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The Trials of Oscar Wilde: A Process Perspective Based on the Social Drama Theory

Wilde's crime was not the private act of sodomy, but his public performances. His trials can be read as an elaborated stage that could be resolved by what Victor Turner calls "social drama". It was a thoroughly collaborative enterprise and various groups participated in the social drama, for example, court, media and characters portrayed by his own. Wilde's fame as an author, the stature of the marquess, and the salacious nature of the testimony led to a frenzy of public interest in the case, countless newspaper articles, cartoons, and even poems were published to keep up with the British public's appetite for information about the trials. During the trials, Wilde was quoting what he had said in a previous improvisational moment. While none of the elements were precisely original, the effeminate behavior, the epigrammatic wit and the speech defending sodomy. Therefore, this theatrical production is a mere copy or quotation. This essay, based on an understanding of the trials as social drama, examines how Wilde became the scapegoat for *fin de siècle* Britain.