

Chapter-I

Wilde and Homoeroticism

This research entitled "Homoerotic Love: Politics of Gender in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" tries to explore the ways that sex-gender ideologies shape specific literary work. The novel illustrates that even in the absence of explicit homosexual terminology or activity, a text can subvert the normative standard of male same-sex behaviour and that the textual depictions of male same-sex experience both reproduce and resist the dominant heterosexual ideologies and practices.

Wilde's novel violated the standards of middle-class property, the characterizations illustrate the intersection of Victorian class and gender ideologies from which Wilde's status as 'homosexual' would emerge. In the novel Wilde's encoding of sexual practices between men moves against those ideologies that sought to 'naturalize' male heterosexuality. Despite its tragic ending, its depiction of male homoerotic desire and practice insists on not only the possibility but the naturalness of same-sex eroticism.

The body of abstract theory and applied readings that come to be known as 'queer theory' during the 1990s is dauntingly complex and diverse. Theories that attempt to homogenize, normalize, categorize and hierarchize are pervasive across the field of the social science and humanities. 'Queer' theories work to challenge and undercut any attempt to render 'identity' as singular, fixed or normal. Queer represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization. It rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest, representation in favour of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal. For both academics and activists, 'Queer' gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual and normal includes normal business in the academy.

The novel centers on Dorian Gray, a young man of great beauty. When he meets Lord Henry Wotton, he inspires him with a vision of life in which the pursuit of beauty through sensual pleasure is valued above ethical or moral concerns. Another friend of Dorian the artist Basil Hallward, awakens Dorian's vanity. After admiring a portrait of himself painted by Basil, Dorian declares that he would give his own soul if he could remain eternally young while the portrait grows old. He gets his wish, and the picture shows the gradual disfigurement of his soul as he sinks into a life of degradation and crime.

The theme of homoerotic love is never stated explicitly, it has been presented in Basil's feelings for Dorian as well as among other characters. Basil is an artist who paints the picture of Dorian Gray. He is completely captivated by the beautiful Dorian, whom he has known for two months and paints him in many different guises. He secretly worships Dorian and later confesses this adoration to him. He believes that Dorian has inspired him to create the best work of his life. Through Dorian he has discovered a new style of painting and hopes it will be the beginning of a new school that will combine the best of the Greek and Romantic spirit, presenting a harmony of spirit and passion, body and soul. Basil does not intend to exhibit the painting because he says he has put too much of himself into it.

Unlike his friend Lord Henry, whose cynicism he regards as a mere pose, Basil does not take an amoral approach to life. He tries to console Dorian after the death of Sibyl Vane and is shocked by the callousness of his friend. He attributes Dorian's attitude to the bad influence of Lord Henry.

Basil, however, is deeply troubled by his painting. He understands instinctively- despite his friends' gibes- that he must not exhibit it in public because it reveals too much of himself. Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of

the artist, not of the sitter. Basil felt terror in Dorian's presence: "I knew that I had come face to face with some one whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself (70). But Basil's resistance is, of course, futile. He does give away his soul, he does fall in love with a boy who symbolizes the harmony of soul and body. He soon comes to feel that he could not live as an artist without Dorian."

On the other Lord Henry's stake in the picture is equally circumscribed by desire. He views it as a fetish or a token of sexual possession. He is as curious about the hidden painting as he is about Dorian's hidden life, which mirrors his own. All three characters are homosexual and in the era of the Labouchere Amendment (passed by the parliament in 1885, the Labouchere Amendment criminalized consensual sexual relations between male in private), that alone is a sufficient reason for mutual identification. Dorian begins by emulating Lord Henry but soon outstrips his mentor, who can only watch enviously as his erstwhile disciple gets away with scandal and eventually murder.

Lord Henry's bid for the picture is limited to a game of erotic communication, which finds shelter in the object d'art without fear of the police. But Lord Henry, the paintings only audience, can never completely identify with the image of the man, who attracts him precisely because of their differences, the difference between an older cynical wit and a lovely and naive young boy. He alone emerges from the involvement with the picture emotionally marked but physically unscathed.

In the last ten years, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has drawn renewed critical attention promoted by a variety of poststructuralist and postmodernist concerns. Readers have tended to shift from more traditional approaches to the text, which have addressed such topics as the theme of the double, the relationship between

art and death, the narrative's conformity to Victorian and Gothic literary conventions, and the literary, historical significance of the notions of decadence and dandyism. More recent criticism has investigated the text as a psychoanalytic reflection on the economics of narcissism and castration, as a sociohistorical artifact that both embodies and participates in the construction of a Victorian public sphere, and as a narrative of homosexual desire that transgresses bourgeois class and gender ideologies while charting the development of an eroticized male identity.

Regarding Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* critic, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes "it as one of the key texts that have set the terms for a modern homosexual identity" (49). It in fact disrupts the emerging connection between homosexuality and self-definition. The true scandal of the novel lies in the opposition. Wilde so presciently establishes between hunger for identity, achieved through an identification with an external model.

Another critic, Joyce Carol Oates saw in Wilde not only a fellow artist but a betrayed artist and a "dishonoured exile"- a kind of Christ through his initial response to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was qualified: the book was "crowded with lies and epigrams" (419). Its spirit muted by the fact that Wilde felt obliged to "veil" the homosexual implications.

That Joyce was insensitive to Wilde's deeper theme is suggested by his frequent echoing of Wilde: "My art is not a mirror held up to nature", Joyce boasts, "nature mirrors my art" (283). These echoes develop only the explicit, daylight side of Wilde's aesthetics and make no allusion to the cautionary and even elegiac tone of much of *Dorian Gray*. It is not the homosexual nature of Dorian behaviour or his heterosexual behaviour that constitutes Dorian's sin. The fact that he, without any

emotion, involves others in his life's drama "simply as a method of procuring extraordinary sensations" (284).

Although not all early reviews were unfavourable, the negative impression created by those who denounced the book affected how people responded to it for decades. Passages from the novel were read in court by the prosecution during Wilde's trial for homosexuality in 1895. The habit of interpreting the novel, and other works by Wilde, in the context of his life dominated early scholarship about Wilde. Some twentieth century and twenty first century critics continued to use 'biographical details to shed light on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, others examined it in relation to the cultural context in which it was written or used archetypal criticism, in which the novel was analyzed in terms of myths and legends such as the Faust story. No critics have interpreted the novel by examining issues of sexual orientation, particularly relating to homoerotic love.

Critic Robert Boyle views:

The homosexual undertones of Wilde's development of his plot rouse a critical eruption, mostly of indignation and vilification. The plot was reputedly based on an unexperience Wilde had had in the Studio of Basil ward, an artist friend, where Wilde expressed regret that a beautiful young man in one of Ward's paintings should eve grow old. (16)

Several recent critics have shown that Wilde was not only conversant with scientific theory he was keenly interested in many of Victorian Science's most pressing questions. Philip Smith, Michael Helfand and Bruce Hally argue that although literary critics overlook his engagement with scientific issues, science played a crucial role in Wilde's aesthetic theory. Recent critic, Heather Seagroaft, in his essay titled "Hard Science, Soft Psychology and Amorphous Art in *The Picture of Dorian*

Gray, has explained why Wilde often discussed scientific theory in terms of the relatively new science of human psychology. He has considered Wilde's representation of psychology in light of Victorian debates over the status of science and art.

This is particularly surprising because throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Wilde figures Harry's and Dorian's dilettantism as a passion for scientific inquiry into the psyche.

When first published in England, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* met with a storm of negative reviews, many of which attacked the book in virulent terms for its alleged immorality. *The Daily Chronicle*, for example assailed its "effeminate frivolity, its studied insincerity, its theatrical cynicism, its tawdry mysticism, its flippant, philosophisings and the contaminating trail of garish vulgarity" (qtd. in Kohl, pg. 51). The anonymous critic for the *St. James's Gazette* affected a manner of even greater disgust when he wrote "not wishing to offend the nostrils of decent persons, we do not propose to analyze [the novel]... that would be to advertise the developments of an erotic prurience" (qtd. in Gillespie 96). This critic even ventured the opinion that he would be pleased to see Wilde or his publishers prosecuted for publishing the novel.

The letters to the editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, Wilde defended himself against such charges. He insisted that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had a very clear moral and that his problem in writing the book had been to keep the obvious moral from subverting the artistic effect.

Thus, the research attempts to study Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* focusing upon the issue of homoerotic love and its social politics. Evidences

have been drawn from Wilde's novels as well as from the vast crops of Wilde criticism.

The second chapter which follows the first chapter deals with the methodology 'Queer Theory'. The third chapter is application of the theory to study Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. And finally, the fourth chapter concludes the research and presents the findings.

Chapter-II

Homoeroticism and Politics of Gender: A Theoretical Overview

The body of abstract theory and applied readings that come to be known as 'queer theory' during the 1990s is dauntingly complex and diverse. Theories that attempt to homogenize, normalize, categorize and hierarchize are pervasive across the field of the social science and humanities. Essentialist theories that locate or seek a trans-historical, enduring or core essence to human identity have even been used in the service of progressive causes-feminist and gay/lesbian.

Queer theory views the traditional and prescriptive essentialist model of sexuality as failing to do the conceptual work involved in the adequate description of how desires function and how sexualities are made. The range of critical terminologies, models and strategies conforms that it is no longer viable to think in terms of a single, coherent 'sexuality'. It has effected the transition from the natural homosexual individual, to whom rights could be attached, to the disorienting notion that all sexualities are perverse and can be reclaimed and celebrated. If gay or lesbian theory has often been defensively grounded in liberal rights, Queer Theory is a deeper philosophical challenge to the status quo. It, at the same time aims to provide readings which at once subvert sameness and celebrate otherness.

Queer studies queries orthodoxies and promotes or provokes such uncertainties, moving beyond lesbian and gay sexualities to include a range of other sexualities that disrupt such fixed or settled categorization altogether.

During 1980s, the term Queer was reclaimed by a new generalization of political activists involved in Queer nation and protect group such as act up and outrages, through same lesbian and gay cultural activists and critics who adopted the term in the 1950s and 1960s continuously to use it to describe their particular sense of

marginality to both mainstream and minority cultures. In the 1990 'Queer Theory' designated a radical rethinking of the relationship between subjectivity, sexuality and representation. Its emergence in that decade owes much to the earlier work of Queer critics such as Ann Snitow, Carol Vance and Joan Nestle, but also to the allied challenge of diversity initiated by black and third world critics.

In addition, it gained impetus from postmodern theories with which it overlapped in significant ways. Teresa de Lauretis, in the introduction to the *'Queer Theory' Issue of Difference (1991)* traced the emergence of the term 'queer' and described the impact of postmodernism on lesbian and gay theorizing.

The first-high profile use of the term "Queer Theory" was in a special issue of the feminist journal *Differences* from the summer of 1991 (one that collected essays drawn from an academic conference held in 1990. Edited by Teresa de Lauretis and entitled "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities", the issue contained essays on a diverse array of cultural representations and manifestations of same-sex desire. Tellingly (for she later changed her mind about its value), de Lauretis in her introduction makes only a quick case for the umbrella term "Queer Theory". She writes, "The term 'queer' juxtaposed to the 'Lesbian and gay' of the subtitle, is intended to mark a certain critical distance from the latter, by now established and often convenient formula" (iv).

As she traces some of the different uses of terms such as 'homosexual', 'gay' and 'lesbian' de Lauretis returns briefly to the utility of the catch all phrase:

The term 'Queer theory' was arrived at the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of these terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead

both to transgress and transcend them, or at the very least problematic them. (v)

A more sustained case for the term "queer theory" is made in the first essay of the issue, written by performance theorist Sue-Ellen Case: "queer theory, unlike lesbian theory or gay male theory; is not gender specific. In fact, like the term 'homosexual' queer foregrounds same-sex desire without designating which sex is desiring" (2). Queer theory, she argues, "works not at the site of gender, but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself", and she suggests, "queer reveals constitute a kind of avotivism that attacks the dominant notion of the natural. The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny" (3).

Case's shift from a discussion of gender to a broader interest in "ontology" - the very question of being is important. This marking out of much larger terrain for 'queer' investigations was given further support in Michael Warner's impressive 1993 collection of essays "Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory". In his introduction he writes,

'Queer represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minorizing logic of toleration or simple political interest representation in favour of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal [. . .]. For both academics and activists 'queer' gets critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy.

(15)

If we conjoin Case's and Warner's statements, we see how normal being (as well as possibilities of abnormal being) becomes the common terrain of investigation in queer theorization and criticism.

According to Donald E. Halls "Queer Theory" tries to expose the issue of homoerotic love and its gender politics. It surveys the history of homosexual activity and expression of homoerotic desire in literature with the reference of contemporary philosophers and their related philosophy. It clarifies that there has always been some form of sexual activity between men and between women, though how that activity manifested itself and the ways in which it was socially castigated or tolerated have varied greatly.

In looking backwards over centuries, all we can do is attempt to tease out the identity constitutes that were available and circulating in a culture and at a particular time. 'Gay' as a term signaling an assertion of self-aware and self-respecting sexual identity is one best left for referencing the twentieth century and today. And it is most accurately used for men alone. 'Lesbian' as an identifying term distinct from 'gay' identity is also certainly important here, even though lesbians and gay men have often interacted politically and socially and in ways also worth noting.

Homosexuals and heterosexuals are recent identifiers, dating from the late nineteenth century medical terminology. They are not at all accurate as terms for labeling identities from previous centuries, though they are useful for describing specific activities between members of the same sex or different sexes. In other words, the men from the medieval era, who had anal intercourse, could be said to have engaged in 'homosexual' activity. Even if it would be erroneous to describe them as 'self-aware' homosexuals of the nineteenth or twentieth century variety.

Greek mythology makes many reference to same-sex erotic desire, especially between adult men and what we would now term 'adolescent' boys. And other philosophical and literary writings, as well as artistic representation, from the era suggest that such contact was countenanced by the privileged Greek citizenry. While

this may seem shocking to us and we may wish to project backward our contemporary notion of 'child abuse' to condemn it, such an anachronistic imposition tells us much more about the power of our categories than anything particularly useful about the Greek. That sexual contact between patrician men and boys was 'naturalized' at the time prompts to see our own system of organizing social/ sexual relation as similarly time-bound. The 'natural' has little trans-historical grounding.

Halls takes reference to Halperian who explores in one hundred years of homosexuality, adult male sexuality during the classical era had much more to do with the power states and social positioning. Than it did with any expression of identity determining desire for the same or other sex. Sexual contact between two adult men or two adult women, while if no doubt occurred, was not itself an activity that provided a basis for self-assertions of identity, as far as we know. Social standing was the means by which individual conceived of themselves and their place in the world.

And beyond those intergenerational manifestations, same sex desire was referenced in several important works during the Greek era that resonated through later time periods. During the sixth century BC, the poet Sappho wrote nine books of emotionally charged and erotic verses, many concerning young women. Both the term 'Sapphic' and "lesbian" (which derive from the name of her home island "lebos") have come down to us through the age as terms for women who desire other women. And Sappho's iconic status is no twentieth century projection backwards. She and her homoerotic verses were very well known during her own day and her poetry was highly celebrated by Plato and others.

Similarly, Plato is another major source of classical articulation on same-sex desire that has implications still. His dialogues contain various references to

pederastic desire, but also in his symposium, he foregrounds a major statement by Aristophanes that has relevance to our discussion of identity, construction even in the twenty-first century. In this statement, Aristophanes theorizes:

That the world was once made up of conjoined beings, some of mixed sex, others of two men or two women. When Zeus divided these conjoined beings into separate individuals, sexuality was determined by the search for one's missing half, either of the same or different sex. (53)

In a postmodern, postcolonial world, in which the object of knowledge has itself become a problematic space, queer theory seeks further to question all such essentializing tendencies and binary thinking. An elusive sexuality, fragmented into local, perverse particularities, is celebrated in all its deviant versions. Such 'perversions' are mobilized in resistance to the bourgeois construction of self-modeled upon a rigid, patriarchal heterosexuality which has exercised its hegemony for over two centuries.

So, we can not discuss 'queer theory' without discussing post-structuralism, post-modernism and the insights of philosophers whose theories do not address sexuality directly. Not only postmodern thinkers like Michael Foucault, Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler, whose work has resonated throughout 'queer theory' and is clearly engaged with studies in sexuality, but also theorists such as Fredrich Nietzsche, Jean Paul Sartre and Jacques Derrida whose insights help us to understand the development of the 'queer' analysis of sexuality, as well as 'queer' manipulation of identity or identities. Certainly no theorists of identity has been more central to 'queer' theorization than Michel Foucault, whose insights and investigations changed the way that academics activists thought about the responded to the power of socio-sexual norms.

The first Foucauldian concept that is central to queer theorization is that linking 'discourse' and 'identity'. In various early works Foucault foregrounds a constructionist notion of identity that explores how mental illness and criminality are historically contingent and changing concepts. It used to cordon off group of people in such a way that evolving economics and political interests are protected and advanced.

"Discourse" is Foucault's base matter for critical investigation. Discourse comprises language, images, unspoken beliefs and prejudices, laws and scientific concepts and all other means by which human values are communicated, 'naturalized' and reproduced.

In ways that broadly correspond to Lacan's notion of the 'symbolic', Foucault suggests that individual personhood/ subjectivity is created through an internalization of discursive categories and the interests and biases that they reflect. This is not to suggest that oppression, for example, is a simple unilateral or unilinear action, for one of Foucault's most important insights is that our internalization of social categories and expectations of 'proper' behavior make the intervention of authorities or repressive agencies (such as police) are relatively rare. We operate as disciplining agents on each other and ourselves through our expectations of normal behavior and our sometimes subtle, sometimes overt, communication of disapproval. A broad mechanism of social discipline is achieved in the modern era through the conformist impulses and self conception of well-socialized individuals.

Although, Foucault does not refer Nietzsche specifically in this instance, it is not difficult to see the traces of the earlier philosopher's categorization of the passive "herd" in some of Foucault's theories. But unlike Nietzsche, Foucault is not interested

in broadly disparaging conformists as much as he is in understanding the mechanisms by which conformity even among philosophers and other intellectuals is maintained.

Foucault's insights into the means by which new type of sexual normality became socially entrenched during the nineteenth century are particularly relevant to our discussion here. In this groundbreaking study, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault has examined the rise of sexual science during the Victorian era and its seemingly powerful prescriptions of normal and abnormal behaviors. But Foucault significantly revises earlier overviews of the era in several ways. First, he demonstrates just how vocal the supposedly 'prudish' Victorians were about sexuality.

Rather than nervously avoiding the subject, 19th century researchers, scientists, politicians writers etc. spoke about sexuality at historically unprecedented length and volume. The 'discourse' on and involving sexuality from child rearing manuals to psychological theories of deviance were incessant.

Thus, a model of 'repression' is wholly inadequate to describe a situation of insistent discussion of and new modes of identification through 'sexuality' in the post 100-150 years. Indeed, Foucault explores at length how certain sexual categories, especially 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' were ones that not only were oppressive towards nonconformists but also became new and empowering ways by which individuals identifies themselves.

This is why, Foucault became a central figure not only for queer academics but also queer activists in the late twentieth century. In this notion of the 'polyvalence of discourse', Foucault opened of the conceptualization of power from a simple model of oppressor and oppressed to a multidimensional investigation, reaction, metamorphosis and group empowerment over time that has complicated and enriched our understanding.

Thus, however, useful it might be to point out the homophobia of the turn of the century psychoanalytic community. Let us say it is also important to acknowledge how such vectors of oppressions became a rallying point for groups of individuals, who became self-aware and politicized through and in response to oppression. This is not to make an excuse for or otherwise dismiss discrimination of 'brutality' but it is to open for philosophical and historical consideration. The ways, notions of 'normality' and 'abnormality' create identity groups that find political voices of tactics through and over, the characteristics that are ascribed to them.

Another important contributor to the body of post-structuralist thought that helped to spur the generalization of 'queer' form of theory was Jacques Derrida. He revised structuralist insight into the binary construction of meaning- male/ female, heterosexual/ homosexual- to reveal how those binaries are always weighted toward the first term, which is held at greater social values, but which also always needs the second term to substantiate that value.

The binary heterosexual/ homosexual, while structuring our conceptions of human identity, obviously does not accord equal value to both identities, but as degraded or debased as that second term in the binary may be, it always marks the fragile boundaries of the first term. How can anyone think of him or herself a 'heterosexual' without the clear contrast provided by the images, traits and markers provided by social conceptions of the 'homosexual'. What we might broadly term the 'deconstruction' of this binary would therefore hinge on the investigation. They not only of their socially constructed nature, but also of the tenuousness of the means by which the supposedly secure and sanctified first term maintains its privilege. Derrida thus provided to queer theorists the singularly important recognition of sexual system and self-inflated in a way that masks a through instability, even though this

recognition does not deny such systems that are highly entrenched and difficult to overcome or even simply to revise.

Two further figures of special importance to the emergence of queer theory are Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Indeed, that drive to investigate the 'internal' as well as 'external' aspects of sexual life and identification is central to the work of Sedgwick. Her profound influence on the field actually dates from the mid-1980s, with the publication of her groundbreaking article "Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire." In it, Sedgwick explores how male psychosocial relations have through the centuries worked not only to control women but also increasingly to excise unacceptable manifestations of specifically homosexual desire from 'homosocial' male bondings and other relationships. In doing so, Sedgwick offers still important, historically nuanced readings of erotic triangles and shifting forms of anxiety in works by Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Dickens among others.

But Sedgwick's most important contribution to the burgeoning field of queer studies was her 1990s book *Epistemology of the Closet*. To frame theoretically her close reading of Melville, Wilde, James and Proust, she offers first an 'Axiomatic' introduction that makes a compelling case for the study of sexuality, specifically, in literature and culture. In her first chapter, she explores the shifting and uncertain ground of our knowledge of homosexuality. In distinguishing between 'minorizing' and 'universalizing' paradigms in the discussion of same-sex desire, she reveals the thoroughly confused nature of debates over whether 'homosexuality' is distinct to a small group of individuals or a characteristic fundamental to everyone's sexuality or sexual development.

The next figure of special importance to the emergence of queer theory is Judith Butler. How to disrupt it, how to change it/ with it being identity, sexual, gender are among the questions asked by Butler, whose investigations of the 'performance' of identity have been widely referenced in queer theorizations of the past decade and more. "Drag" and other disruptive performance of gender and sexual identity are important example for Butler. In a key essay, entitled "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" she argues that:

Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. [. . .] In this sense, the 'reality' of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations(21)

In this way, queer theory proposes a disruption of normative sexual identities and a conception of agency linked to the 'performance' which installs the identities. Butler's work is known above all for her association of the idea of 'performativity' with sexual or gendered identities.

Indeed, nineteenth-century sexologist began to construct elaborate theories detailing 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexualities, their manifestations, genesis and social consequences. As Jonathan Ned Katz points out in his essay "The Invention of Homosexuality":

In August, 1869, a German medical journal published an article by Dr. K.F.O. Westphal that first named an emotion he called "*Die contrare sexual empfindung*" (contrary sexual feeling). The emotion was "contrary" to the proper, procreative 'sexual feeling' of men and

women. Westphal's contrary feeling was the first, and became one of the best known contenders, in the late nineteenth century name that perversion contest. (54)

Other sexologist of the era began to work diligently to further refine sexual categories. Richard Von Kraft Ebing's *Encyclopedic Psychopathia Sexualis* from 1886 thoroughly pathologizes homosexuality, seeing it and a wide array of other 'perversions' not only as manifestations of individual illness but clear indicators of a degenerating society. What an individual did with her or his own genitalia and others body parts was thus ever more highly politicized and over-loaded with meaning. Anxieties over social dissolution, circulating because of wide array of economics, religious and political uncertainties, fixed on the figure of the sexual nonconformist. Having always been carried on in private, sexuality was secret that once fully revealed and properly controlled would secure us all.

Yet, as always, those expressions of explicit condemnation continued to breed resistance. Another early sexologist, Karl Ulrichs, devised an elaborate schema in his writings from the 1860s and 1870s to explain homosexuality as 'natural' partially through reference back to Plato. Ultimately, Ulrichs based his defense of homosexuality on the premise that same-sex desiring individuals had the soul of the other sex body trapped within them. Ulrich thereby meant to validate homosexuality as metaphysically determined, yet as Joseph Bristow has noted "this idea would have a lasting and damaging influence on 20th century prejudices against homosexuals. For it set the trend for imagining that lesbians and gay men were 'inverts' (*Sexuality* 21-22). 'Inverted' individuals were recognizable because they always demonstrated the gender characteristics of the sex of the soul within them; gay men were theorized as always effeminate and lesbian as always masculine.

This conflation and confusion of gender and sexuality gained further implicit support in Havelock Ellis's treatise *Sexual Inversion*, which described social prejudices against homosexuals but still used a model of easily recognizable 'normal' and 'abnormal' behavior that attempted only to replace vicious homophobia with something like pity for the invert. Such pathos resonated through literary characterizations even well into the twentieth century, with Radcliffe Hall's characterizations of miserable 'inverted' women in *The Well of Loneliness* standing as the starkest example.

Certainly Sartre and the existentialists were social constructionist in that they argued for human agency in all designations of right and wrong, higher and lower, and proper and improper. That Sartre's own less than radical gender politics may have failed to reflect fully the iconoclasm of his philosophical assertion. Serves as an important reminder to us about how rigorous we must be in allowing theory to disturb even our most cherished preconceptions.

Andre Gide, an existentialist who is certainly "queer" in sexuality as well as in philosophical bent. In books such as *The Immortalist* and *Corydon*, Gide explores a specifically sexual state of "freedom" even if, at times, his perceptions about acceptable "homosexual" acts seem rather limited. As Leo Bersani notes,

Gide thought of 'inverts' -grown men who like to be anally penetrated- as morally or intellectually deformed and it is one of the least attractive aspects of Gide's presumed defense of "homosexuality" in *Corydon* that the argument excludes what most of us would identify as homosexual desire. (12)

But certainly Gade pushed existential iconoclasm into the terrain of the sexual in ways that Sartre and Camus never did. He queerly delinks sexuality from a necessary basis in domestic or even affectional relationships.

Working from a different set of premises and methodologies, 'constructionists' look not to biology or the metaphysical realm but to language and belief systems as determinants of identity. Here, it is worth emphasizing that constructionists look always to historical context to see what categories and concepts were available at the time in question and how those may or may not have involved forms of self-awareness and identification on the basis of sexual desire or activity. A very strict constructionist would even reject the use of the adjective 'homosexual' to describe activities from centuries long past.

Obviously the explanation above is simplifications. Few literary or cultural evidences are so simple as to reference an enduring 'gay soul or 'gay brain' or to ignore wholly changing historical contexts. But certainly in the early years of lesbian and gay studies, essentializing moves were made that had an important political purpose to locate gays and lesbians throughout time with whom current readers and activists could identify and feel kinship. This was a necessary process of recovery. Same-sex desire, homoeroticism, and lesbian and gay-relevant themes and implications have long been ignored by historians, literary critics that book writers and anthologists. As an often viciously oppressed minority, lesbians and gays in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have desperately needed ways of affirming themselves in the face of condescension and scorn by psychologists' clergy and law-makers.

To locate and celebrate 'lesbians' and 'gays' throughout history is a powerful way of countering the decision and dismissal of a larger homophobic culture. It may

be anachronistic and simplistic from the standpoint of historically nuanced research to call Shakespeare 'gay' or Sappho a 'lesbian' but from the standpoint of identity - affirmation, it is fully understandable why a movement would want to make such claims and why readers and activists would find them so important and integral to their sense of self-worth. Theorist Diand Fuss makes an important point in essentially when she suggests that essentialism has been self-consciously deployed at times to meet communal and contextually understandable needs.

Gayle Rubin, in *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of Politics of Sexuality*, memorably differentiates radical sex study from feminism, arguing:

It is essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically to reflect more accurately their separate social existences. This goes against the grain of much contemporary feminist thought, which treats sexuality as a derivation of gender. For instance, lesbian feminist ideology has mostly analyzed the oppression of lesbians in terms of the oppression of women. (33)

Taking a strict constructionist approach, Rubin reminds us:

The realm of sexuality also has its own internal politics, inequalities, and mode of oppression. As with other aspect of human behavior, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. (11)

And Rubin here usefully, if implicitly, broadens the discussion of modes of oppression to the internal politics of queer communities as well as their external relationships to more obvious oppressory and institutions.

Chapter-III

Homosocial Politics in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* develops around a constellation of three characters- Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray- who challenge the Victorian standards of 'true male' identity. In the novel, the theme of homoerotic love is never stated explicitly, it has been presented in Basil's feeling for Dorian as well as other characters.

The research aims to show that without presence of explicit homo-social terminology or activity, a text can subvert the normative standards of male same-sex behaviours and that the textual depictions of male same-sex experience both reproduce and resist the dominate heterosexual ideologies and practice. The artist, Basil is completely captivated by the beautiful Dorian, whom he has known for two months and paints him in different guises, they secretly worship Dorian and later confess their adoration to him.

Basil is an artist who paints the picture of Dorian Gray. For Basil, Dorian appears as an 'ideal' as the motivation for "an entirely new manner in art, an entirely new mode of style" (20). Dorian's mere 'visible presence' enables Basil to represent emotions and feelings that he found inexpressible through traditional methods and themes:

I see things, I think of them differently. I can now recreate life in a way that can hiddenfr4om me before. A dream of form in days of thought who is it who says that? I forget; but it is what Dorian Gray has been to me. (13)

But what gives Basil's relation to Dorian this transformative power? In the opening chapter, in describing his friendships with Dorian to Lord Harry, Basil narrates the story of their first meeting:

I turned halfway round, and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met I felt I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating, that if I allowed it to do so it would absorb my whole nature my very art itself [...] something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I have a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. (10)

Dorian's personality enchants Basil and throws him back upon himself, evoking a physical response that is thus translated into a psychic, verbally encoded interpretation. In his deep inclination toward Gray, he himself forgets his real motive. He feels speechless. As an artist, Basil resolves this crisis by experimentally and aesthetically transforming his representation of this experience. His fascination with Dorian leads him to foreground their erotic connections as he explains, "Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me. We were quite close, almost touching. Our eyes met again" (10).

Such erotic feeling is unacceptable, and at the same time to legitimate it in the sublimated language of aesthetic ideas. "Dorian Gray is to me simply a motive in art" (14).

By dialectically transforming Lord Henry's verbal and Basil's visual representations, Dorian enters into the circuits of male desire through which these characters play out their sexual identities. He inspires both Basil and Lord Henry to

new heights of expression, but only by internalizing and modifying images through which the older men would have themselves seen. Thus the development of Dorian's perfect nature underscores the disjunction between male homoerotic experience and the historical means of expressing it, so that his strategic mediation between them enables desire to enter the novel explicitly. Lord Henry continues his moral panegyric, once again voicing the problem:

The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains than but the recollection of a pleasure, or luxury of regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows wick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. (21)

On the other hand, the tug of war between Lord Henry and Basil to win the Dorian's heart. Basil wants to keep Dorian around his sight. He does not want the separation between him and Dorian. Basil tries to keep Dorian from anyone's influence. His existence as an artist depends upon Dorian. In short, he wants Dorian possess with him which he reveals at the end of opening chapter with the conversation Lord Henry:

Dorian is my dearest friend", he said "he has a simple and beautiful nature" [. . .] Don't spoil hi. Don't try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. The world is wide, and has many marvelous people in it. Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possess; my life as an artist depends on him. (16-17)

Yet his plea merely confirms their competition for the same wonderfully handsome young man. Though the motives behind this competition are left unspoken, it unfolds during Dorians final setting for his portrait. Here in Basil's studio, the

conflict plays itself out as a seduction. Lord Henry woos Dorian away from the adoring gaze of the painter to awaken him to a new, symbolic order of desire, an order at the very heart of the narrative.

Responding to Dorian's complaint that Basil never speaks while painting, Basil allows Lord Henry to stay and entertain Dorian. While Basil puts the finishing touches on the canvas, Lord Henry charms Dorian with a discussion of morality:

The aim of life is self development. To realize one's nature perfectly that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self. Of course, they are charitable. They feed the hungry and clothe the beggar. But their own souls strave, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion. These are the two things that govern us.

(20)

As Lord Henry's words provide Dorian with new vistas on the moral prejudices of their era his "low musical voice" seduces the younger man who becomes transfixed: "a look had come into the lad's face [. . .] never seen before there" (21). Simultaneously, Basil inscribes this "look"- the object of both his artistic and erotic gaze- into the canvas thus doubly imbuing his aesthetic image with the representations of male homoerotic desire.

Dorian's personality and beauty have deep rooted impression on Basil. He is so impressed by Dorian, in a talk between Lord Henry and Basil, Henry clarifies that, what will be the relation between Basil and Dorian in the future. Henry mentions that in future Dorian will abandon Basil. Basil will be the valueless thing for Dorian. In

the struggle for existence a person can not care about others existence; it is modern trend of men. Same will happen between Basil and Dorian. Dorian will be perfectly indifference to Basil. He adds that Basil deep faith to Dorian is quite a romance, a romance of art only. But Basil responds Henry "As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me" (15).

The emotional intensity with which Basil's passion for Dorian belies the Platonic invocation of "the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal" since this verbal interpretation merely echoes the available public forms of expression. That displaces Basil's physical domination onto a freedom indicates that there is no public validated visible reality to express male homoerotic desire. But because painting can only occur in the nonlinear, and hence extra linguistic, space where Basil synthesizes the visual elements of his emotional and aesthetic inspiration, this visual and its verbal analogue are necessarily disjunct. Thus, although Basil's painting is entirely exterior to the text, it provides the reference point for a mode of representations that admits the visible, erotic presence of male body.

This symbolic displacement of the erotic onto the aesthetic is reiterated by the absence presence of the picture within the novel. While homoerotic desire must be muted in a literary text that overtly conforms to dominant codes for writing. Which have historically excluded the same sex desire as unrespectable- it is nevertheless metonymically suggested by a verbally unpreventable medium. The painting, whose linguistic incommensurability deconstructs the apparent self-sufficiency of these representational codes.

Since the portrait stands outside the text and evokes an eroticized tableau transgressing the limits of verbal representation, it establishes a gap whereby universalized meaning can enter the text. In particular, its visual eroticism suffuses the

dynamic between Dorian and Basil, thereby foregrounding male body as the source of both aesthetic and erotic pleasure:

[. . .]"Harry, I want to finish this picture to-day. Would you think it awfully rude of me if I asked you to go away?" [. . .] "Basil", cried Dorian Gray, "if Lord Henry Wotton goes, I shall go, too. you never open your lips while your painting, and it is horribly dull standing on a platform and trying to look pleasant. Ask him to stay, I insist upon it."
(19-20)

The portrait provides the space within which, in contemporary psychoanalytic terminology, the phallic activity of "the gaze" encroaches on the dominant linguistic unrepresentability of male same sex eroticism. Thus, the picture's absent presence which motivates the narrative development intrrupts the novel's overt representational limits by introducing a visual, extraverbal component of male same-sex desire.

The Picture of Dorian Gray defines painting as an active expression of personal meanings. Basil's secret infuses Dorian's picture with a vitality and passion that fundamentally change its "mode of style". Yet this secret does not lie in the work of art but rather grows out of Basil's emotional and erotic involvement with Dorian Gray, thereby establishing a new relation between the artist and his object. As Basil eventually explains to Dorian:

[. . .] from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I

wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you.

When you are away from me, you were still present in my art [. . .] (109)

Basil makes a good contrast to Lord Henry in terms of character as well as in his relationship with Dorian. However, they share the same devotion, namely to Dorian's accelerated development; in Basil's case, through showing him his mirror image through the picture. They both help to trigger within Dorian his own infinite curiosity about life and desire to own eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle the secret', 'wild joys' and wilder sins. Furthermore, Dorian's picture and Basil seem to have a relationship not unlike the one between Dorian and Lord Henry in terms that both? Dorian's picture and Dorian outgrow the very person that has put his soul into each of them to a great extent, although the reactions of Basil and Lord Henry are contrastive, Lord Henry finds pleasure in tracing his soul in Dorian, whilst Basil is embraced to see his own in his portrait. At the end of chapter nine, where Basil confesses to Dorian his secret about how much personal worship he expressed in the portrait:

As he left the room, Dorian Gray smiled to himself. Poor Basil! [. . .]

How much that stranger confession explained to him! The painter's absurd fits of jealousy, his wild devotion, his extravagant panegyrics, his curious reticence- he understood them all now, and he felt sorry.

There seemed to him to be something tragic in a friendship so colored by romance. (112)

Toward the end of the second chapter, Lord Henry proposes to Dorian and Basil that they go to the theatre together. Dorian accepts the offer willingly, quite contrary to Basil, who declines and begs Dorian not to accompany Lord Henry:

"Don't go to the theatre to night, Dorian" said Hallward. "Stop and dine with me"

"I can't, Basil", [. . .] "I beg you not to go". [. . .] As the door closed behind them, the painter flung himself down on a sofa, and look of pain came into his face. (32)

The painter, Basil tries to protect Dorian Gray, his model and source of inspiration, from Lord Henry's very bad influence; and he begs the latter, not to spoil his young friend. In the same way, Basil is shocked by Dorian's callous demeanor after Sibyl Vane's death. His is the voice of conscience that speaks to Dorian when the young man is intent on ignoring his own conscience.

In the first and second chapters of the picture of Dorian Gray, especially, construct Dorian's erotic 'character'. We get to watch a pretty boy become a beautiful image, than watch again while the same boy identifies with that mimetic image, assimilating it as the template according to which he will thereafter fashion himself so extravagantly, and with such ugly results. "It had taught him to love his own beauty" (54). In effect, Dorian props his emergent identity upon an erotic identification with Basil's just completed painting, he does so first in response to Lord Henry's tease-and-taunt that the portrait is "the real Dorian Gray":

"Is it the real Dorian?" Cry the original of the portrait, strolling across to him

[Basil]. "Am I really like that",

"Yes, you are just like that".

"How wonderful, Basil!" (31)

Oscillating uncertainly between similarly (like that) and identity (the real Dorian) the "original of the portrait" is reduced into secular identification with an

erotically charged image of himself; the portrait supplies the very prototype of the being Dorian will work to become, a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And soon he prays impiously for a substitution of identities: "If it was I who was to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this-for this- I would give everything "(28).

Dorian becomes the eponymous character, that is, Dorian 'himself' comes to embody the picture of Dorian Gray. This Dorian constitutes not only the narrative's definite sexual object (everybody wants him), but also its definitively perverse sexual subject: the one who extends his desire toward external object only so he may then watch it coil back upon the image he loves to watch watching him. For Dorian, object-cathexis themselves sponsor the multiple mirror relations that constitute Dorian's only lasting passion.

Specially in chapter two it radically complicates this cross-identification of a person and picture by insisting that the completed portrait represents more than a homoerotic sublimation derived from Dorian's heart-stopping beauty and Basil's hopeless desire. While narrating Dorian's final sitting before Basil, Wilde carefully traces a complicated audiovisual interchange among men and then maps its effects upon the painting as it is completed. During this interchange Dorian literally incorporates the desire of both Basil and Lord Henry for the unspoiled youth whom Dorian himself is about to dismiss with an impious prayer. Yet these desires are deeply problematic, not simply because they mark as same sex desires: Basil's by an idealizing Platonism that disdains the call of the flesh and calls instead for its sublimation into art, thought, and prayer, Lord Henry's by a counterpoised "new hedonism (25), that repudiates this platonic disdain and promises instead a reascent being in-the-flesh, one that refuses all limitation as it seeks "to give form to every feeling,

expression to every thought, reality to every dream" (185). Together, these two extremes, each the other's palpable obverse, define the homosexual possibility in Dorian Gray as an inescapable double bind: excessive resistant on the one hand, unrestrained license on the other. Once Dorian's person is inserted into his double bind the vertices of the fatal tangle are in place.

The audiovisual homosex circulating within this triangular exchange bypasses women entirely; its three vertices are occupied by men. Heterosex simply has no time or place during the two chapters. For brevity's sake, the erotic circulation that the portrait comes to materialize may be delineated in a single lumbering sentence as follows: while Dorian stands before Basil to painted in their final session together, Lord Henry whispers bitter sweet paterian nothings, "those subtle poisonous theories" (54), into the boy's ripening ear, as Dorian assimilates Lord Henry's bewildering influence he alters in both body and pose- his eyes brighten and his mouth opens slightly, while, Basil, deep in his work grows dimly conscious only that a look had come into the lad's face that he had never seen before" (21), so moved is Basil by Dorian's somatic alteration, that he captures the perfect movement with his last daubs of paint:

You were perfectly still. And I have caught the effect I wanted, — the half parted lips, and the bright look in his eyes. I don't know what Harry has been saying to you, but he has certainly made you have most wonderful expression. (22)

Basil's curious phrasing underscores the psychosomatic power of Lord Henry's speech, its wonderful influence, all the more enhanced by its own inclusion of a patient warning against itself: "There is no such things as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral" (20). Lord Henry's flux of language suffuses Dorian's ear

only to transform his mind and visage, where Basil's eye catches the crucial effect and passes it on to his painter's hand. At the moment of its completion, then, the portrait steps forth as the material formalization, the visual precipitate, of the complex erotic interfluence, the circulation of audiovisual flows.

The famous reversal between the character and his portrait first appears to stem from the failure of the novel's only explicitly heterosexual element. By introducing the feminine into a world that systematically denies it, Dorian's attraction to the young actress Sibyl Vane seems to violate the male-identified world in which Basil and Lord Henry have 'revealed' (Dorian) to himself. Yet, Sibyl's presence can never actually disturb the novel's male logic, for her appearance merely shows how much an overtly heterosexual discourse depends on male defined representations of female experience. For Dorian, Sibyl exists only in the drama. Offstage, he imbues her with an aesthetic excess, so that her reality never pierces his fantasy. His remarks to Lord Henry demonstrate that Dorian's passion is the passion of the voyeur, whose desiring gaze distance the viewer from the possibility of physical consummation:

"Tonight she is Imogene", he answered. "and tomorrow night she will be Juliet".

"When is she Sibyl Vane?"

"Never".

"I congratulate you".

When Dorian impassions Sibyl with a single kiss (the only physical expression that evades his aesthetic voyeurism), her own real passion renders her incapable of making a male defined representation of female passion 'real'. Thus, she fails to achieve the aesthetic standard he expects of her in the role of Juliet, and Dorian unable to sustain his heterosexual fantasy-abandons her.

Likewise, Lord Henry reveals the news about Dorian's engagement with Sibyl in chapter six. Basil responds as:

Hallward started and then frowned.

Dorian engaged to be married!" he

Cried. "Impossible"

"It is perfectly true".

"To whome?"

"I can't believe it. Dorian is far too sensible." (70)

Basil's response was just like a woman whose husband is engaged with next woman. But, Basil changes his responses in accepted form and says: I hoped the girl is good [. . .] I don't want to see Dorian tied some vile creature, who might degrade his nature and ruin his intellect (71). Such feeling of Basil clarifies his homoerotic motives.

Within these representations Dorian comes to view his body as distinct from his soul and misrecognizes the certainty of his aging and death. Splitting his self image into two, Basil's visual representation and Lord Henry verbal portrait, Dorian internalizes an identity that excites his body only to make it vulnerable to the passage of time. The transiency of this new self-recognition manifests itself as physical experience. As he thought of it (his body's aging) a sharp pang of pain struck through him like a knife and made each delicate fiber of his nature quiver (27). To avoid aging, Dorian inverts the imaginary and the real, and thus conceptualizes the painful disjunction between the image of his body and his body itself as a form of jealousy:

How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older

than this particular day of June [. . .] if it were only the other.

(28)

Dorian states his soul for the preservation of his physical beauty, of his body image, and Wilde makes the motive for this wager clear: Dorian fears that time will rob him of the youth that makes him the object of male desire:

Yes, he continued (to Basil) "I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has fought me that. (28)

In portraying Dorian's self-perception as a function of Basil's erotic and aesthetic appreciation, Wilde fuses the artifacts of homoerotic desire and the representations that Dorian uses to constitute his identity. The classical images of male beauty and eroticism make Dorian jealous because he fails to understand that the body can have simultaneous aesthetic and erotic appeal. His focus on visual and sexual desirability emphasizes the importance that culturally produced representations have in the construction of male identity.

In describing Dorian's identity as a product of aesthetic and erotic images, Wilde locates "the problem" of male homoerotic desire on the terrain of representation itself. Since his character encounters one another at the limits of heterosexual forms, they produce multiple positioning for articulating different desires, evoking possibilities for male same-sex eroticism without explicitly voicing them. Instead, Wilde posits may uncovered secrets (Basil's 'secret', 'Dorian's secret', Lord Henry's continual relation of the 'secret of life' even the absent portrait itself), thereby creating a logic of displacement that culminates in Dorian's prayer for eternal

youth. Yet, initiating all further narratives development, the prayer is marked only by a caesura that transforms the relation between representation and desire.

In a moment of textual silence, Dorian misperceiving the true object of Basil's feeling defends his idealized self-image by invoking the magical aspects of utterance. To maintain his identity as the object of another man's desire, he prays to exchange the temporality of his existence for the stasis of an erotically charged visual representation. In as much as Basil's secret- his worship with far more romance than a man usually gives a friend radiates from the canvas reflecting its subject's beauty, Dorian's profession, "I am in love with it, Basil. It is a part of myself. I feel that" (29), underscores the degree to which his male self-image reverberates with the passion of same-sex desire.

Despite the fact that the painting represents Dorian, Basil claims that "there is too much of myself in the thing" (16). Basil paints himself into another's image. As he explains to Dorian, the picture is an expression of his own aesthetic vision rather than an attempt to render his friends' personality: "you became to me that visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream" (19). In his capacity as Basil's muse, Dorian is merely a sign for the painter's own dreams and desires. "He is never more present in my work than when no image of him is there", says Basil to Lord Henry (14).

Basil himself is perfectly aware of the distinction between Dorian-in the painting and Dorian-in-the-flesh. When Dorian abandons his friend for the more fascinating company of Lord Henry, lucky Basil, still in the possession of the picture, declares he is staying with the "real dorian". But twenty years later, when Dorian shows him the corrupted portrait, Basil unhesitatingly chooses the man over the image and offers to destroy his creation. And it is his desire for the man that prevents his

own complete identification with the portrait. Desire drives a wedge between the self of the artist and the erotic other whose image both is and is not that of its creator.

Since he is able to dissociate himself from the painting through his love for its model.

Lord Henry's stake in the picture is equally circumscribed by desire. He views it as a fetish or a token of sexual possession. He is as curious about the hidden painting as he is about Dorian's hidden life, which mirrors his own. All three characters are homosexual in a sense.

Dorian bagging by emulating Lord Henry but soon outstrips his mentor, who can only watch enviously as his erst-while disciple gets away with scandal and eventually murder. Lord Henry's bid for the picture is limited to a game of erotic communication, which finds shelter in the object d' art without fear of the police. But Lord Henry, the painting's only audience, can never completely identify with the image of the man who initially attracts him precisely because of their difference, the difference between an older, cynical wit and a lovely and naive young boy. He alone emerges from the involvement with the picture emotionally marked but physically unscathed, as the reader may emerge from an encounter with a gripping text that ultimately fails to impinge upon real life

Of the three, Dorian is the one whose investment in the picture is absolute, recognizing no insurmountable boundary between imagination and reality, desire and identify, self and the other. Both Basil and Henry went to have the picture, Dorian wants to be the picture. The reason for this desire strong enough to bend reality is that Dorian sees in the painting his own ideal self: an image of prince of Charming, a fairy-tale character impervious to change, mutability, aging and death.

Not sophisticated enough to grasp Basil's aesthetic message, Dorian 'reads' the picture naively as a representation of the man he wants to be. And equally naively, he

strives to become this man, not realizing that in the process he ceases being a man at all. His search for identity has led him to misperceive the real nature of art, which is based on an artist balancing and between the artist, the subject, and the audience; further, it has led him to misperceive the real nature of individuality, which is based on the interaction between contradictory and contingent drives and desires.

In the last stages of his existence, Dorian hates both what he was and what he has become. Carving reality, he learns to despise the emptiness of his ideal life "why had such a soul been given to him?" (94). At the same time, he abhors his decaying portrait, which pitilessly shows him the way of all flesh. Both hatreds converge in his murder of Basil. Dorian kills both Basil, the painter and Basil the man. Blaming Basil for seducing him with the ideal self of the painting. By killing Basil, Dorian punishes his artistic seducer. Thus, Basil as well as other characters like Dorian and Henry possess homoerotic desire in different forms. Dorian Gray to some extent born of the conjunction between Basil's visual embodiment of his erotic desire for Dorian Lord Henry's verbal sublimation of such desire.

Chapter-IV

Conclusion

The Picture of Dorian Gray narrates the development of male identity within a milieu that actively subverts the traditional representations of appropriate male behavior. While it portrays a sphere of art and leisure in which male friendships assume primary emotional importance and in which traditional male values (industry, earnestness, morality) are abjured in favor of the aesthetic, it makes no explicit disjunction between these two models of masculinity; rather, it formally opposes an aesthetic representation of the male body and the material emotional, sexual male body itself. In other words, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* juxtaposes an aesthetic ideology with an eroticized milieu that inscribes the male body within circuits of male desire.

To the extent that Wilde communicates the experience of homoerotic desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It focuses on the innocent Dorian's awakening, under twin influences of Basil's homoerotic painting and Lord Henry's subversive philosophy. Basil effectively translates his sexually charged desire for Dorian into disciplined artistic production. He paints the picture of Dorian Gray. He is completely captivated by the beautiful Dorian; whom he has known for two months, and paints him in many different guises. He secretly worships Dorian. He believes that Dorian has inspired him to create the best work of his life. Through Dorian he has discovered a new style of painting and hopes it will be the beginning a new school that will combine the of the Greek and Romantic spirit, presenting a harmony of spirit and passion, soul and body.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the meditations are necessarily more complex. It doubly displaces male homoerotic desire, thematizing it through the aesthetic

production of a medium that the novel cannot represent Basil's portrait of Dorian can embody his desire for the eponymous character, and yet male homoerotic passion remains, in the dominant representational codes.

In the novel Wilde problematizes representation per se to make athwart the historical limitations that define male homosexuality as 'unnamable' thereby creating one of the most lasting icons of male homoerotic desire. Instead of seeing it a literary work as ideological reflections of an already existing reality, we must consider its elements in the production of this reality. In analyzing the textual strategies through this novel puts male desire for other men into discourse. Some of the historical forms that such relations between men took and thereby begin to suggest others that they can take.

In short, Lord Henry's verbal and Basil's visual representations, Dorian enters into the circuits of male desire through which characters play out their sexual identities. He inspires both Basil and Henry to new heights of expression. Thus, the development of Dorian's 'perfect nature' underscores the disjunction between male homoerotic experience and the historical means of expressing it.

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