

The Two-Faced Mirror: The Aristotelian-Hegelian Structure of The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

O espelho de duas faces: A estrutura aristotélica-hegeliana de A importância de ser prudente de Oscar Wilde

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Abstract: *For centuries, classical Greek drama was considered, by playwrights and theorists alike, the greatest influence on the structure of the dramatic text. One of its main features, for example, was the law of three units. Elaborated by Aristotle, the prescriptions oriented the plays to take place in a single place, within twenty-four hours, and exhibit a continuous plot, with a beginning, middle, and end. However, for thinkers such as Hegel, modern drama needed new approaches. In his writings, the German philosopher postulated that modern drama should exhibit narrative speed, and a certain dynamic quality, aligned with the internal and external conflicts of the characters. This article aims at analyzing the way in which Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest (1895), balanced both Aristotle and Hegel's views by engendering a modern text with classical roots, while simultaneously embedding a comedy satirizing the customs of English society.*

Keywords: The Importance of Being Earnest; Oscar Wilde; Drama; Theatre.

Resumo: *Durante séculos, o teatro grego clássico foi considerado, por dramaturgos e teóricos afins, a principal influência na construção do texto dramático. Uma de suas principais características, por exemplo, tratou da lei das três unidades. Elaboradas por Aristóteles, as prescrições orientavam que as peças se passassem em um único lugar, em um período de vinte quatro horas e exibisse uma trama contínua, com começo, meio e fim. Contudo, para pensadores tal qual Hegel, o teatro moderno, com suas demandas artísticas correntes, necessitava de novas abordagens. Em seus*

escritos, o filósofo alemão postulou que o drama moderno deveria exibir celeridade narrativa, uma certa qualidade dinâmica, porém, alinhada aos conflitos internos e externos dos personagens. Este artigo objetiva analisar o modo com o qual Oscar Wilde, na peça A Importância de ser Prudente, equilibrou ambas as visões de Aristóteles e Hegel, engendrando, ao mesmo tempo, um texto moderno com raízes clássicas, bem como uma comédia satirizando os costumes da sociedade inglesa.

Palavras-Chave: A Importância de ser Prudente, Oscar Wilde, Texto Dramático; Teatro.

Introduction

In his foundational work of dramatic theory, *Poetics*, Aristotle established three essential elements—the law of three unities; three rules that would govern Greek plays and influence the dramatic text for centuries. The unities concern time (limiting plays to take place within twenty-four hours), space (being performed in a single scenario), and action (valuing a basic and logical plot, with a beginning, middle, and end). Despite the strict neoclassical interest of seventeenth-century French and Italian productions in Aristotelian precepts, theatrical performances began to be involved with commercial needs, resulting in a shift of thinking regarding Aristotle’s unities, in particular those related to time and space, which were reviewed and rethought of as guidelines, rather than rules.

The matter of “action”, however, gained more and more relevance in theoretical studies. In *Introdução à dramaturgia* (1988), Renata Pallottini analyzes the positions adopted by academics regarding the unit of action, demonstrating how, gradually, the points of view on the aspect have varied, and expanded, sometimes complementing each other or raising new considerations. One of the items pondered by Pallottini is the distinction between an act and an action. Gestures such as walking or eating should be characterized as an act since they do not have dramatic implications, “a certain moral weight” (7, my translation).¹ Using John Dryden’s argument, Pallottini claims that the objective of a true dramatic action resides “first in the intention and last in the execution” (7, my translation).² Then, it becomes important to observe the factor of will, of deliberation, on the basis of an action: the character must operate according to his feelings, and those feelings need to be externalized.

Such reflections are aligned with Hegel’s perspective, who argues that it is a human desire to see its own actions as a journey “through a conflict of circumstances, passions

and characters, which leads to the last outcome” (Pallottini 8, my translation).³ Therefore, animosity is essential to the development of the dramatic action, which blossoms due to the existence of a “moral person” (Pallottini 8, my translation),⁴ the lucid and willful being. The individual who, consumed by his personal desires, hunts his prey. Thus, there is a need for antagonistic personalities: in modern drama, the core of the dramatic action is the collision of opposing ambitions, of individuals pursuing different and conflicting goals. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the assemblage of dramatic actions, fostered by the clash of dissonant interests, provides the mechanisms leading to the final conflict and, then, to its resolution.

Contrary to the characters found in classical theatre, often exhibiting lackluster qualities and an unimaginative spirit, individuals of the modern drama move according to their intimate issues, not prophecies or omens. Rivalries erupt from interpersonal encounters, from the profusion of subjectivities. The modern character, although dissatisfied with his circumstances, has complexities, and secluded concerns. It is then precisely because of his ambivalence that he needs to operate by consulting his own feelings, but these same feelings will often collide with the interests of others.

The collision (of internal and external conflicts) is what Hegel concludes as being “the mediated union of the epic genre and the lyric genre” (Pallottini 13, my translation).⁵ Modern drama, according to the German philosopher, demands a conciliation between the physicality and diligence of the epic genre and the profound and introspective motions of the lyric genre. It cannot be lethargic or arid, devoid of tangible outcomes, just as its success through exorbitant events that lack depth and substance would become unfeasible. The course of internal and external movements colliding with each other, continually growing to finally consummate at the end, represents the unity of modern dramatic action.

The element of action, or dramatic poetry, as Hegel (2014) calls it, is related not only to the texture of the dramatic text, but also to the fact that its words, its characters, and dilemmas, will be represented, imbued with life, on stage. The theater (a place of bodily expressions) is characterized, therefore, as an important place for the dramatic action to be developed, as it gives the play the aspect of synchronicity to the events of the plot. Thus, the theatrical site presents itself as a unit that adds to the demanding nature of the men and women aligned with their private goals, and divergent desires. The question regarding ethical behavior, so much present in classical drama and functioning as a beating heart, is overlooked in modern drama, where the idiosyncratic constitution of the characters (their ethos) works as a driving notion. Hence, it becomes possible to affirm that the “problem”

(or drama) to be solved starts from the confluence of feelings, which, articulated in dramatic actions (that is, externalized), provokes displacement, struggle, and confrontation.

However, it is worth noticing how little Hegel talks about a theory of comedy or the items that constitute it. Mark W. Roche, Professor of German Language and Literature, as well as Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, argues in *Hegel's theory of comedy in the context of hegelian and modern reflections on comedy* (2002/2003), that similar to the dramatic character, the character of comedy moves according to his own passions, and “in contrast to the world and the substantial sphere such particularity tends to overlook”. The individual’s subjectivity in the comedy consults itself in terms of authority, acts through particular considerations, and diverges from the prevailing external morality. In comedy, says Roche, it is possible to find “the central role of contradictions”. Roche, author of *Tragedy and Comedy: A Systematic study and a Critique of Hegel* (1998), presents the three types of comedy listed by Hegel: in the first one, the characters and their intentions are exhibited as phlegmatic elements, and the result of their mobilization is shown to be “inherently null”. In the second type, the hero nurtures distinct purposes but finds himself unable to act due to his surroundings. In the third model of comedy, the fortuitous meeting presents itself as the agent that stimulating events. In this last classification, Roche argues that “the hero achieves harmony through nature and chance, not consciousness”. Roche offers as an example for such plays, where “aims and their accomplishment, inner character, and external circumstances, are placed in comic contrast with one another and then they lead to an equally comic solution”, with works such as William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Ludvig Holberg’s *Masquerade*.

The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

Despite presenting itself as a solely modern or classic text, a play can contain elements, glimpses, and reflections of both classic and modern drama. An example of the latter is *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), by Oscar Wilde. The work by the Irish playwright, divided into three acts and taking place in the “present”, features two English gentlemen, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, who roam through London’s social scene without preoccupations, until the day Jack heads into town to propose to Algernon’s cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax, in marriage. The problem is that, in the city, Jack is known by another name: Earnest. The young man is forced to admit his double life when, after forgetting his

cigarette case at his friend's house, Algernon reads the following inscription on the object: "From little Cecily with her fondest love to dear Uncle Jack" (270). Jack reveals to Algernon that Cecily is the daughter of the family who adopted him after he was found as a baby in a train station. Under the nickname "Earnest" (the name of the fictional brother he claims to take care of whenever he goes to town), Jack performs countless unthinkable actions in the small community of Hertfordshire. While, listening to this account, Algernon is attracted by Cecily's description; and, moments later, after Jack is refused by Gwendolen's mother, Lady Brackwell, due to the obscure nature of his birth, Algernon, pretending to be Earnest, decides to go to the countryside and seduces Cecily.

During his lifetime, Oscar Wilde wrote plays usually divided into comedies of manner (*The Importance of Being Earnest; An Ideal Husband; A Woman of No Importance*), tragedies (*Salome; Vera; or the nihilists; The Duchess of Padua*), and some unfinished works (*A Florentine Tragedy* and *La Sainte Courtisane*). Although, for some critics, he did not present himself as a daring artist, experimenting with form and content, Wilde became known for the sui generis grit of his dialogues: agile, paradoxical, astute; real epigrams. The composition of his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, proved to be challenging for the writer, because, as he explained in a letter addressed to Beatrice Allhusen, his characters "sit in chairs and chatter" (277). In the message, Wilde goes on to complain of his inability to deal with certain descriptions common to the novel genre, given that his own life was "full of talk and no action".

Even though unsatisfied with *Dorian Gray's* unfolding, his eloquence and articulation, especially in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, gave the Wildean dialogue an athletic edge: not only vigorous, lively, but flexible in its ability to argue, rebut, and contradict itself or a previous dialogue. The confrontation between Jack and Algernon, in the first act, can be interpreted as the beginning of the dramatic progression, due to the fact that Jack's confession has "weight" and, in relation to the following events, advances the plot. Back in the country house in Hertfordshire, Algernon moves with purpose, aware of what he wants to achieve. Lady Brackwell's refusal works as an obstacle colliding with Jack's desire, as well as an expression of the character's inability to accept someone asymmetrical to her social parameters.

At this point, it is necessary to bring light into the working conditions of Wilde who, in addition to managing his own artistic concerns, also managed, at each night of theatrical exhibition, technical elements, such as art direction and costumes. Wilde, as a public figure, was aware of the commercial element at the time. In the nineteenth century, London's West

End was home to the most famous and sophisticated theatres, like the St. James's Theater, where "in those days people went to see the ... plays *before* ordering a new gown" (Raby 149).

As the theatre became accepted by the wealthy classes, its modes, rites, and aesthetic parameters began to emerge in some theatrical stagings. During the reign of Charles II, the aristocracy was the main sponsor of the arts, deciding in an elusive manner, what was appropriate and in good taste, and with the prosperity of the bourgeoisie (a social layer composed of those enriched through commerce and industry, rather than family lineage), the relationship between class and art, business and entertainment, became increasingly intertwined: "Theatrical companies became organized on an entrepreneurial basis and offered diverse forms of entertaining, including interludes of music and dancing, in order to attract audiences to theatrical performances" (Wallace 127). Therefore, in addition to a theoretical analysis, it is necessary to study the social transformations in which the plays and their creators were inscribed. In fact, for Peter Szondi, in *Teoria do Drama Burguês* (2004), it is not feasible to discuss theoretically the development of bourgeois drama without mentioning the productions. The theory, as in the cases of George Lillo and Denis Diderot, was conceived by the playwrights themselves. For this reason, stresses Szondi (29, my translation), it is possible to notice what he calls a "terminological problem", since there was no exact formula or abstract definitions.

Although he opposed to Georg Lukács's perspective, regarding the prominence of bourgeois drama as directly linked to the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, Szondi does not shut himself to the capitalistic sensibility surrounding (or, sometimes, structuring) the plays.

One example of such sensibility is the conversion of a drama with "public repercussion" to a drama with a "private" one. Let's take Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for instance. The main character's grief can be considered a universal sentiment, however, the situation acquires a grievous veneer when one realizes the effectuation of a coup d'état: by murdering his brother and becoming king, Claudius interrupts and usurps Hamlet's rightful place as ruler of Denmark. Thus, Hamlet (as a son and next in line to the throne) is not the sole victim of his uncle's misdoing: so are his subjects. Claudius's act victimized the kingdom. Although the murder happens to a single family, "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.100). The state. The whole nation.

On the other hand, the protagonists of bourgeois drama ceased to be mythological or royalty figures. The battlefield became the living room of emerging individuals who, like their spectators, performed routines of relative normality. After all, it is a drama that,

among other things, talked about and was set in clubs, country houses, and garden parties. As Szondi demonstrates, the bourgeois drama placed domestic conflicts and private affairs at the center of the dramatic stage. The characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with their ladyship and lordship titles or family inheritances, may not be considered members of the bourgeoisie, but, as in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*, it is still possible to find aristocrats starring in middle-class dramas.

The lives of people portrayed in plays were no longer linked to those of public figures, as designated by Greek culture. For the Greeks, few notions held as much significance and were so invaluable, as the concept of eternal glory, *kleos aphthiton*. The latter understanding, however, is at odds with the one nourished in the 21st century. Being famous was the privilege, a heroic deed, of existing beyond one's own time and space. The ancient Hellenistic culture believed that having one's life story told and retold, inspiring other young people, and the children of these young people, was a greatness destined for the selected ones. There is no way to ignore, for example, the pedagogical role of Homeric poetry in the education of Greek youth. Their reports, and the heroes they reported on, demonstrated examples of virtues and bravery not limited to a pedestrian sense: that would be the food of young people, of the men, who would give progress to the nation. Such myths should warm the spirit. Assist in the process of citizenship, in the gain and development of critical thinking. Fame, therefore, involves an expanded perception of circumstances, and a metaphysical effort by the hero to be able to have enough dignity to obtain it. To conquer it. Fame was bestowed, or should be in its classical sense, on those worthy of being remembered by history. Inscribed in history.

It is interesting to notice how the duality of fame was something that Oscar Wilde himself went through in his lifetime. Due to his nationality, public behavior, and clothing style, the Irishman was not the dearest figure to the British establishment. However, the long-run staging and success of his plays show him as a significant element in the profitable enterprise that theatre became. As far as 1895, *The Importance of Being Earnest's* first staging, Wilde had already published what would become his most famous works (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Happy Prince*), but his achievement as a playwright was like no other:

An Ideal Husband had been playing at the Haymarket Theatre since 3 January, and at the same theatre *A Woman of No Importance* had completed a successful run, having opened on 19 April 1895. On 20 February 1892 *Lady Windermere's*

Fan had been the second play staged by [George] Alexander's new management at the St James's Theatre, running until 26 July of that year (Jackson 161).

Going to the theater was characterized as a solemn point of the London social scene, as well as frequenting private clubs and fashionable restaurants. Wilde attended every staging of his plays, making last-minute changes, and shortening or cutting acts. Following this line of thought, it is possible to consider, in the same way, the influence of the public on the plots. Even in works with a comic bias, it was common for Wilde to insert elements with a dramatic aspect (a woman who abandoned her family, in *Lady Windermere's Fan*; a blackmail capable of destroying the characters' lives, in *An Ideal Husband*; a lost child, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*), without never going so far as to leave those who watched with some feeling of outrage.

Wilde, after all, reflected and commented on the current English society, from the perspective of a playwright, an artist, as well as that of an Irishman. Although his clothes and even his diction, his eloquence, had an English ring, his parents, Sir William Wilde and Lady Jane Wilde, did not hide their nationalist and anti-colonial principles inside public and private spheres. Sir Wilde, a surgeon, created what would later become the Eye and Ear Hospital in Dublin, while also carrying out anthropological investigations, making an unprecedented discovery of a group of aquatic marine mammals. Ellmann reports that when treating low-class people, instead of fees he collected "superstitions, legends, cures, and charms that might have been lost" (10). His writings, edited by Lady Wilde after her husband's death, had among its readers and supporters the poet and playwright W.B. Yeats, one of the most important figures of the Irish Literary Renaissance. Lady Wilde, also known as Speranza, displayed herself as an artist of "inflammatory" poetry. She was the poetess who, on the verge of revolution, as Ireland was increasingly destitute of material and moral nourishment, had found in art her instrument of protest, shouting that "the long pending war with England has actually commenced" (10).

It is an interesting act to think about the possibility of reading Wilde's *corpus* – with its veiled criticisms and categorical mockery – from an anti-imperialist perspective. Wilde (re)creates in his dramatic works a particular cosmos, as complex in its moral and social values, in the organization and functioning of its codes, as in the tight bodices and extravagant crinolines, granting volume to the dresses.

It is a world (or a fraction of it) made up of schemes and artificialities presented in moments like the second act of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where, after Algernon asks Cecily's hand in marriage, pretending to be Earnest, Gwendolen, who had escaped

from her mother's control, emerges to marry Jack, the man who introduced himself as Earnest. The two young women then talk about their respective suitors. Before concluding that it could be the same person, they emphasize their infatuation with the name "Earnest", for the way in which it conveys elegance and seriousness. Both confess their uncertainty in loving any man without the same sophisticated tone. The interaction denounces the nature of a group that prioritizes the elite, and everything connected (or possible to be connected) to it. Peter Raby states that

There is something Chekhovian in this study of England, which exposes the immorality and hypocrisy, and the immense self-satisfaction, of the English ruling classes, and which yet contrives to show glimpses of the charm and elegance, the allure, of a way of life which has no future (154).

The second act, taking place entirely in the garden of the country house, concludes with the confrontation between the young women, and with the arrival of Jack and Algernon, who individually sought ways to change their names to "Earnest". Gwendolen and Cecily demand to know the whereabouts of the real Earnest, resulting in Jack admitting that his brother never existed and during all that time it was a ruse to cover up the dual nature of his behavior. The couples then separate.

The third and final act, taking place in the living room, focuses on the resolution of the conflict. The men explain the nature of their actions; they acted on the impulse of love. As the progression of their responses appears to reassure the women, a servant announces the arrival of Lady Bracknell. She had discovered her daughter's location after bribing one of the maids in London. Being informed, again, of the union between Jack and Gwendolen, the matriarch does not accept it. Algernon then reveals his matrimonial bond to Cecily, resulting in an interrogation by Lady Bracknell, and leading her to learn about the young woman's inheritance. Furious, Jack, as Cecily's guardian, forbids the engagement, refusing to consent to the marriage. Lady Bracknell, trying to bypass the situation, argues that the match can be effected at Cecily's age of majority, but Jack points out that, under the terms of her grandfather's will, she does not come of age until she is thirty-five. Lady Bracknell asks him to reconsider the matter, which he admits to doing only if his betrothal to Gwendolen is accepted. She refuses. About to leave the house, taking her daughter with her, she stops. The mention of Miss Prim, Jack's governess, disconcerts Lady Bracknell, who recognizes in her the servant who, twenty-eight years before, disappeared with the baby of her sister, Algernon's mother. Miss Prim confesses. She admits to the loss of the

child at a train station. Jack, perplexed by the revelations, hurries offstage, returning with the exact basket described by the housekeeper, the same container where he was found by Cecily's father. Therefore, he is the missing brother of Algernon, the boy whom their parents named "Earnest."

As the play progresses, it becomes more and more interesting to observe the way in which Wilde twists familiar events into a dramatic axis. *The Importance of Being Earnest* displays critical circumstances, which in the hands of a melodramatic artist, would end in tragedy. Wilde understands the dynamic soul of modern drama. He focuses on the route in which the collision of wills, chained by the actions of the characters, raises tensions, drives events, and causes reactions and more reactions until reaching the end. In a way, the dramatic structure of *Earnest* is similar, but not equal, to the one elaborated by William Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*. The play, divided into five acts, starts resembling a comedy, which is evidenced by the behavior of characters such as Mercutio and the Nurse. Later, with Mercutio's death, a turning point occurs, and the plot is ruthlessly driven towards a tragedy. Wilde, despite incorporating elements of Shakespearean comedy (misplaced identities, lovers separated by authority figures), refuses to penalize his characters with the same destiny.

Unfolding within a brief period (twenty-four hours) and economical use of spaces (Algernon's living room in London; the garden of Jack's country house and its living room), the dramatic action in *The Importance of Being Earnest* springs from the characters' personal desires that, externalized, diverge with other desires causing conflicts: Jack and Gwendolen long for marriage, but are separated by Lady Bracknell. Algernon, presenting himself under another name and therefore as another person, asks Cecily to marry him. Thus, the young ladies believe they are engaged to the same man. In this web of deception, all the characters eventually meet and the truth is revealed.

The dramatic unit, therefore, has from beginning to end, a conflict, climax, and a conclusion. Comparing the progress of the ideal dramatic text to the movements of an animal, Aristotle had in mind an organic forwardness that, through dialogues and actions, could lead the plot to a neat conclusion. It is also possible to perceive, in the third act, the presence of what Hegel entitles a "great dramatic collision". As the characters become entangled in the outcome of their own actions, they illustrate Hegel's argument summarizing the drama as a kind of intercommunication, the miscellany of events propelling the plot. At the intersection of information and parallel demeanors, the fabric comprising the network of intrigues thickens and, in turn, the development of the dramatic unit becomes more evident. The clash between Jack and Lady Bracknell

happens as both start from different but legitimate positions. Jack, in love, seeks to marry Gwendolen. She, experienced in the serpentine lanes of society, senses the danger in letting her daughter marry a man of obscure origins. Arising from justifiable points of view, Jack and Lady Bracknell try, in their particular way, to defend their own actions. In this collision of interests, not only different but actually colliding with each other, is what Pallottini named the “principle of conflict”. Here, one can see the element of will in the dramatic action that ends up driving Algernon’s trip to Hertfordshire, as well as the meeting, in the same place, between Cecily and Gwendolen. The lively nature of each character is what impels them to defend themselves and attack the reasons of the other. The actions and dialogues, therefore, are in harmony with the Hegelian view of the characters’ actions as an external expression of their internal desires.

Conclusion

When looking at the grand structure of English drama, one notices the way in which Victorian theater displays idiosyncratic characteristics, especially in its *fin-de-siècle* productions. The art of dramatists such as George Bernard Shaw and even the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen (whom Oscar Wilde had revealed to have watched some of his plays) was concerned with social problems and contradictions. In *A History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama, 1850-1900* (1946), Allardyce Nicoll reveals the public’s growing interest in theater houses. Opera was no longer the only valid entertainment for the wealthy classes, and theatrical performances returned to popularity after being rejected during the monarchical restoration in the eighteenth century. The massive interest in theatre can be read as the result of the high level of commercial power of the British Empire, and, with the height of the Industrial Revolution, the sociocultural transformation that gave the era the designation of *Pax Britannica*. The progressive phase of the English nation, which restored its colonialist system and the prestige of the bourgeois class, was also marked by the rigidity of policies regarding the moral and ethical values of society.

Wilde’s triumph is something by itself worth noticing. One should remember that in the act of taking subjects related to good taste and well-living as tools of transcendence, he broke with the religious emphasis that all tangible matters, all physical consumptions, would obstruct the path of spiritual elevation. This notion persisted, especially in Victorian pedagogy, since “the role of the church, regarding the English education in the 19th century, is fundamental; practically all educational institutions were conducted by the church, whether the official . . . or the Protestant” (Morais, 55-56, my translation).⁷

Literature, for example, was contemplated as an institution, and not just art or entertainment. During the nineteenth century, the older relative, with a book in hand, would be surrounded by the younger ones, and read a story in which values such as courage and respect served as a basis, and, also, showing the youth the price to pay for misbehaving. Morais states:

... there was a firm belief in the role of education received at home coming from the father and mother, who tried, always with great rigidity and discipline, to lead their children through the difficult path that leads to the acquisition of what they considered the *great virtues*. ... at the time, to educate was to make the child look like an adult (67, my translation).⁸

Such meetings, nourished, especially in male children, a model of behavior. It would be counterproductive to ignore the civic aspect of reading, serving as an incubator of moral values, so that, by transmitting from one generation to another, the social order (and Christian values) could be maintained. Despite advancing technological and industrial inventions, Victorian England also exhibited an extreme attachment to their notion of morality and the fear of its ruin.

Victorian morality became, in the lexicon of later generations, an expression to designate sexual restraint and extreme rigor in the treatment of public and private conduct, aiming at maintaining Puritan values, austerity, and an acute sense of civic duty. In conclusion, Oscar Wilde, who graduated from Trinity and Oxford universities as a unique classicist, picks up the elements of the current drama (social convention, the dynamics of heteronormative relations, the hypocrisy of the bourgeois class, moral and public values, questionable means of acquisition), to create an Aristotelian-Hegelian structure: taking Aristotle's law of three units and Hegel's idea of dramatic action as a clash between internal desires and external circumstances.

Notes

- 1 "Certa carga moral."
- 2 "Primeiro na intenção e por último na execução."
- 3 "Através de um conflito de circunstâncias, paixões e caracteres, que caminha até o desenlace final."
- 4 "Pessoa moral."
- 5 "O princípio do conflito."

- 6 “A união mediatizada do princípio épico e do princípio lírico.”
- 7 “O papel da igreja, no que se refere à educação inglesa do século XIX, é fundamental, praticamente todas instituições de ensino eram conduzidas pela igreja, seja a oficial ... seja a protestante.”
- 8 “... acreditava-se muito no papel da educação recebida no lar através dos exemplos vindos das figuras paterna e materna, que procuravam, sempre com grande rigidez e disciplina, conduzir suas crianças pelo difícil caminho que leva à aquisição do que consideravam as *grandes virtudes*. . . . na época em foco, educar era fazer com que a criança parecesse um adulto.”

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