


Clash of Past and Present: Production of Historical and Representational Spaces in Oscar Wilde's Poetry*

Res. Assist. Dr. Emre Çakar 

Manisa Celal Bayar University, Faculty of Science and Letters

Department of English Language and Literature

emre.cakar@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to determine the function of space and how it is depicted in Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) selected poems. Wilde is one of the important literary and cultural figures of the Victorian era. He criticized the traditional moral codes and values of the Victorian era in which he was born and rejected many Victorian poetic aspects. Wilde used characters and places of ancient Greek mythology in his poems and developed a poetic sensitivity that focused on the real places and characters of the city. The brothel, the prison and the streets of London are some of the places that he used in his poems. Within this framework, it can be said that Wilde is one of the leading poets who shaped the *fin de siècle* poetry. In this study, French thinker Henri Lefebvre's (1901-1991) theory of space is applied to discuss the function of space in Wilde's poetry. Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space*, published in 1974, was influential in the second half of the twentieth century as it examined the historical development of the concept of space and evaluated it politically. The analysis of the poems from Lefebvre's perspective will reveal Wilde's use of space in relation to the conflict between past and present, and the attitude of the individual who wants to escape from society.

Keywords: Oscar Wilde, Henri Lefebvre, Theory of Space, *Fin de Siècle*, Victorian poetry.

Geçmiş ve Şimdinin Çatışması: Oscar Wilde'in Şiirinde Tarihsel ve Temsil Mekanlarının Üretimi

Öz

Bu çalışma Oscar Wilde'in (1854-1900) seçilmiş şiirlerinde mekânın işlevini ve mekânın nasıl betimlendiğini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Wilde, Viktorya döneminin önemli edebi ve kültürel isimlerinden biridir. İçine doğduğu Viktorya döneminin geleneksel ahlaki kurallarını ve değerlerini eleştirmiş ve şiirsel özelliklerinin pek çoğunu reddetmiştir. Wilde şiirlerinde hem antik Yunan mitolojisinin karakterlerini ve mekanlarını kullanmış, hem de kente ait gerçek mekanlara ve karakterlere odaklanan şiirsel bir duyarlık geliştirmiştir. Genelev, hapishane ve Londra sokakları, Wilde'in şiirlerinde kullandığı mekanlardan sadece birkaçıdır. Bu çerçevede Wilde *fin de siècle* (yüzyılın sonu) dönemi şiirini şekillendiren şairlerin başında geldiği söylenebilir. Bu çalışmada inceleme yöntemi olarak, Fransız düşünür Henri Lefebvre'nin (1901-1991) mekân teorisi uygulanmıştır. Yazdığı kitap ve makalelerle yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında etkili olan Lefebvre'in 1974 yılında yayınladığı *The Production of Space* (Mekânın Üretimi) adlı kitabı temel alınmıştır. Lefebvre kitabında mekan kavramının tarihsel gelişimini incelemiş ve politik açıdan değerlendirmiştir. Şiirlerin Lefebvre'nin bakış açısıyla yapılan analizleri sonucunda, Wilde'in mekân kullanımıyla ilgili olarak, geçmiş ve şimdinin çatışması, toplumdan kaçmak isteyen bireyin tutumu ortaya çıkarılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oscar Wilde, Henri Lefebvre, Mekan Kuramı, Yüzyılın Sonu, Viktorya dönemi şiiri.

* The present paper is the revised and expanded version of the third chapter of my doctoral dissertation, "Politics of Space in the English Fin de Siècle Poetry."

INTRODUCTION

La production de l'espace was published in 1974 and translated into English as *The Production of Space* in 1991, which is considered by many thinkers as Lefebvre's masterpiece. In his *Writings on Cities*, Lefebvre (2000) defines his aim as the "research on the city" and "the urban" and their connection with space (p. 185). *The Production of Space* begins with a chapter entitled "A Plan of the Present Work" where it is revealed that Lefebvre's main concern is "social space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 1). Lefebvre mainly explores social space because every living organism has a significance in its own space; he argues, "[t]he living organism has neither meaning nor existence when considered in isolation from its extensions, from the space that reaches and produces (i.e. its 'milieu')" (p. 196). Therefore, living organisms gain their meaning according to their environment; in other words, the environment and social milieu must be necessarily taken into consideration to understand the meaning of a living being.

In his *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) develops his "spatial triad" and determines the first element of the triad as the "spatial practice" that contains "production" and "reproduction" and ensures "continuity" and "cohesion" (p. 33). The spatial practice of society is revealed by "deciphering" space; which he regards as "perceived" space (p. 38). The second element is "representations of space" which is the conceptualised space. It is the space of "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (p. 38). To Lefebvre, it is "conceived" space, that is, "the dominant space in any society" (pp. 38-9). Merrifield (2006) interprets the idea of representation of space and asserts that it is "commandeered by the rich and powerful, by CEOs and cybernantes, by state politicians and free-market planners, by those who're invited to global summits like the World Economic Forum, who conceive spaces every year at Davos, Switzerland" (pp. 133-4). Merrifield reveals that representation of space contains "ideology, power and knowledge" latently (p. 109). Lastly, "representational spaces" directly become the "lived" space that holds images and symbols, and it is, Lefebvre (1991) claims, the space of "inhabitants," "users" and of "some artists," as well as "writers" and "philosophers" (p. 39). Hence, citizens, writers and thinkers create representational spaces of their own through symbols and images to escape from the power embodied in the representations of space.

In the beginning, space is empty, but people move into space and turn it into a social realm. The more people socialise in space, the more it becomes a representational space. Lefebvre (1991) explains how a *representation of space* changes into a representational space as follows: "[e]mpty space ... is actually merely a representation of space. Space is conceived of as being transformed into 'lived experience' by a social 'subject', and is governed by determinants which may be practical (work, play) or biosocial (young people, children, women, active people) in character" (emphasis original) (p. 190). It is described as dynamic because a group of social "subjects" live there transforming representation of space into a representational space. In his theory, Lefebvre discusses the physical and mental aspects of space but mainly focuses on the significance of social space.

Briefly, the spatial practice of the spatial triad is characterised with perceiving; in other words, it is equalised with observation. The relation between people and space is on the level of perception. Therefore, Lefebvre defines this phase as perceived space. Shields (1999) explains Lefebvre's idea on spatial practice with some examples such as "test sites for nuclear weapons; places for this and that; sites for death (graveyard) and remembrance

(memorials, battlegrounds, museums, historic walks and tours)" (p. 162). Secondly, the concept of representations of space covers the theories and codes that are determined by the dominant ideology. Thus, it is the conceived space and abstract as well. Lastly, representational spaces are regarded "as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe" (emphasis original) (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39).

However, one may still wonder how Lefebvre's spatial triad theory is applicable to life. In order to exemplify the difference between representations of space and representational spaces, Lefebvre (1991) mentions the Roman culture. For him, "[a]ntiquity's representations of space have collapsed: the Firmament, the celestial spheres ... Its representational spaces, however, have survived: the realm of the dead, chthonian and telluric forces, the depths and the heights. Art – painting, sculpture, architecture – has drawn and continues to draw on these sources" (p. 231). It can be inferred that the living places of the Roman Empire disappeared years ago, yet its lived spaces have survived on the level of art and culture. At this point, intellectuals such as poets, artists and sculptors gain an important function to maintain representational spaces because space, according to Lefebvre, is "organic," where a social organisation is founded in keeping with the relationships between members of groups and between society and nature (p. 229). This organic nature of space is conserved by using social systems and art, which enables people to produce representational spaces.

While expounding his theory of space in *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre also surveys the historical development of space in Western culture. He mainly divides the types of space into two as absolute and abstract. While absolute space contains natural space, sacred space and historical space, abstract space includes contradictory space and differential space. The first period is absolute space that is represented by nature. The second period is sacred space that is the age of Egypt. The third age is historical space which stands for Greek city states and the Roman Empire. Next one is abstract space, and it is marked by capitalism. Contradictory space is the fifth period which is characterised with the "contemporary global capital versus localised meaning" (Shields, 1999, p. 171). The last one is differential space, which is the "future space revaluing difference and lived experience" (p. 171).

Lefebvre (1991) begins the survey of space with absolute space and claims, "[t]he cradle of absolute space – its origin, if we are to use that term – is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants, or by nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists" (p. 234). Since absolute space was once natural, it intertwined with natural space. Then, natural space transformed with political developments. Lefebvre marks, "architecture picked a site in nature and transferred it to the political realm using a symbolic mediation ... [as] the statues of local gods or goddesses in Greek temples" (p. 48). In the meantime, absolute space did not disappear but gained both religious and political aspects. Thus, Lefebvre asserts, "[n]ot that absolute space disappeared in the process; rather it survived as the bedrock of historical space and the basis of representational spaces (religious, magical and political symbolisms)" (p. 48). Shields interprets absolute space from a different angle and adds "sacred space" to Lefebvre's account, and Shields (1999) states that "the emergence of *sacred space* is marked by the construction of the first city states"

(emphasis original) (p. 173). Due to the unity between city and religion, Shields transfers absolute space into sacred space during the era of city-states and Egypt.

The fourth period is historical space which covers the period of Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. Lefebvre (1991) portrays the development of historical space and states that “the invisible fullness of political space” began to govern “the emptiness of a natural space,” and “the forces of history smashed naturalness forever and upon its ruins established the space of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art and symbols)” (p. 49). With the rise of capitalism, historical space transformed into abstract space. According to Lefebvre, abstract space was “founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices” (p. 53). Therefore, it becomes “the space of bourgeoisie and of capitalism” (p. 57). The main problem of abstract space is that “abstract space cannot be conceived of in the abstract. It does have a ‘content’, but this content is such that abstraction can ‘grasp’ it only by means of a practice that *deals with it*” (emphasis original) (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 306).

The next period is designated as contradictory space in which the body is contradictorily situated between its representation and the body itself. Lefebvre depicts the situation of body and sexuality in abstract space and how a “strange substitution” emerged concerning sex. In its natural form or natural space, sex was regarded as an intercourse between two people. However, in the meantime, natural space evolved into abstract space where nature was substituted by “cold abstraction and by the absence of pleasure;” therefore, Lefebvre (1991) designates this space as “the mental space of castration (at once imaginary and real, symbolic and concrete)” (p. 309). It can be considered a kind of castration because the representation takes the place of the subject itself; he argues, “the image of the woman supplants the woman herself” (p. 309). Regarding the situation of abstract space after the strange substitution, Lefebvre claims that it is dominated by male power, “[o]ver abstract space reigns phallic solitude and the self-destruction of desire. The representation of sex thus takes the place of sex itself” (p. 309). Therefore, he designates this phase of abstract space as contradictory space.

Lastly, Lefebvre discusses differential space. According to Lefebvre (1991), differential space grows out of abstract space on the condition that it gives strong emphasis on differences (p. 52). Apart from comprising differences, abstract space, on the one side, brings about “the dissolution of old relations;” on the other side, it generates new relations (p. 52). Another significant aspect of abstract space is homogeneity. Due to its association with violence and war, it develops into political apparatus, and because it is instituted by the state, it is institutional, and it is homogeneous (p. 285). However, the way Lefebvre employs “different” in his theory needs to be defined regarding spatial practice; it is “what is *excluded*: the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games” (emphasis original) (p. 373). People living out of the centre mainly because of economic reasons are excluded from the majority and exposed to homogenization in order to render uniformity in society. Therefore, Lefebvre emphasises the divide and rule aspect of differential space with regards to the state and politics. To sum up, Lefebvre composes a unitary theory of space by bringing together the physical and mental aspects of space but particularly surveying its historical development within the framework of politics and ideology. Thus, his theory of space becomes essential for this study in order to understand the evaluation of space

concerning the tension originating from the clash between past and present in Wilde's poetry. All of the types of space that Lefebvre defines in his theory are not applicable to Wilde's poetry because his poems written with pastoral elements focus on the period of the ancient Greek civilisation, and his poems of urban life display abstract space. At the same time, influenced by Impressionism, Wilde wrote some poems that carry the aspects of Impressionism. Such poems are appropriate to trace the development of representational space in Wilde's poetry as well.

LONGING FOR A PASTORAL LIFE: PRODUCTION OF HISTORICAL SPACE

Oscar Wilde uses certain pastoral places, cities and natural sceneries as the setting of some of his poems such as "Theocritus: A Villanelle," "Pan: Double Villanelle" and "Ravenna." One of the cities is Arcady that stands for a symbol of the perfect pastoral landscape through its natural aspects. Panofsky (1955) claims that it was Virgil who idealised and attributed some utopian aspects to Arcady (p. 299). According to Hight (1949), Arcady was such a "distant and unknown and 'unspoilt'" place that it was transformed into an "unreal land of escape" (p. 163). Then, Arcady became a utopic place which was "remote from Roman everyday life" with "an unreal, far-off atmosphere" (Panofsky, 1955, pp. 299-300). Wilde integrated some elements of pastoral space into his poems, although he is not generally considered to be a "pastoral poet" (Beckson and Fong, 2004, p. 59).

By using pastoral space in his poems, Wilde usually reveals the complicated situation of the individual who is estranged to the norms of society. Accordingly, he demonstrates the clash between gloomy urban and utopian rural settings. Wilde's poem "Theocritus: A Villanelle" (1881) is about the ancient Greek poet, Theocritus (300-260 BC). Cohen (2007) holds that Theocritus is the "inventor" of pastoral poetry. (p. 306). Wilde takes the pastoral imagery from Theocritus and applies it to his poem in the form of "a villanelle," rustic song in Italy (from Italian Villano, "peasant") (Villanelle). In the poem, the speaker addresses Theocritus as the "singer of Persephone," and asks, "In the dim meadows desolate / Dost thou remember Sicily?" (Wilde, 2009, p. 51). Since Sicily is the birthplace of Theocritus, the question signifies Theocritus's past. In this sense, it can be claimed that the Sicilian refrain of the poem, "Dost thou remember Sicily" highlights the theme of nostalgia. Wilde creates a pastoral world with flowers and animals, and he says, "Still through the ivy flits the bee / Where Amaryllyis lies in state; / O Singer Persephone!" (p. 51). From the perspective of Lefebvre (1991), "the emptiness of a natural space" is governed by political and historical forces in historical space (p. 49). In fact, Wilde does not reveal any political implications throughout the poem, he points out to the depiction of historical space. Therefore, Wilde's poem produces historical space in which flowers, animals and deities take place. As Beckson and Fong (2004) state,

In 'Theocritus' ... Wilde alludes to such figures as Persephone (the wife of Hades) and Amaryllyis (a conventional name for a shepherdess in such poems), to whom the question becomes a thematic refrain: 'Dost thou remember Sicily?' Though the Sicilian-born Theocritus had depicted actual shepherds, as the pastoral tradition developed poets increasingly regarded the earlier pastoral world as a Utopia, hence the question asked in Wilde's poem as though he yearned to recapture the irretrievable past. (p. 59)

As it can be understood from Beckson and Fong's quotation above, rustic Sicilian setting develops into an agency to emphasise the irretrievable past. With the help of "Theocritus," Wilde creates the image of a utopic place by projecting his idea of the nostalgic past, which can also be traced in his "Pan: Double Villanelle."

In "Pan: Double Villanelle" (1881) Wilde again discusses the theme of the irretrievable past. In the poem, the pastoral landscape is united with the mythological world of the ancient Greek. The poem is made up of two parts; in the first part, the mythological god Pan, the "goat-foot God of Arcady" is addressed (Wilde, 2009, p. 121). The goat-like Pan is born in Arcadia, and it becomes the god of shepherds and flocks. The speaker longs for the pastoral life which is associated with Pan. In the opening tercet, the speaker, who is not content with the present condition, says,

*O goat-foot God of Arcady!
This modern world is grey and old,
And what remains to us of thee?
No more the shepherd lads in glee
Throw apples at thy wattled fold,
O goat-foot God of Arcady!* (Wilde, 2009, p. 121)

As it can be observed in the quoted lines, the speaker portrays the modern world as "grey" and "old," and complains that nothing beautiful remained from the time of Pan. In the world of the speaker, "No more the shepherd lads [are] in glee," and one cannot see Pan's "soft brown limbs" and "beard of gold" (Wilde, 2009, p. 121). The speaker's restlessness continues until the end of the first part.

In the second part of "Pan: Double Villanelle," the speaker says that "This modern world hath need of Thee" and he/she begs Pan to come back, "Ah leave the hills of Arcady" (Wilde, 2009, p. 122). Pan is not the only person to ask for help; he/she also presents Milton, whom "This modern world hath need of" (p. 122). Furthermore, the issue of time and space is emphasised by introducing Sir Philip Sidney. The speaker displays that Sidney witnessed the golden days in "A land of ancient chivalry" (p. 122). The first reference is about the period in which Sidney lived; he is one of the leading literary figures of the Elizabethan age. And many historians regard the Elizabethan age as the golden age or the English Renaissance due to the developments of drama, poetry and music. Secondly, the land of ancient chivalry is an allusion to Sidney's work, *The Arcadia* (c. 1580) which is a chivalric prose romance. The allusion to the land of ancient chivalry along with the golden days of Elizabethan age develops into a reference to the nostalgic past.

Regarding the theme of irretrievable past, "Pan: Double Villanelle" can be read as a reaction to the cultural decay in the eighteen-nineties because two different situations, the happy days of past and the ruined present are juxtaposed to each other. In accordance with Lefebvre's theory of space, it can be asserted that Wilde again embodies the representation of historical space through the idea of the loss of naturalness as nothing remained from olive-woods and vine-clad wold of Pan's days. The speaker, therefore, repeats that the modern world needs Pan since the feeling of disintegration was highly evident at the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, in his two villanelles discussed above, Wilde

produces representational spaces with the help of pastoral imagery to stress the theme of irretrievable past by recreating historical space.

In addition to the two villanelles with pastoral setting, Wilde portrays an Italian city, Ravenna as an idealised space to evaluate the theme of irretrievable past in "Ravenna" (1878). The poem, composed of seven parts, is written in couplets and told in the first-person speaker. "Ravenna" revolves around the lost glory of Ravenna through pastoral imagery. The poem opens with the speaker's statement revealing the time of his/her visit to Ravenna, "A year ago I breathed the Italian air" (Wilde, 2009, p. 31). On his arrival in Ravenna, the speaker tells how he/she is impressed by the greatness of the city; "O how my heart with boyish passion burned, / When far away across the sedge and mere / I saw that Holy City rising clear" (p. 31).

In the second part of "Ravenna," Wilde juxtaposes the pastoral past to the exhausted present. The speaker finds the city desolate; "... no sound of life or joy / startles the air; no laughing shepherd-boy" (Wilde, 2009, p. 32). As for the nostalgic past, Wilde compares Ravenna to Proserpine, the Roman equivalent of Persephone. Like Proserpine, Ravenna guards "the holy ashes of the dead," but now it is far away from its splendour. Thus, Wilde designates the present Ravenna as a "childless city" (p. 32). In the following lines, Dante who was buried in Ravenna is mentioned,

*Mighty indeed their glory! yet to me
Barbaric king, or knight of chivalry,
Or the great queen herself, were poor and vain,
Beside the grave where Dante rests from pain."
His gilded shrine lies open to the air. (emphasis original) (Wilde, 2009, p. 33)*

In the lines quoted above, the speaker praises Dante with the image of the "gilded shrine." After glorifying the good days when Dante lived, Wilde (2009) states that the "dull world is grateful for [his] song" (p. 33). Dante may sleep in peace because it is Ravenna that will guard Dante's ashes. From this standpoint, the city gains an aspect of a guardian that protects art and the artist. It can be maintained that Wilde juxtaposes the unpleasant situation of the present with delightful days of the past by using Ravenna. The city as a social space is presented as shiny and colourful, and Wilde turns this perceived space into a representational space in his poem "Ravenna" by re-presenting it. According to Lefebvre (1991), antiquity's representations of space diminished, but its certain spaces have remained alive in the level of representational spaces (p. 231). Wilde also reveals historical space in his poem "Ravenna" by transforming Ravenna into a representational space.

Thus, in his poem "Ravenna," Wilde represents Dante's grave as an element of representational space. The speaker states that Dante belongs to the nostalgic past, and Dante's "gilded shrine," like a symbol, indicates the golden period of the Roman Empire. Regarding Lefebvre's theory of space, Wilde demonstrates the change from a spatial practice into a representational space. Accordingly, Wilde identifies high art with Dante and utopic past with Ravenna. From the standpoint of Lefebvre's space theory, it can also be interpreted that Wilde produces historical space by means of "Ravenna."

“DEEP SILENCE IN THE SHADOWY LAND:” PRODUCTION OF REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE

Wilde’s poetic perception of setting is not limited to the pastoral scenery; he uses various images from the cityscape as well. His concern with urban setting is related to the influence of Impressionism because he is affected by several Impressionistic artists such as Degas, Monet, and the Pissarros (Ellmann, 1988, p. 220). Wilde’s poetry is sometimes marked with the strata of the impressions, which is an evident influence from the writings of Walter Pater. In the “Conclusion” part of his book, *Renaissance*, Pater (1919) states that “each object is loosed into a group of impressions – colour, odour, texture – in the mind of the observer” (p. 235). Then, what is the purpose of the artist at this point? According to the Impressionists, the artist must address the observer to arouse their sensory impressions; therefore, Impressionism turns out to be a very subjective school of art. Pater continues, “[e]very one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world” (p. 235). From Pater’s perspective, the artist enables the observer to enlighten and encolour his dream world because art is a very subjective process for Impressionism. Influenced by Pater’s ideas, Wilde writes some poems under the impact of Impressionism.

Wilde’s “Impression du Matin” (The impression of the morning) (1881) carries some aspects of Impressionism. “Impression du Matin” is about a prostitute who is depicted in a dark London cityscape. In the first stanza, the speaker gives a description of the Thames changing its colour into grey, and he says, “The Thames nocturne of blue and gold / Changed to a Harmony in grey” (Wilde, 2009, p. 129). The speaker’s portrayal of the Thames as “nocturne of blue and gold” is a reference to Whistler’s work, “Nocturne in Blue and Gold” (Murray, 2009, p. 198). Whistler is an American Impressionistic artist. Accordingly, it can be claimed that not only does Wilde create an Impressionistic atmosphere through the depiction of the environment, but also he makes allusions to the Impressionistic works. In the next stanza, “the yellow fog” spreads over the components of the city such as bridges and houses. In the poem, within the image of the city, the space of a religious place is associated with urban space; St Paul’s Cathedral “loom[s] like a bubble o’er the town” (Wilde, 2009, p. 129). Then, the quiet and peaceful scene changes into a noisy and restless setting through the appearance of “country waggons” (p. 129). It is widely known that French Impressionism had a great influence on late nineteenth-century poets, and as Beckson & Fong (2004) state that “Wilde suggests the transforming effects of light in Impressionistic painting” (p. 64). Along with light, space is also a fundamental element for Wilde’s poems because Impressionism makes use of sceneries depicted from various angles in different lights. Therefore, the use of space becomes an essential component in Wilde’s poetry.

In “Impression du Matin,” Wilde changes the course of the poem from the setting to the character in the last stanza; “one pale woman all alone” enters the scene. For it is early morning, “the daylight kiss[es] her wan hair,” and she stands idly “beneath the gas lamps’ flare” (Wilde, 2009, p. 129). Under the gas light, the woman looks pallid and unnaturally whitish as if suffering from emotional distress. The last line draws attention to the woman’s flamelike lips and stone-like heart which can be interpreted as she is a prostitute who tries to grab attention (Bach and Degenring, 2015, p. 57). The image of prostitute blends into the London sunrise in harmony. Therefore, “Impression du Matin” is a significant poem

throughout Wilde's poetry collection because he employs an entirely different setting apart from the pastoral realm of Arcadia and draws a realistic character that can be seen on the street. It is the first time that Wilde refers to abstract space by creating an urban scene. In the first part, Wilde displays harmony in the city;

*The Thames nocturne of blue and gold
Changed to a Harmony in grey:
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold.* (Wilde, 2009, p. 129)

As it can be noticed in the quotation above, the cityscape is portrayed with several images in harmony such as the unity of blue and gold. By means of the urban scenery of the Thames, it is symbolised in the level of abstract space. The homogeneity of the city is disturbed by the representation of a prostitute; what makes "Impression du Matin" different from his other poems is that Wilde, for the first time, depicts a scene and a figure from the eighteen-nineties. From this perspective, in "Impression du Matin," Wilde pushes the limits of abstract space by depicting a prostitute in urban space by producing the effect of light that is used in Impressionistic painting. Along with abstract space, Wilde also reproduces a representational space through the portrayal of London with an allusion to Whistler's "Nocturne in Blue and Gold."

The influence of Impressionism can be observed in his "In the Gold Room: A Harmony" (1881) as well. In "In the Gold Room," Wilde gives a direct reference to Whistler's another work, "The Peacock Room." It is the room installation of a dining room performed in 1876. The poem centres upon a girl who has intercourse with the speaker. She is depicted while playing the piano, and the speaker watches her. He compares the woman to flowers and fruits, and finally, she kisses him. In the title, it is indicated that she is in the gold room as if she was in Whistler's Peacock Room. In the first stanza, she holds the "ivory keys" with her "ivory hands" that stray "in a fitful fantasy" (Wilde, 2009, p. 130). In the second stanza, her fitful and dull manner disappears. Finally, the two lovers come together; the speaker says, "her sweet red lips on these lips of mine / Burned like the ruby fire set" (p. 130). Wilde mentions the name of the room in the title, but then he does not give details about the room. The reader does not know much about the actual setting, and the only point remarked is that she is in the gold room.

In "In the Gold Room" Wilde does not let the beloved turn into a statue-like person, and the speaker kisses her lips. Since love can be considered as a reference to natural space, it can be claimed that the status of natural space is preserved through the intercourse between the two lovers. Moreover, Wilde tries something new in his "In the Gold Room," firstly, Whistler produces "the Peacock Room" as an artistic space which can be read as a portrayal of representational space. Secondly, Wilde reproduces the image of the Peacock Room in his poem, and this time it is represented on the paper. By this way, Wilde pushes the limits of production of artwork by connecting two different mediums, the installation of a dining room and a poem. It can be concluded that the two artists produce their own representational spaces with their unique styles.

The poem, "Le Jardin des Tuileries," is written in the first-person speaker and it gives a picture of Tuileries Garden in Paris in winter, when it is "keen and cold" (Wilde, 2009, p. 133). In the first stanza, the speaker, probably in a café, sits on a chair around which children

“run / Like little things of dancing gold” (p. 133). Besides children, women and men “strut and stride,” and some “blue-eyed brigands” hide in the small wooden areas in the garden (p. 133). In this picture, there are also some nurses looking after children, and one of them is depicted while reading her book by the square. Those brigands “launch their paper navies” in the ornamental lake (p. 134). The children are represented while climbing up “the black and leafless tree” and the moon is “like a yellow seal / Upon a dark blue envelope” (p. 134). The speaker ends the poem with the dim image of the Seine river.

In “Le Jardin des Tuileries,” Wilde treats a space of spatial practice, a public park, Tuileries Garden in Paris and transforms it into a representational space by means of the re-portrayal in the poem. Like a painter, Wilde depicts a public garden and various people there. Once a part of the palace, Tuileries Garden was converted into a public park after the French Revolution. Furthermore, Lefebvre (1991) also claims that urban space “gathers crowds ... acts and symbols” (p. 101). In this light, the main point of the poet is to uncover “the social relationships embedded in it” (p. 89). In “Le Jardin des Tuileries,” Wilde also reveals the social relationships in the scenery through the depiction of various people from different classes. It can be claimed that in “Le Jardin des Tuileries,” Wilde latently emphasises the class conflict through the portrayal of brigands and nurses.

In “The Harlot’s House” (1881), Wilde gives voice to a woman who is an outsider in the society, the speaker portrays her place. Upon hearing some footsteps of dancing people, the speaker and her lover stop beneath a house to enter. The apartment is so impressive that they hear “the loud musicians play / The ‘Treues Liebes Herz’ of Strauss” and see “The shadows raced across the blind” (Wilde, 2009, p. 134). In the house, the lovers perceive non-living creatures such as “ghostly dancers,” “skeletons,” “a clock-work puppet,” and “a horrible Marionette” (p. 134). Through the end of the poem, the beloved leaves her lover and goes into “the house of Lust.” Then, everything suddenly changes like a fairy tale; “The tune went false / The dancers wearied of the waltz, / The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl” (p. 135). In the end, with the rising sun, the dawn creeps “like a frightened girl,” and the speaker finds himself all alone in the “long and silent street” (p. 135).

“The Harlot House” is a thoroughly Decadent poem; according to Jerome H. Buckley (1990), it is “Wilde’s best Decadent poem” (p. 26). Firstly, he puts non-living and unnatural creatures into action, which underlines one of the characteristics of Decadence. It is the approval of artefacts that stand against the natural. Secondly, Wilde does not set his poem in an ancient setting. “The Harlot’s House” is set in a contemporary era and urban space, particularly in the harlot’s house. Accordingly, Wilde’s use of a real place signifies his concern with the present situation. In “The Harlot’s House,” the speaker is unexpectedly dragged into the loneliness on the silent street. It can be maintained that it is the representation of the alienated wanderer in the city.

Moreover, a house and its interior space take place as an essential element in “The Harlot’s House.” Wilde presents a place of his time, and through the non-living creatures, so he turns the traditional poetics upside down creates a scene which is barely represented in the conventional Victorian poetry. Wilde does not only criticise the content, but he also attacks sexual immorality. For this purpose, the title of the poem is deliberately chosen; unlike “Impression du Matin,” in “The Harlot’s House” Wilde discusses the issue of prostitution, which can be regarded as a stance against Victorian morality. According to Paglia (2001), prostitutes “stand as a rebuke to sexual morality,” and she claims,

"[p]rostitutes, pornographers, and their patrons are marauders" (p. 26). Then, Wilde emphasises the presence of prostitutes in Victorian society and investigates the place where they live as well. Regarding Lefebvre's terminology, Wilde transfers the house into the space of art and attributes artistic value so that it becomes a portrayal of representational space of Decadence. Consequently, Wilde reflects various urban depictions in the "shadowy land," and that is the city.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, through the analysis of Wilde's poems, Wilde's interest in historical space is revealed. Three of his poems are set in ancient cities, and their personas bemoan their present conditions and long nostalgically for the past. Wilde's emphasis on those ancient cities also attributes utopic aspects to historical space. Wilde does not only deal with the pastoral setting of ancient cities but also with the urban setting of his time. In "Impression du Matin," Wilde employs a prostitute on the streets of London to explore abstract space, but his reference to Whistler adds a new layer to the poem. By means of the impressionistic reference, Wilde employs a representational space in "Impression du Matin." Once again in "In the Gold Room: A Harmony," Wilde produces a representational space by referring to Whistler's work, "Peacock Room." Moreover, "Le Jardin des Tuileries" is another poem in which Wilde, like an Impressionistic artist, depicts a scene from the Tuileries Garden in Paris. The last poem, "The Harlot's House" does not carry any Impressionist aspect but it can be claimed as Wilde's most complete decadent poem. In all those four poems, Wilde deftly reproduces different images of representational space employing Impressionistic and Decadent imagery. From Lefebvre's theory of space, it becomes clear that Wilde creates various sceneries from city life to display representational space.

In his poems with a pastoral setting, Wilde produces representational spaces through the portrayal of a utopic past of ancient days. It can be deduced that pastoral life stands for a space of escape and sanctuary in Wilde's poems. Through his urban poems, Wilde does not illustrate a vivid and joyful picture of the city; instead, he depicts the dullness and gloom of city life. From the perspective of Lefebvre's historical approach to space, it is observed that Wilde refers to historical space in his poems with pastoral setting and while producing representational spaces, Wilde employs some elements of Impressionism in his poems.

Fin de siècle poets often look for the possibilities of new spaces in their poems, because, despite coming from city life, they do not seem to be content with the norms of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, the attitude of escapism can be considered as a result of middle-class norms. In this regard, production of space in Wilde's poetry is associated with the theme of alienation, escape and urban life, which mainly originates from the representations of the gloomy and disordered city. However, Wilde's tendency to flee does not evoke the theme of escape which is the leading theme in escapist fiction. In other words, Wilde, like the other *fin de siècle* poets, does not ignore the problems of his age and does not produce a fantastic world. In his poems, Wilde reveals the troubles he faces and displays historical space as a sanctuary to take refuge in. Therefore, it is possible to refer to Wilde's poetry as escapist but not in a sense used for escapist fiction. The poetry of Wilde reinforces the idea that the peacefulness of the country life stands against the chaotic urban life. Thus, it cannot be claimed that Wilde is indifferent to the realities of his age.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bach, S., & Degenring, F. (2015). From Shakespearean nights to light pollution: (Artificial) Light in anglophone literature. In Josiane Meier et al (Eds.), *Urban lighting, light pollution and society* (pp. 46-65). New York: Routledge.
- Beckson, K., & Fong, B. (2004). Wilde as poet. In Peter Raby (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Oscar Wilde* (pp. 57-68). New York: Cambridge UP.
- Buckley, J. H. (1990). Echo and artifice: The poetry of Oscar Wilde. *Victorian poetry*, 28(3/4), 19-31.
- Cohen, A. (2007). Mythic landscapes of Greece. In Roger Woodard (Ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Greek mythology* (pp. 305-330). New York: Cambridge UP.
- Ellmann, R. (1988). *Oscar Wilde*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Hightet, G. (1949). *The classical tradition: Greek and Roman influences on Western literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. (Donald Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H. (2000). *Writings on cities*. (Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, Trans.). Malden: Blackwell.
- Merrifield, A. (2006). *Henri Lefebvre: A critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Murray, I. (2009). "Notes." *Oscar Wilde: Complete poetry*. New York: Oxford UP. 175-206.
- Paglia, C. (2001). *Sexual personae: Art and decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. Yale Nota Bene: New Haven.
- Panofsky, E. (1955) *Meaning in the visual arts: Papers in and on art history*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Panofsky, E. (1991). *Perspective as symbolic form*. (Christopher S. Wood, Trans.) New York: Zone Books.
- Pater, W. (1919). *The Renaissance: studies in art and poetry*. London: MacMillan and Co.
- Shields, R. (1999). *Lefebvre, love and struggle: Spatial dialectics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Villanelle. (2 May 2009). In *Encyclopædia Britannica online*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/villanelle>. 13 May 2017.
- Wilde, O. (2009). *Complete poetry*. Isobel Murray (Ed.). New York: Oxford UP.