liberate their unconscious sexual desires. A study of the proposed thesis with reference to Ego psychology will widen the scope of research by extending the study to gay writers in general. Ego Psychology “sought meanings not in the individual psyche, in private fantasy, but in the public encodings of the private, in what was mutually shareable” (Wright 61). It proposes that during artistic activity repressed material is transformed into something publicly shareable. Ego facilitates the traffic and trade between Id and the external world. Ernst Kris, earliest Ego psychologist puts foreword a theory of creativity in which “the emphasis is shifted from the subversive operations of the Id to the managing capacities of the Ego” (Wright 58). Instead of the unconscious wish trying to find expression, the analogy rests on the way unconscious wishes are modified by the preconscious operations of the Ego. This approach extends the use of same-sex pair from an individual’s tool to the mechanism of the collective unconscious.