

Gender and Sexuality in The Picture of Dorian Gray and Dorian Gray



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Abstract

In this thesis the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde, and the film *Dorian Gray* (2009), directed by Oliver Parker, are analysed. This thesis aims to provide an answer to the question on how the story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has changed through the influence of the pornification of the media on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* in terms of sexuality and gender. Through the analysis of characters, events, and literary and cinematographic techniques from a gender and sexuality point of view, it has become evident that although *The Picture of Dorian Gray* adheres to Victorian gender roles and ideas on sexuality, the pornification of the media has made it possible to highlight the sexual subtext of the novel in the film. Moreover, conventions in gender are broken in *Dorian Gray*, which has led to empowered women and more feminine men. Additionally, the switching gazes and the more identifiable characters in the film have resulted in a more enjoyable story for contemporary audience, compared to the story in the novel.

Key words: *Dorian Gray* (2009), femininity, gaze, gender, masculinity, sexuality, sin, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Victorian

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Introduction

When Oscar Wilde first published *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a short story in 1890, his Victorian readers were shocked by the hedonistic lifestyle of Dorian Gray and the homosexual subtext of the text (Mason 75-7). When the story was turned into a novel, Wilde added a preface in which he stated that art had no moral responsibility, which sparked even more controversy. The novel tells the story of the young and beautiful Dorian Gray, who is unmarked by age and excess. Meanwhile, his portrait, which is hidden from view, registers every detail of his debauched life. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a visualisation of the pleasures and dangers of a hedonistic lifestyle.

In 2009 Oliver Parker directed the film *Dorian Gray*, starring Ben Barnes as Dorian Gray and Colin Firth as Lord Henry Wotton. This modern film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is “[r]ated R for sexual content including nudity, violence and some drug use” (“Dorian Gray (2009)”). Between the Victorian times and 2014, ideas on sexuality and gender have changed immensely. While the Victorians were greatly outraged when a novel had an immoral subtext, nowadays not that many people are shocked when seeing graphic scenes in mainstream media,

Oscar Wilde lived and published his work in the late-Victorian Era. The Victorians are known for their oppressive moral codes, and during that time sex and anything that brought sex to mind was strictly taboo (Muldoon x). Furthermore, gender roles were strictly regulated as well. In Victorian society, men and women lived in separate spheres. Men had close friendships and did not spend much time with women. This way of social life in combination with traditional gender roles led to sexual policing and paranoia. In 1885, ‘gross indecency’, the unspeakable sin of male sodomy, became punishable by law (Salamensky 581).

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the homosexual subtext is unmistakable. Lord Henry has a wife; however, he spends all his time with Dorian, mentoring him. Basil’s adoration of Dorian can be interpreted as homoerotic and Dorian himself is said to have ruined several young men. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was even offered as evidence of Wilde’s homosexuality in his trials. In 1891 Oscar Wilde met the twenty-year-old handsome Lord Alfred “Bosie” Douglas, with whom he began an affair. Their relationship infuriated Bosie’s father, and after provocation, Wilde sued him for libel. Wilde lost, and Bosie’s father retaliated by starting a trial against Wilde for homosexuality. After two trials, Wilde was bankrupt and had to go to prison for two years (Salamensky 576). Because of this, numerous articles and books written about *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, such as Ellmann, Kaufman, and

Sinfield deal with how Wilde's sexual preferences are incorporated in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The Picture of Dorian Gray has been adapted numerous times, the first film adaptation being released as early as 1913 ("The Picture of Dorian Gray (1913)"). Other adaptations include plays, songs and even episodes of television series. As Asheim argues, the main influence on a book to film adaptation is the audience, and producers should adapt the story in such a way that their audience will appreciate it (334). An important factor in this is that a film should have an escaping function for the audience, but just as important is the sensationalism of the film. A film usually does this through highlighting the action-filled series of incidents instead of basing the film on the long parts of dialogue that are often the most important aspect in a novel (Asheim 336). Parker's 2009 film adaptation *Dorian Gray* does this as well. The many sex scenes and violent incidents that are shown in the film keep the audience entertained, while in the novel these matters are implicit.

The incorporation of sex scenes instead of other scenes to amuse the audience is a result of the pornification of the media. The idea of 'pornification', a term coined by Brian McNair in 1996, is also known as 'pornographication' or 'sexualisation' and illustrates how pornography infiltrates and proliferates through our media (Attwood, "Sexed up" 83). The process of pornification is evident in both art and popular culture where the images of pornography have become mainstream. This process also includes a more widespread fascination with sex and sexual explicitness in print and broadcast media. In our culture, sex is becoming more and more visible as sexual representations, products and services are becoming widely accessible to a greater group of consumers. Moreover, new communication technologies are developed to support, replace or reconfigure sexual encounters, and have become an increasing part of everyday life (McNair 61).

The 2009 film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has tried to stay close the novel, but also has been updated to entertain the modern audience. These updates have led to changes in the story, which will be analysed in this thesis on the basis of the following research question:

How has the story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* changed through the influence of the pornification of the media on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* in terms of sexuality and gender?

In order to answer the research question, this thesis is divided in three chapters. The first chapter will focus on the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and how Victorian gender roles and ideas of sexuality are incorporated in the novel. The second chapter will analyse the film adaptation *Dorian Gray*, and will describe how notions of sexuality and gender have changed when the book was adapted to film. The main focus is on how implicit or explicit sexuality is in the film and how this has changed from the novel, and how the gender roles in the story have changed from novel to film. Finally, the final chapter will be the conclusion in which the answers to all the subquestions will be combined, and in which the research question will be answered.

As Wilde states at the very beginning of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “[t]he artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim” (Wilde 3). Following Wilde’s ideas, the focus of this thesis is on the story and characters in *The Picture*, and not on the author. Much research has been done on the sexuality of Oscar Wilde, and on if, and how, homosexuality is depicted in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Although homosexuality will be mentioned, this will be of secondary importance. This thesis will focus on gender and sexuality in the novel, both throughout the story and through different characters, which has not been researched before. The film adaptation *Dorian Gray* has not been part of academic research before, and research on the change of gender and sexuality between *The Picture* and other adaptations unknown as well.

Theoretic framework

This thesis draws on theory from adaptation studies, gender studies, and media studies and therefore a basic framework from these fields of study is essential in understanding the following chapters.

The idea of using a novel as a source for a film came into existence at the very beginning of cinema. Filmmakers’ reasons for this continuing phenomenon are both commercialism and the respect for literary works. When a novel is popular, there is a fair chance the film version will be lucrative as well. Audiences want to see what the novel ‘looks like’, because they are interested if it compares to their mental images of the world of the novel and its people. However, the reader will not always see ‘his’ film, as the actual film is the fantasy of the producers. Most adaptations are disappointing; nonetheless people still want to see film adaptations (McFarlane 7).

Discussions of adaptations, whether they are reviews or academic essays, are haunted by the fidelity issue. Fidelity criticism is founded in the reader’s idea that there is only one

correct meaning, which the filmmaker either adhered to or violated in some sense (McFarlane 8). There is a distinction between adaptations that are faithful to the letter, and adaptations that capture only the essence of the work. According to Geoffrey Wagner, there are three possible categories of adaptation; namely a transposition, a commentary, and an analogy, and the critic should be aware on which kind he is commenting (McFarlane 11). Parker's *Dorian Gray* is a commentary, as the film is not the most faithful adaptation of the book, but the main story is the same. The story is updated through the invention of a new character, Emily Wotton, which gives a new dimension to the film. Also, as said before, the numerous sex scenes and other sinful scenes are not in the original novel either.

These alterations in the film version have influenced the themes of gender and sexuality in the story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When exploring gender, there is a binary division of people into male and female. This categorisation becomes fundamental to people's identity and carries associated expected patterns of behaviour with it. This division leads to a distinction between masculinity and femininity, and is a phenomenon that has bodily, physiological and behavioural features (Alsop 13-4). Gender is a social construct, out of which follows that every time and place has different gender roles. Therefore the definitions of masculinity and femininity are always changing and bound to the time and place they are used in. The gender roles in the late Victorian era and modern times are important in this thesis, as they influence the writing of the novel and the making of the film adaptation. These gender roles will be explained in the chapters dealing with the novel and the film.

Gender studies and media studies coincide on some facets, especially on the topic of pornification of the media. The process of pornification is widely researched and has come under scrutiny because of the way a dislocation in the construction of sexual meaning might be revealed, and the potential harm pornification has to sexual regulation and to society (Attwood, "Sexed Up" 83). For young people, their image and expectations of love and sex might be distorted by what they see in pornography, and pornography might advocate unsafe sex. Moreover, through the pornification of media, the pornographic images of, for example, children have also become widespread. However, the most criticised aspect of the pornification is the feminist issue (Sturken and Cartwright 126). In the past, sexualised representations of women presented women as passive, mute objects, who were looked upon by a male gaze (Gill 148). Females were objectified, and were only on screen so that men had something entertaining to look at. The male gaze means that the viewer is forced to look at an image from a male point of view (Sturken and Cartwright 130). Much criticism on

advertisements, music videos, and television series such as HBO's *Game of Thrones* is grounded in this feminist debate.

However, according to Gill, the sexual representations of women changed in the past couple of years, because today women are presented as "active, desiring, sexual subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their interests" (148). Nowadays, women exploit their sexuality in images to show their liberation. Also, Gill argues, "one of the most significant changes in visual culture in the last two decades has been the proliferation of representation of the male body" (143). Earlier, women's bodies were dominant in the advertising landscape, but now male bodies are shown on billboards, magazines and cinema screens as well. Not just more images of men are circulating, but a specific kind of the male body has emerged. It is the idealised and eroticised body of a toned, young man. This representation is striking, because it shows that there is permission to look at men's bodies and desire them (Gill 143). This shows that nowadays, not only the female body is objectified, but the male body as well.

Even so, images of men and women are not equal. The last ten years saw an increase of lesbian couples on screen. These lesbian women seldom appear on mainstream images except in a highly eroticised manner, while gay men are rarely portrayed kissing or even touching (Gill 152). Moreover, showing breasts on screen has almost become mainstream, while images of penises are virtually absent.

Conclusion

This thesis will try to answer the research question on how the story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has changed through the influence of the pornification of the media on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* in terms of sexuality and gender. Theory from gender studies, adaptation studies and media studies will be used to analyse how Victorian gender roles and ideas of sexuality are incorporated in the novel, and how these concepts have changed between novel and film, and if this has altered the original story or not. Most probably, the addition of sex scenes, a result of the pornification of the media, and the invention of the new character Emily Wotton, a result of changed gender roles, will have the most influence on the story. By looking at the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the film *Dorian Gray* from this point of view, it is possible to gain new insights on the original novel, but also about the timelessness of the story, and about contemporary issues such as gender and sexuality.

Chapter I, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Although Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the first influential feminist text, was written in 1792, the woman question was not widely discussed until the 1850s, and only after that gender roles came into consideration (Parker 2). Campaigners for women's rights in the Victorian period focused mainly on practical issues such as the legal status of women, education, and the vote. However, the broader philosophical issues were discussed as well, mainly in relation to education. Especially the topic of education led to discussions about gender, as it raised questions about what exactly women were capable of, if educated properly (Parker 2). The Victorian period is extremely interesting in terms of gender and sexuality, as it is full of contradictions. Examples include Victorian morality being famous for the values of sexual constraint and the strict social code of conduct, but the Victorian period also marks the beginnings of feminism and produced a huge amount of erotica (Cocks 14).

In order to compare the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the film *Dorian Gray* in terms of gender and sexuality, it is essential to have some basic knowledge of the workings of these themes in Victorian society. Therefore, this first chapter will discuss Victorian ideas about gender and sexuality and link them to the characters and events in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It is important to know how the characters are gendered in the novel, and how they think about gender and sexuality themselves, in order to be able to see how this is reflected in the modern adaptation.

Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Society

In the Victorian era, the Evangelical belief that men and women were different in nature, and had complementary roles, was common sense to the middle class (Parker 5). According to Martin Danahay, the Victorian period showed a most extreme form of gender segregation, with strict separate spheres for men and women (2). This gender segregation was reinforced through images and texts that implicitly and explicitly stated that work was manly, and therefore not appropriate for women. The dominant public sphere of work was reserved for men only, and strictly separated from the private, feminine sphere of the household (Danahay 2). This was a result of the campaign of male unionists who started arguing for the restriction of women's hours and jobs in the 1840s. The campaign lasted and by the 1880s work was seen as appropriate solely for men, and therefore it restricted the possibilities of women's employment (Danahay 7).

W.E.H. Lecky and John Stuart Mill both published influential works on the women question in 1869 (Parker 4). Although Lecky was a historian, and Mill a philosopher, they both saw the origin of the Victorian gender roles, and the subjection of women, as a result of man's physical strength which was needed in the barbarian world, and the value of women in that context, who were "the ministers of passion" to the men (Lecky qtd. in Parker 5). Lecky also argued that women were the slaves of men, as "her life is one of continual, abject, and unrequited toil", and "she is exposed to all the violent revulsions of feelings that follow, among rude men, the gratification of animal passion" (qtd. in Parker 5). Mill took these explanations to demonstrate his argument that existing laws, institutions and attitudes related to the position of women were founded in a time where people only recognised the brute forces of nature, and therefore these ideas were not applicable to the modern world (Parker 5). Even so, most other contemporary works on the position of women held entirely different opinions. For example, an anonymous reviewer of *The Times* stated that "the most interesting side of a woman's character is her relation to the other sex, and the errors of women that are most interesting spring out of this relation" (qtd. in Parker 6). This shows that women were looked upon as 'the sex', which stressed that they were only identifiable by their natural biological functions and that their character was dominated by traditional gender roles (Parker 6).

Martin Danahay and Max Weber have researched male Victorian identity, and both argue that this identity was modelled on the Protestant work ethic (Danahay 7; Weber 139). According to John Calvin's teaching, God's will constrained all people, especially men, to labour, and thrift and sobriety were necessary for salvation (Weber 139). In the Victorian period, these ideals were translated to self-discipline, self-denial, and hard work, and people who were unable or unwilling to work were seen as morally and socially sinning (Danahay 7). Moreover, 'idleness' was seen as inviting the influence of Satan and the flesh (Weber 157), and therefore, work was seen as "an antidote for temptation" to men (Danahay 7). Idleness would lead to sin, and sin could only be repudiated through self-discipline and hard physical work. However, work was viewed as having the opposite effect on women, and led to a release of a dangerous sexuality for women (Danahay 7). According to Thompson, serious work, but also serious writing and education, "was regarded as a masculine activity that threatened to divert women's energy from their reproductive organs to their brains" (qtd. in Danahay 7). This might sound like a paradox, but in the Victorian period, sexuality was something else than reproduction. Reproduction was the women's duty, as work was the men's (Danahay 8). According to the stereotype of the repressed Victorian woman, which was

adopted by scholars in the 1960s, “the Victorians denied that women possess sexual feelings; they sought to purge sex of its sensual aspects and restrict its role to a procreative one; Victorian marriage was described as characteristically cold as the relations between husband and wife were emotionally distant and formal” (Seidman 47). As stereotypes go, these characteristics are founded in truth, as contemporary writings show. Dio Lewis argues that “women’s pivotal passion is the maternal. Man’s pivotal passion is the sexual” (117), and William Acton states that although “the majority of women are not very troubled with sexual feelings of any kind”, female sexual feelings are “very moderate compared to that of the male” and motivated by “the desire for maternity” (119). So although women were thought to be less sexual than men, they did possess sexual feelings, but only for reproduction, and thus their desire was linked, and focused, to love and intimacy (Seidman 48). This argument can be turned around as well, because as anticonception was not available yet, women deliberately refrained from sexual contact to not become pregnant.

John Tosh argues that Victorian gender ideology was full of contradictions and paradoxes (48), and an example of this is that the Victorian ideal of the hard-working masculine man leads to a problem for Victorian intellectuals. Intellectual labour was not immediately obvious as being masculine, and therefore intellectuals had difficulty representing their work as manly (Danahay 14). For example, a writer’s hands are soft just like a woman’s, and not rough, dirty and calloused like a manual labourer. The Victorian division of the public and private spheres was the source of the problem for intellectuals, as their work was often situated in the domestic sphere (Danahay 15). Yet, these men were higher class and educated, and saw that their activities, such as writing, painting, balancing the family accounts and managing servants, were at some level ‘work’ as well. They recognised that for them the boundaries between work and domestic labour were blurred and unstable, and this was socially accepted (Danahay 15).

The examples above all show the clear distinction between the male and female sphere, and the gender roles associated with these spheres. While work was seen as a sin for women, it was a way to salvation for men. While women’s sexuality was denied, and their only passions linked to maternal instinct, men were full of desire, and not reprimanded when visiting prostitutes to fulfil their needs.

Gender in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

In this section the gender roles in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* will be analysed by close reading the novel alongside the description of Victorian gender roles mentioned above.

First of all, when reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in a gender studies mindset, the absence of women is striking. The novel is focalised from a male perspective, the focalisers being most often Dorian, Henry and Basil, and Sibyl Vane only once. Women are rarely mentioned or spoken about in the novel. The only female character of importance to the story is Sibyl Vane, Dorian's first love. Other female characters include family members of the male main characters, such as Lady Agatha, Lord Henry's aunt, and Victoria Wotton, his wife. These women do not have much to say, but the men talk about them. The content of these remarks is even more significant, as they are all negative and downgrading. The first time a woman is mentioned in the novel, Basil describes Lady Brandon as having a "curiously shrill voice" to which Lord Henry replies that "she is a peacock in everything except beauty" (Wilde 11). Other characteristics of Lady Brandon, according to Basil and Henry, include her "treating her guests exactly as an auctioneer treats his goods", and her failing in opening a saloon (Wilde 12). The next instance where a woman is mentioned, Henry says that "women have no appreciation of good looks" (Wilde 17), implying that women's opinions are incorrect. Moreover, throughout the novel, the showing of emotion is linked to the feminine, and is looked upon as negative (Felski 1101). However, the most remarkable quote on women in the entire novel must be Henry's, after Dorian has pronounced Sibyl Vane a genius:

My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals. (Wilde 53)

This quote clearly indicates the sentiments towards the female sex. Although the first quotes about Lady Brandon may be personal, as she might simply not be a nice person, the other countless instances in the novel make it quite clear how the men in the novel think about women in general.

Nevertheless, Sibyl Vane is spoken of in a positive way, at least at the beginning, and at least by Dorian. "From her little head to her little feet, she is absolutely and entirely divine" (Wilde 60), Dorian tells Henry. Dorian calls her a genius, completely worships her and wants to do anything to make her love him. Sibyl, in her turn, calls Dorian her "Prince Charming" (Wilde 67). However, the moment Dorian finds out that her acting is not that good at all, he is done with her immediately. Dorian objectified Sibyl enormously, and the moment he realises she does not live up to his expectations, he casts her away. There is an ideal standard for women, but they keep disappointing the men because it's impossible to live up to these

standards. However, there is not a similar standard for men, illustrating the inequality between the sexes once again.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is mainly focused on the lives of Dorian and Henry, and told from their perspectives. As said before, women do not often appear in their stories, and this shows the separate spheres of Victorian society. The men are often at home or at a bar drinking amongst themselves, and they only meet women at parties. Henry does not work, and neither does his wife, so they must be at home most of the time. However, they do not often meet, both keeping to themselves. Moreover, Henry mentions that all his friends, acquaintances and enemies are male (Wilde 13), illustrating that he does not interact with women often.

These examples show how women are portrayed in the novel, and how men deal with them. If a woman is mentioned at all, she is either objectified, in the case of Sibyl, or talked about negatively. Dorian's quick switch between objectification and hate for Sibyl, and Henry mentioning that everyone of worth he knows is male, also illustrates how irrelevant women are according to the men in the novel.

The separation of the male and female spheres in Dorian Gray is striking, and the individual characters show different attitudes towards the Victorian definitions of gender. Dorian Gray is the young, handsome protagonist of the novel. When Dorian enters the story, he is young, naive and pure, and in the way he is described, one might see him as childlike and feminine. This is strengthened through the androgynous descriptions of his beauty: scarlet lips, golden hair and eternal youth. Moreover, Dorian Gray is extremely narcissistic, as he wants to stay eternally beautiful and sits for portraits, a vice often described to women (Felski 1096). In Victorian times, effeminate men such as Dorian had negative associations with aristocratic license, sexual deviance, and vice (Hamilton, 231). Moreover, Victorians believed in the Rousseauan idea that children were born pure and free of sin, and would grow up well unless they were spoiled by grown-ups (Nelson 531). Both these ideas hold for Dorian Gray's evolution, as he gets indoctrinated by Henry's ideas on the soul and sinning. Dorian is the only heir of great fortune, and therefore does not have to work, he only manages his staff. He spends his days with Henry and his other male friends, and he reads and travels a lot, not only stressing the separate male sphere, but also showing other characteristics of effeminacy as described by Hamilton. The sins Dorian commits are supposedly of a homosexual nature, and therefore he is often seen as a homosexual character (Oates 419).

Henry Wotton is most remarkable because of his explicit opinions on women throughout the novel, which have been discussed before. Henry does not work and although

he is upper class, the novel does not give evidence that he even manages his staff, he only meets up with his friends for drinks and to join social events. On the basis of Danahay's definition of the Victorian work ethic, it may be concluded that Henry is not masculine at all.

Basil Halward is a painter and a close friend of Henry and Dorian. Basil is obsessed with Dorian's beauty, and after painting Dorian as romantic figures from mythology, he paints the picture of Dorian Gray. However, Basil is afraid he put too much of himself into it, and that the picture might show his love, or "idolatery" as he calls it, of Dorian to the world. Because of this love, Basil is seen as a homosexual character, but except for the creative job often associated effeminacy (Hamilton 232), Basil is not a feminine character. Because he has a job, he is the most masculine character of the upper class, according to Danahay's definition of masculinity.

Sibyl Vane is the beautiful young actress Dorian falls in love with, and the most important female character in the novel. Although Sibyl works as an actress, she has a feminine job, according to Danahay's argumentation, and thus this is accepted in Victorian society. Sibyl becomes an object of desire, and loses herself in her love for Dorian Gray. She is objectified, but also objectifies herself by putting herself completely in Dorian's power, and killing herself when he breaks up with her. She is not a strong woman at all, as she gives up on life when Dorian abandons her. She could be seen as a stereotypical Victorian woman, as she is completely dependent on the men in her life.

James Vane is Sibyl's protective older brother. They do not have a father anymore, thus he has taken over the masculine role of protecting the family. He is perhaps the most masculine character according to Danahay's definition, as he is part of the lower class, and does manual labour as a sailor.

Sexuality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

In this section sexuality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* will be analysed by close reading the novel alongside the description of Victorian ideas on sexuality as mentioned above.

Although it is clear from the novel that Dorian Gray has committed sins, these sins are not mentioned specifically. Dennis Allen argues that "*Dorian Gray* stands as the epitome of the nineteenth-century novel's battle with the sexual in general" (112). No sexuality or homosexuality is specifically mentioned, but it is still in the novel, and has caused a lot of problems for Wilde. Throughout the novel, Oscar Wilde has kept quiet about the protagonist's

sins, but it is clear from the public humiliation he experiences that Dorian's sins are worse than just self-preoccupation (Lane 44).

Except for Basil's unusual love for Dorian Gray, and the hints of unspeakable sins Dorian has committed, the novel does not speak of sexuality. Dorian is accused of "creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London", and supposedly strange things happen at Dorian's country house (Wilde 162). According to Neil McKenna, these are all references to places where Dorian had sex with young men, because "the 'foulest dens' could be a coded reference to public lavatories or 'cottages', or to the male brothels where, for a few shillings, a man could have sex with an off-duty soldier" (par. 21). Whether these foul dens are male brothels or not, the novel gives the reader enough to suspect that something sexual went on over there.

As an explanation of what sins Dorian committed exactly, Oscar Wilde stated that "each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no-one knows. He who finds them has brought them" (qtd. in Moers 304). In line of this argument, Jacqueline Rose argues that "the sexuality lies less in the content of what is seen than in the subjectivity of the viewer, in the relationship between what is looked at and the developing sexual knowledge of the child" (227). Because no sin is specifically mentioned, readers try to find their own sin in the novel, which ultimately led to the accusations of sodomy towards Oscar Wilde, and the enormous amount of research into the homosexuality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Conclusion

Although homosexuality and gender studies are often grouped together nowadays, both in fields of research and in terms of emancipation, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* shows that this link was not that self-evident in Victorian times. Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward are supposedly homosexual characters, but they are just as sexist as Lord Henry Wotton. The novel is ruled by men and the few women who are mentioned, or are allowed to speak, are objectified and degraded. Moreover, the novel mostly agrees with Victorian gender roles and sexuality. The separate spheres of men and women are strictly maintained. Also, Dorian Gray comes across as an effeminate male, as he is narcissistic and his beauty is described through feminine qualities. Moreover, Dorian, and Henry as well, are not masculine because they do not have a job, but that does not matter for their position in society, as they are wealthy. The lower class people, the Vanes, do fit perfectly in the traditional Victorian gender roles through

their work and status. Furthermore, the exact sins Dorian commits are not mentioned, and particularly sexuality is not spoken about explicitly. However, Dorian's sins do get punished in the end, and this agrees with Victorian rules of morality.

Chapter II: *Dorian Gray*

The 2009 film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has tried to stay close to the novel, but also has been updated to entertain the modern audience, and thus is not completely faithful to the original story. The film “veers away from Wilde’s narrative by focusing less on the portrait and more on the man himself, hence the eradication of the picture from the film’s title” (Lawrence). The focus on Dorian Gray himself has led to the positioning of his sins as more central to the story than the picture. The main result of this is that the sexual implications of the novel have been made explicit in the film. According to Heilmann and Llewellyn, “the 2009 film version of *Dorian Gray* … directed by Oliver Parker, who previously directed Wilde’s *An Ideal Husband* (1999) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2002), enhances and makes more prominent the unspoken elements of Wilde’s text, particularly in relation to the potential violence of Dorian’s character” (235). The film not only shows more sex, also the violence is enhanced by showing it on screen. Moreover, the character of Emily Wotton has been invented, which has great influence on gender and the storyline.

The previous chapter dealt with gender and sexuality in Victorian society and in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In order to see the changes between novel and film, this chapter will analyse gender and sexuality in the film *Dorian Gray*, and compare these findings to the analysis of the book. This chapter is built up in much the same way as the previous one: an overview of sexuality and gender in modern society will be given first, and then the film will be analysed.

Gender and Sexuality in Modern Society

A lot has changed in relation to sexuality and gender between Victorian times and now. In contemporary Western societies, sex now assumes many forms and has many purposes. Sex has become easier to separate from procreation and everlasting and binding love. Instead, the new view on a sex life is composed of a series of sexual encounters that are relatively easily started and ended, and are based on the desire for individual fulfilment. These sexual encounters can be part of a casual sexual lifestyle, or in monogamous relationships that combine sexual pleasure with love (Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 458).

These changes are part of a greater shift of informality in social relations, as contemporary relations between men and women and adults and children have become “more relaxed, egalitarian, and open” (Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 458). Sex has become more of an adventure, and one-night stands, pornography and sex toys are accepted by the Western

society. Moreover, sex has become more associated with commerciality. Sexuality has become more visible, it has become a means of public expression instead of private self-expression. The media has become essential to understanding how sexual identities and lifestyles work and are maintained (Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 459). Especially television addresses issues such as sexual morality and changing patterns of family life through both fictional and factual genres. These shifts in culture are linked to legal status of sexual behaviour, the results of political campaigns by for example feminist and queer movements, and the growing concern for the safety and education of children in relation to sexuality (Arthurs 3).

As mentioned in the introduction, the visibility of sexuality in the media is called ‘pornification’ or ‘striptease culture’ (McNair 37). Erotic fiction, sexual self-help books and lingerie catalogues, but also sex scenes in films and series, could be understood as a form of domesticated porn, opposed to ‘real’ hard-core porn. These forms of porn are associated with style, fashion and therapy, and therefore are seen as stylish and classy. Consequently, through this new mode of presentation, these ‘porno-chic’ texts have been able to achieve much more visibility and respectability than real porn, which is nowadays still seen as dirty (Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 460).

It is evident that contemporary media, and therefore society, is filled with representations of sexuality (Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 465). However, it is argued that the representation of sex in mainstream media is still marked by conservatism. For example, television programmes offer normative constructions of gender and sexuality, and sexual diversity is represented as being deviant (Arthurs 145; Attwood, “Sex and the Media” 459). A huge amount of criticism is centred on the influence that representations of sexuality have in the media. These objections come from anti-sex movements including, but not limited to, religious and feminist groups. Their main concerns are focused on the representation and conveying of nonconventional sexualities, such as homosexuality and fetishes. Attwood argues that these groups ignore the shifts that have taken place in society, and that their way of dealing with it does nothing to develop the understanding of society and culture (“Sex and the Media” 459).

These changes in sexuality are closely related to changes in gender. Castells states that women’s liberation, the feminist movement, and the increasing openness of society to sexual freedom and expression has led to the death of patriarchalism (qtd. in Tsatsoe 516). Contemporary discourses in sexuality, especially concerning homosexuality and transgender representations, challenge the established concept of gender and gender roles. This leads to a

change in power relations between the two genders, and therefore attacks patriarchy (Tsatsoe 516).

Gender and Sexuality in *Dorian Gray*

In order to analyse gender and sexuality in *Dorian Gray*, this part is split up in subsections. First, the character of Dorian Gray and the representation of his sins will be examined. Then the other male characters will be studied, followed by the representation of women in the film. Finally gender and the gaze will be analysed.

Analysis of Dorian Gray and the Representation of his Sins

Instead of meeting Dorian through stories about his beauty and loveliness, *Dorian Gray* starts its tale completely different. The film opens with a scene where we see Dorian dumping a body in the Thames in the middle of the night, immediately revealing him as a bad guy. Only in the next scene the innocent, naïve and beautiful Dorian Gray is introduced. Although Dorian's hair is black instead of blonde like in the novel, he is immediately depicted as innocent as he is lost and gets robbed when arriving in London. Moreover, Dorian is seen taking a white flower and putting it in his lapel. White is a symbol for virtue, purity and innocence (Heather 176), and indeed Dorian has not yet been influenced by Henry at this moment. Like in the novel, talk of Dorian's beauty precedes him. "An honest young man with a beautiful nature" (*Dorian Gray* 08:45), Henry has heard from his sister Agatha. Moreover, when Dorian sees a group of girls looking at him, they giggle as if being caught talking about him.

The next characteristic we get introduced to is Dorian's skill on the piano. Unlike in the novel, Dorian plays the piano a lot throughout the film. His first concert in London is also his introduction to London society, as he meets Basil there. Dorian plays the piano before sleeping with Sibyl, and at the end of the film, Dorian performs a concert as well. Here he sees hallucinations of the dead Basil, and society shows their opinion on Dorian's sinning. The film focuses on Dorian's skill as an artist, which has implications on how we analyse his gender. As stated in the previous chapter, a creative job such as musician or artist is often associated with femininity and homosexuality.

Dorian Gray's first meeting with vice is when Henry takes Dorian and Basil to a gin-shop, where not only gin is sold, but women as well. While in the background men and women are pleasuring each other, Henry talks to Dorian about morals, sins and souls.

Through this setting, opposed to Basil's atelier in the novel, the talk about sin is immediately linked to a sexual interpretation.

In the novel, it is often claimed that Dorian ruined young men and women. The exact way in how Dorian has ruined them is not clear, but some characters have ruined reputations and killed themselves, or fled the country. However, in the film, the only ruined person we meet is Sibyl. We see what Dorian does with other people, but we never see if that influences their lives further, except in the case of Sibyl Vane. Dorian sees Sibyl, and her brother James, for the first time in the gin shop. She is wearing white, a symbol of purity, and she looks almost like an angel, opposed to the dark surroundings. When Dorian visits Sibyl in her changing room after watching her play, he is uneasy and flustered. Dorian calls her performance impeccable and extraordinary and Sibyl as well. "When I stand before you, I am awestruck and humbled by your radiance" (*Dorian Gray* 23:22), he says like a young boy who is head over heels in love.

Dorian's engagement is frowned upon, and Henry takes Dorian to a brothel so that he can enjoy his bachelor life before getting married. Dorian initially hesitates to drinking and smoking with Henry, and tells him that his conscience is stronger than that. Henry calls him a coward, "no civilised man regrets a pleasure" (*Dorian Gray* 30:35). Dorian then also takes a smoke, becomes intoxicated, and joins a woman upstairs. There the next sex scene takes place, where Dorian gets pleasured by at least three women. When Dorian and Henry finally get to the theatre, Dorian and Sibyl get in a fight. "Make me your wife, not one of your whores" Sibyl yells, before Dorian runs away mad (*Dorian Gray* 34:02).

When Jim Vane visits Dorian shortly after, he tells Dorian that he has taken Sibyl out of the river, as Sibyl has killed herself and their unborn baby. The result of Dorian's actions becomes evident, and Sibyl is ruined. Nevertheless, at that moment Dorian is in shock and feels remorse for what he has done. When he speaks with Henry about it, Dorian tries to hug him. Henry awkwardly steps aside, disapproving the emotion shown by Dorian. The novel often speaks negatively about the showing of emotion, and as women are associated with emotion, this is one of the reason why Henry is so degrading about them (Felski 1101). Through this subtle occurrence, this sentiment is expressed in the film as well.

Hereafter, Dorian commits sin after sin. On Celia Radly's debutante ball, he has sex with both Celia and her mother, Lady Radly. Celia is hidden under the bed when Dorian has sex with her mother, making this scene very voyeuristic and perverted. Numerous parties and sex scenes follow this incident, growing more and more extravagant with each scene. However, until Basil confronts Dorian about the missing portrait, the film has not shown

Dorian with men. In an attempt to distract Basil from finding out where the portrait is, Dorian shows his gratitude for his picture by kissing Basil. When Basil returns the favour, Dorian pushes Basil towards his crotch, urging him to perform oral sex.

After Dorian has bloodily killed Basil, his sexual preferences turn even more perverse and the scenes grow more violent. The sex scene following the ditching of the corpse shows Dorian being blindfolded and kissing men, but also shows acts of bloodletting, and the drinking of blood. According to Dworkin, bloodletting is not just an act of violence, but also an act of male dominance, patriarchy and heterosexuality (Grant 984). However, in these scenes, Dorian is the submissive person. He is blindfolded, cut, and hit by both men and women, which shows fluent power relations between the sexes.

Analysis of Male Characters

Lord Henry Wotton is portrayed as the same witty and misogynist man as in the novel. The first thing we hear Henry say in the film is “you only make love to her when she is pretty, and to someone else when she is plain” (*Dorian Gray* 8:00), followed by “Gladys Allonby has been dressed for her 14th birthday ever since her 40th” (*Dorian Gray* 09:00), and a few seconds after this Henry remarks about his wife: “I knew you were good for something” (*Dorian Gray* 09:14). Through this introduction, the tone of his character is set, and throughout the novel, his character remains unchanged.

While Basil’s adoration for Dorian is quite explicit in the novel, as he often speaks about it, in the film this is the other way around. Rather, Basil comes forward more like a father figure, trying to protect Dorian from Henry’s influence, than someone who idolises him. Nevertheless, when Dorian comments on Basil’s disapproval of his engagement, Henry replies that “Basil should be less afraid of his own feelings” (*Dorian Gray* 29:19). Basil’s feelings, however, only surface after Dorian has taken the lead. Dorian is the first to kiss Basil, and not the other way around, but Basil is eager to join in. The homoerotic subtext that is so clear in the novel, becomes explicit in the film, but without any preceding hints of it.

Although the last ten years saw an increase of gay couples on screen, lesbian women seldom appear on mainstream images except in a highly eroticised manner, while gay men are rarely portrayed kissing or even touching, Rosalind Gill argues (153). The kiss between Dorian and Basil, and the insinuation of oral sex, is therefore surprising. Because not only does it come out of the blue, but also it is not often seen on film. However, *Dorian Gray* holds on to the other characteristics of the phenomenon sketched by Gill, as the sex scenes in the film portray various women, and only twice a man is shown. Bryant and Miron argue that

creating a story of sex and violence, like this film, is a way of seducing the audience, and asking them to participate in pleasure through anticipating events (442). This leads to a close link between consumer and writer, because the consumer tries to anticipate events, which increases excitement through suspense, but the consumer does not know how far the writer is willing to go with the visualisation of violence and sexuality (Bryant and Miron 442-3).

The five times James, or Jim, Vane appears or is mentioned in the film, he plays the part of the protective older brother. The first time Dorian sees Sibyl, Jim is next to her, escorting her in the gin shop. When Sibyl wants to leave Dorian's house, her excuse is that her brother would worry if she is home late. Jim comes to Dorian's house to blame him for Sibyl's death, and then tries to strangle Dorian, to avenge his sister's death. Years later, when Dorian has come back from travelling, he meets Jim on the streets twice, and Jim again tries to kill Dorian for the wrong he did to Sibyl. The only difference between the film and novel is that in the film Jim is portrayed as being mad, and therefore he is at a mental institution between the attempts to murder Dorian. In the novel, Jim is a sailor and is away from London a lot because he is at sea. This change has an influence on how we depict his character, as he cannot be taken serious. Although Jim is protective of his sister, Jim is seen as more of a mad drunkard instead of the masculine man he was in the novel.

Representations of Women in Dorian Gray

As stated in the introduction, in the past, sexualised representations of women presented women as passive, mute objects, who were looked upon by a male gaze. Females were objectified, and were only on screen so that men had something entertaining to look at. However, the sexual representations of women have changed, and nowadays women exploit their sexuality in images to show their liberation. This agency of women has also affected the film rendition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, especially through the characters of Sibyl Vane and Emily Wotton.

Although Sibyl is highly objectified by Dorian, she does not internalise this objectification at first. When Dorian visits Sibyl in her changing room after watching her play Hamlet, Dorian is uneasy and flustered, while Sibyl leads the conversation. When Sibyl asks Dorian if he can give her an answer, he starts telling her about her beauty and skill. Sibyl counters his ode by correcting him, as she was only asking for his name and not his opinion of her. She shows a certain power in this scene, as she is in control of the conversation, while Dorian is mesmerised by her.

When Sibyl is at Dorian's house, she still makes up her own mind. Dorian wants to kiss her, but she walks away. He then proposes that she could stay with him. However, Sibyl is afraid because she has seen other girls been cast away by men, but Dorian replies that he loves her. Sibyl responds by passionately kissing Dorian and taking control, instead of letting him dominate. Sibyl also starts unclothing Dorian first, instead of the other way around.

Nonetheless, although Sibyl is more empowered in the film than in the novel, she still fits the Victorian gender roles. When Sibyl meets Henry, she tells him that she cannot wait to start a family, showing her mother instinct and the sense of duty to start a family. Like in the novel, Sibyl kills herself because Dorian does not love her anymore. This shows that although she was in control of the relationship at the beginning, she still put herself in his power at the end. The change in power relations is symbolised by the colour of her clothing. Sibyl wears white dresses until Dorian gifts her a blue dress just before they sleep with each other, she is wearing this blue dress when she is found dead in the river.

Emily Wotton is a new character invented for the film. She is the daughter of Henry, and she is born and grows up while Dorian is away travelling. When he comes back, they meet at Henry's house, and not soon thereafter she invites him on a date. On the date, she casually mentions that "I had to promise not to chain myself to any more railings" (*Dorian Gray* 1:15:33), explaining that she is a suffragette. Dorian answers that "a woman shouldn't be given anything that she cannot wear in the evening" (*Dorian Gray* 1:15:55), showing that Dorian still reproduces Henry's opinions. Although Emily Wotton is clearly a feminist, she also expresses a hint of Victorian values. As Dorian is slowly breaking down, she takes pity on him and hugs and comforts him, showing a motherly nature. However, she also exclaims that she "won't let no-one hurt you" (*Dorian Gray* 1:20:02), willing to protect him, which was originally a masculine task.

Gender and the Gaze

Although the male gaze is more dominant throughout the film, as the story is told by a man, the female gaze appears as well. The male gaze appears most prominently in voyeuristic scenes through Henry Wotton. When Sibyl and Dorian are fighting in the theatre, the scene ends with a shot of Henry watching them from the theatre box while enjoying a cigarette. Later in the film, we briefly see Emily Wotton playing in the yard as a child, while Henry is watching her. At the end of the film, this happens again. After Dorian's breakdown, he and Emily fall asleep next to the fireplace in Henry's house, and Henry is again seen watching them. The result of the voyeuristic male gaze, often deployed in cinematic productions, is that

the viewer is forced to look upon the scenes from Henry's point of view and therefore the viewer takes over his opinion on events (Sturken and Cartwright 124). Furthermore, the viewer experiences Henry's influence more intensely, because through the gaze, Henry is closely linked to the events. On one occasion, a female voyeuristic gaze appears in the film. While Dorian has sex with Lady Radly, her daughter Celia is hidden under the bed. This scene mostly adds to the idea of the perverted nature of Dorian and his sins.

Another instance of the male gaze focuses on the objectification of Sibyl. As stated before, when Dorian first sees Sibyl, she looks like a radiant angel dressed in white against a dark, dirty background. Moreover, at the picknick, she is portrayed much in the same way, with the camera focusing on her face and beauty often. This objectification is neatly contrasted at the end of the film, when Dorian hallucinates and these same shots come back to haunt him with the beautiful image of Sibyl replaced by a zombie-like Sibyl.

Ariel Levy, a critic of the pornification of the media, is alarmed by the enormous amount of naked girls on contemporary mainstream media. She argues that the exploitation of female sexuality has gone too far, and that the willingness of women to show their bodies goes against everything feminism has tried to achieve (44-5). This raunch culture that Levy is opposed to is evident in *Dorian Gray* as well. When Dorian visits the gin shop with Henry and Basil, the film first shows the corners of the shop where men are amusing themselves with half-naked women. Moreover, while the men are talking, more of these acts are going on in the background. In fact, naked women are shown throughout the film. Naturally, when Dorian and Henry visit the brothel, the barely clothed women set the scene. Additionally, the many sex scenes exhibit various breasts.

However, although a lot of naked women are shown in the film, most nude scenes serve a function, and not all the scenes are looked upon with a male gaze. Dorian's sinning is mainly of a sexual nature, and the scenes where naked women appear in, serve to explain this. If no unclothed women would be shown, the sexual sinning would become implicit like in the novel. Moreover, nowadays naked women are depicted on mainstream media so often, that it would be remarkable if this film would shun these images. During the sex scenes, although many bared breasts appear on screen, the focus is not on the women. On the contrary, the camera is mainly focused on Dorian's face, while the naked women he is with fill up the background. The traditional male gaze, generally used in pornographic films, would look at the enjoyment of the women, instead of the man. Moreover, the women observed would be positioned "so that her body is on display for the viewer's easy appreciation" (Sturken and Cartwright 123-9). During the sex scenes in the film, only short fragments and parts of the

female bodies are shown, while Dorian is almost in full view, making it easier to appreciate Dorian's body than the female ones. Thus, the film generally uses a female gaze to depict sex scenes.

Another interesting example of the female gaze is during the meeting of Dorian and Sibyl in her changing room at the theatre. As argued before, Sibyl shows certain dominance during this scene, and this is even more pronounced through the female gaze. Throughout the history of art, a convention has arisen where women are depicted gazing at themselves at the mirror, with their bodies facing the presumed spectator. The mirror is a marker of femininity, as the mirror puts a woman in full view for the presumed male spectator, and establishes her gaze as narcissistic (Sturken and Cartwright 124). The scene in the changing room goes against these conventions. Although Sibyl is positioned in front of a mirror, she is not looking at herself, and neither is she facing Dorian. In fact, she is sitting with her back to Dorian, and gazing at Dorian through the mirror. This subtle change has a couple of consequences. Firstly, Dorian is turned into the object, as he is seen through a female gaze. Moreover, Dorian is established as being narcissistic, because it is his image that is seen in the mirror. Finally, Dorian's character is seen as more feminine since he is put in this convention.

Candace Moore argues that switching between male and female gazes leads to a more enjoyable watching experience for both men and women, because both sexes can identify with the characters better (6-7). Moreover, the switching between gazes also accommodates homosexual and transgender identities (Moore 8; Sturken and Cartwright 132). Thus, the result of showing both the male and female gaze in the film does not only add to the understanding of the story, as is the case with Henry's voyeuristic gaze, but also adds to the enjoyment of the adaptation to a greater audience.

Conclusion

Although pornification of the media has become mainstream, anti-sex movements that are Victorian in their ideas on sexuality still exist. This ability, and the acceptance, to show sex on mainstream media has been exploited in *Dorian Gray* and has led to an interpretation of Dorian's sins. Through the positioning of certain scenes in establishments of vice, Dorian's sins immediately get a sexual charge, even before his exact sins are shown. Moreover, the homoerotic subtext of the novel is made explicit in the film through the kiss between Basil and Dorian, and the sex scenes between Dorian and another man.

Dorian Gray breaks with conventions, which has influence on how gender is depicted. The male gaze, especially unmistakable through Henry's voyeuristic scenes, is dominant

throughout the film because of the male protagonist, but most sexual scenes depict a female gaze. Moreover, although bloodletting is seen as a heterosexual act establishing male dominance, the scenes in the film show homosexuality and the submissiveness of Dorian. Furthermore, by breaking the convention of women looking at mirrors, Dorian is characterised as even more feminine, which was already made more prominent through the focus on his music skills.

Contemporary ideas on gender, especially the agency of women, have a noticeable influence on the depiction of the women in the film as well. Sibyl Vane has become a much more powerful woman, both through her actions and the cinematography of her scenes. However, she still ends up the same way as in the novel. Through the addition of the character of Emily Wotton, a feminist, contemporary public is able to identify themselves better with the film, as she inhabits more contemporary views on women as opposed to the other characters.

However, while a lot of naked women appear on screen, adhering to the phenomenon that more women than men are depicted sexually in the media, most nude scenes serve a function to the story, and most sex scenes are not looked upon by a male gaze. Moreover, the switching between male and female gazes in the film results in a more enjoyable story for all audiences.

Conclusion

By using theory from gender studies, adaptation studies and media studies this thesis has tried to find out how the story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has changed through the influence of the pornification of the media on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* in terms of sexuality and gender.

The novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is strongly misogynistic. The majority of the characters are male, and the few women that appear in the novel are objectified and degraded. Lord Henry Wotton is especially verbal on this matter, as he often speaks badly about specific female characters or about women in general. Sibyl Vane is the only important female character in the novel, and she is extremely objectified by Dorian. However, when she fails to meet his high expectations, she is cast away without any second thoughts, exemplifying how men think about women in the novel. This inequality between the sexes in the novel closely mirrors the position of women in Victorian society. Moreover, most Victorian gender roles are enforced in the novel as well. The appearance of so few women in the novel is a result of the strict separation between the male and female sphere. Moreover, the lower class people in the novel, Sibyl and James Vane, fit the traditional gender roles perfectly. Although Sibyl is a working female, this is tolerated because it is seen as a feminine job. Moreover, she is completely dependent on the men in her life. James works as a sailor, and this manual labour is the perfect expression of Victorian masculinity. Also, James is extremely protective of his sister, showing a masculine role. Dorian Gray is depicted as an effeminate male, because he is narcissistic, his beauty is described through feminine qualities, and he does not have a job, but this does not matter in society as he is wealthy. Basil Hallward, who is often analysed as a homosexual character, which automatically leads to being viewed as feminine, is actually the most masculine character of the upper class as he is the only one who has a job. Furthermore, Victorian morals are adhered to in the novel as well. The sins Dorian commits are not mentioned explicitly, and therefore sexuality is not spoken about at all. Moreover, Dorian's sins get punished at the end of the novel, which agrees with the Victorian ideas of suffering for ones vices. In short, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* adheres to Victorian gender roles and ideas on sexuality because the inequality between men and women is clearly displayed, the characters fit the Victorian gender roles and sexuality is not explicitly mentioned in the novel.

A sexual revolution has taken place between the Victorian age and now, and this has great influences on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray*. The taboo on sex has lifted, and the pornification of the media has resulted in that sexuality is frequently shown in mainstream media. This ability and acceptance of sexuality has been exploited in *Dorian Gray* and has led

to an interpretation of Dorian's sins. Through the positioning of certain scenes against a sexual background, Dorian's sins immediately get a sexual charge. Moreover, the homoerotic subtext of the novel is made explicit through the addition of sexual explicit scenes. This changed way of dealing with sexuality also has consequences for gender, both in modern society and in the film. Contemporary ideas on gender, especially on the agency of women, have a noticeable influence on the female characters. Sibyl Vane has become a much more powerful woman, both through her actions and the cinematography of her scenes. Moreover, the film has added Emily Wotton to the story, who is a feminist character. While Sibyl kills herself just like in the novel and the men in the film are still misogynist, the film shows a more contemporary view on women, and therefore is more appealing to the audience as the story is less offending. The depiction of gender in the film is also influenced by the conventions that are broken in *Dorian Gray*. The male gaze, especially unmistakable through Henry's voyeuristic scenes, is dominant throughout the film because of the male protagonist, but most sexual scenes depict a female gaze. Moreover, although bloodletting is seen as a heterosexual act establishing male dominance, these scenes in the film show homosexuality and the submissiveness of Dorian. Furthermore, by breaking the convention of women looking at mirrors, Dorian is characterised as even more feminine, which was already made more prominent through the focus on his music skills. Also, while a lot of naked women appear on screen, adhering to the phenomenon that more women than men are depicted sexually in the media, most nude scenes serve a function to the story. In short, especially the empowerment of women, both through the female characters' actions and the use of the female gaze, and the addition of sex scenes have had an influence on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray*.

In conclusion, although *The Picture of Dorian Gray* adheres to Victorian gender roles and ideas on sexuality, the pornification of the media has made it possible to highlight the sexual subtext of the novel. While the novel only hints at the nature of Dorian's sins, the sex scenes in *Dorian Gray* have given his sins an interpretation. Also, the homosexual subtext of the novel has been made explicit through the addition of sexually explicit scenes. Through the pornification of the media, ideas on gender have changed and this has influenced the film as well. Although it was initially expected that the addition of Emily Wotton would be the greatest change in the film, this is not the case. She is mainly a love interest who happens to be a feminist character. The conventions that are broken in *Dorian Gray*, particularly through the use of the female gaze where traditionally a male gaze would have been used, have resulted in more empowered women and more feminine men than in the novel. Moreover, the

film switches between the male and female gaze, which accommodates male, female, and homosexual identities. Additionally, the characters in the film, especially the empowered women and the less misogynist men, are more identifiable to a contemporary audience than in the novel. This results in a more enjoyable story and watching experience for the modern public.

Whereas much research has been done on Oscar Wilde's homosexuality and femininity and how this is represented in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, very few sources focus exclusively on sexuality and gender in the novel. Furthermore, the only sources on *Dorian Gray* are reviews by film critics, meaning that not only this thesis has shown another point of view on *The Picture*, it is the first academic paper on the film as well. For further research, it may be interesting to analyse other film adaptations of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in terms of gender and sexuality. Not only will this show how, for example, the highly praised adaptation from 1945 has incorporated contemporary ideas on sexuality and gender, and how these compare to the novel, this will also demonstrate the differences in conceptions of gender and sexuality between 1945 and now. Moreover, *Das Bildnis des Dorian Gray*, an adaptation from 1970, is considered a soft-porn film, and the comparison of this film to *Dorian Gray* might show whether or not the pornification of the media has resulted in that modern mainstream films are just as explicit as soft porn in the seventies.

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