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A personal interview with Jonathan Dollimore, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

**Mufeeda:** If by ‘transgressive aesthetic’ you mean the sublimation of repressed desire to creative liberation, why do you think Wilde’s transgressive aesthetic dates from 1886 to 1991, a period which excludes his strong theatrical career?

**Dollimore:** The transgressive aesthetic is indeed about creative liberation. It uses desire politically. It certainly is not repressed desire in the case of Wilde. Go back to the sections on this in SD and you will see what I mean.

**Mufeeda:** Could you please explain the second part of my first question? Don’t you think he has attempted creative liberation through his plays as well? I would also like to explain why I think it is “repressed” desire in the case of Wilde. Wilde seems to have never openly admitted his homosexual identity as he belonged to the Victorian England which is noted for its homophobia. For social recognition he had to repress his feelings.

**Dollimore:** Definitely creative liberation in the plays, but only lightly so. You are quite right that Wilde could not be openly gay at that time. He was secretive about his sexuality but not repressed. "Repressed" usually means psychic repression whereby typically a person denies not only to other that they are gay, but to themselves also.

Repessed means: (of a thought or desire) kept suppressed and unconscious in one’s mind. “repressed homosexuality”
Synonyms- restrained, suppressed, held back, held in, kept in check, muffled, stifled, smothered, pent up, bottled up; More

It is characterized by the repression of thoughts or desires, especially sexual ones.

In private Wilde was completely open about his sexuality, but not in public.

**Mufeeda**: In the light of Jean Delay’s observation that “Gide’s sexuality remained ‘infantile’ arrested at a stage between narcissism and heterosexuality”, how do you look at the link between narcissism and homosexuality?

**Dollimore**: Delay’s view if Gide’s sexuality is a classic instance of the psychoanalytic/heterosexist misreading of homosexuality.

**Mufeeda**: In many of his poems Wilde has used images from ancient Greek classics and myths to contrast the Christian world with the bright pagan world. For him Pagan world represents unrestricted sexual expression, where as the Christian world stands for social/moral values. But he always makes it a point to conclude the poem with a return from his imaginary flight to the real world. On this context could you explain your observation that, “Wilde’s aesthetic was not so much a self-concealment as an attempted liberation from ‘self’”.

**Dollimore**: Again, go back to SD and you will see what I mean. Wilde realised that repression works in terms of many things including western concepts of self-hood. So to be liberated you have to refuse/transgress those concepts of self hood.

**Mufeeda**: You have rightly observed that, “The attempts to account for homosexual diversity have pushed psychoanalysis theory into inconsistency and even absurdity; this is most acutely the case in relation to the Oedipus complex”. But, is it possible to define Oedipus complex from a gay perspective?

**Dollimore**: Yes, it is possible - see eg the writing of Guy Hocguinhem and Mario Mieli, both referenced in SD
**Mufeeda:** In his non-fictional work, “The Portrait of Mr. W.H.” Oscar Wilde speaks about his passionate attempt to unravel the mysterious identity of Shakespeare’s ‘master-mistress’, W.H. how do you look at the observation that ‘Cyril’s quest to know Shakespeare’s mystery is a projection of Wilde’s own Unconscious’?

**Dollimore:** It may well be a projection of Wilde’s desires, but it certainly isn’t unconscious.

**Mufeeda:** Thank you so much, Sir.