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**Oscar Wilde and the Allusions to queerness
in *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

BA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published in July 1890 simultaneously in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in Philadelphia, USA, and in UK. The novel deals with topics such as mortality of beauty and youth, corruption of the soul and art, and how art imitates life, but it also contains hints and allusions to same-sex love, more particularly male homosexuality which was a part of Wilde's life that influenced his writing. The main focus of this thesis is on the queerness of the three main characters; which was considered immoral and corruptive during Wilde's contemporary time.

There are two questions that this thesis seeks to answer. Firstly, what is the extent of allusions to queerness in the three main characters in the novel, and secondly, can Wilde's personal life be a factor for character formation as well as a vehicle for the actions his characters take in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters and a conclusion. The introduction gives a brief overview of the topics in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the feedback it garnered from the general public on its publishing.

The first chapter provides an overview of the concepts of queerness that is used for the framework and also terms used in the discussion, the legislature of the Victorian time concerning homosexuality, Oscar Wilde's life, and the censorship concerning *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The second chapter consists of a three-part empirical analysis, which analyses how Oscar Wilde uses clues that in the right context can take on queer connotations and allusions.

The conclusion summarises the findings of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde as a writer is most well known for his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which was first published in first in 1890 in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in Philadelphia, United States of America, and then in 1891 by Ward, Lock and Company in the United Kingdom. The novel went through some editing and censoring, both for linguistical reasons (changing the punctuation and spelling to match the American or British spelling) and for moral reasons – the text was purged from unsavoury passages. The revised edition, published in America, still caused such an uproar that, before the later British edition was published in 1891, Wilde was asked to clean the text from previously uncensored hints to homosexuality (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 38, 41-42). This version was expanded from thirteen chapters to twenty, and is nowadays the basis of most editions that are published (*Ibid*: 35). Although the modern editions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are based on the version of the novel that has been so-called cleaned from most homosexual subtext, it is possible to find queer allusions by analytically reading the text.

The aim of this thesis is to see whether textual evidence from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be found of the queerness of the three main characters of the novel – Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. This thesis uses two editions – one published in 2012 and edited by Nicholas Frankel, and one published by Alma Classics in 2017. Although the quotes – the evidence - come directly from the novel, the papers by Allen, Brinkley, Cohen and Sanna are used to support the findings.

The first part of this thesis gives a literature review on the topic of homosexual or queer as terms, the legislature concerning homosexuality during Oscar Wilde's time, Oscar Wilde's biography and the censorship concerning the novel. In the second part, the thesis analyses passages from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from the queer-reading perspective.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Homosexual or queer

The general theoretical framework of this thesis is based on Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (1996) but for the background, Lee Edelman's *Homographies* (1994) is a valuable material as well. Edelman mostly discusses homosexuality in literature and other types of media. He points out (1994: 7) that while it is possible to read homosexuality in texts it has to be recognised that these homosexual "markings" that must be legible can often be unremarked and unremarkable or pass as such. While Edelman's influence is not explicitly stated in the thesis, he offers a background to help with how to read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* analytically.

Jagose (1996: 72-75) offers a more theoretical background to homosexuality and queerness in both society and media, and an overall introduction to how queer theory as a field of study has developed and what it covers. An important part of queer methodology in relation to analytical reading is contextualising which is what this thesis will do- it will read the text analytically and analyse it in the context of queerness. Jagose (1996: 72-75) explains with plenty of examples from authors such as Chauncey, Dynes, Thomas, Watney *et al.* how the terms *homosexual*, *gay* and *queer*, and the meanings of the terms have evolved. Stemming from that I will use the words *homosexual* and *queer* to describe the sexual orientation of the characters for various reasons. One of those reasons is that there is a difference between *queer* identity and *homosexual* identity. According to Jagose (1996: 3), "Queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. For most, queer has been prominently associated with those who identify as lesbian and gay." Edelman (1994: 113) agrees that the words *gay* and *queer* are associated with each other, and that in some circles the word *queer* became prevalent after the AIDS wake, but he also uses the term *queer* separately in his writing marking an individual identity. This means that while those,

who have identified as both queer and gay, or queer and lesbian are not wrong in their identification; the word *queer*, however, can also be used by people who for various reasons do not wish to associate themselves with the words of *gay* and *lesbian*. Additionally, queer can denote the sexual identity of a person who is neither homosexual or heterosexual but finds themselves somewhere between those two identities (*Queer*, OD 2014). Barker and Scheele (2016: 7) bring attention to *queer* being an umbrella term or used in a way to challenge the norms surrounding gender and sexuality and the whole LGBT “mainstream”. As mentioned by Jagose (1996: 3), queer can also denote a person who is not cisgender¹, but this nuance of the term will not be used in this thesis.

Another reason why these terms are both used is that they fit the time during which Oscar Wilde wrote his novel. As a term *homosexuality* was coined in 1869 by a Swiss doctor Karoly Maria Benkert. It was not used widely in English until the 1890s, and it entered the English language through the medical field in 1892. It was used first as a noun in 1912, and what is more, still carrying medical connotations, it is nowadays used as self-identification. (Jagose 1996: 72; Wilde and Frankel 2012: 6) Although this may be true, it does not mean that using the word *homosexual* to describe the characters in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is ill-suited. Furthermore, Simon Watney (in Jagose 1996: 72) says that describing oneself as a homosexual “more properly belongs to the age of the steam engine than to the late twentieth century” - this timeframe includes the time Wilde wrote his novel. However, the usage and connotations of the terms today are different than during Wilde’s time – instead of the word *homosexual* carrying medical and negative connotations nowadays it is mostly a neutral term.

Based on the temporal context, the word *queer* became the next one to be used. The origins of the usage can lay in the end of the 19th century (OD 2014) and it was used as a

¹A person is cisgender(ed) if their gender identification corresponds with the gender they were assigned at birth.

way for heterosexual people to denote a homosexual person. However, the word *queer* was primarily used in the 1910s and 1920s by men who identified themselves as different based on their sexual interest and not based on their gender status (Jagose 1996: 74). Dynes (1990: 1091) also mentions in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* that older English gentlemen prefer the term *queer* as self-identification, and claims that the term itself is rather archaic. James Davidson (1994: 12) has said that *queer* “is /--/ at home in 19th-century drawing-rooms, accommodating itself to whispered insinuation”. 19th century drawing-room is where we meet the three main characters for the first time, all together. Interestingly enough, the first recorded use of *queer* is an insult supposedly used against Oscar Wilde in 1894 in a letter from John Douglas, the Marquess of Queensberry (Barker, Scheele 2016: 9).

Despite their similar semantical meanings and their relations to each other, the terms *homosexual* and *queer* are not synonyms (Jagose 1996: 74). It is also important to note that both terms have been used as insults and have been later reclaimed by the LGBTQ community – the Q stands for either queer or questioning (LGBTQ, OD 2014). By the late 1980s, people started to use the word *queer* as a word for self-identification (OD 2014; Queer Nation, 1990). A flier by Queer Nation that circulated in the Pride Festival in June 1990 establishes the reclamation of the word *queer*: “Yeah, QUEER can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe's hands and use against him”. Today, the terms *gay*, *homosexual* and *queer* have all been reclaimed by the community and are seen as neutral or even positive terms. It is however polite not to use a term about a person if they have mentioned they would prefer it to be not used.

As to Oscar Wilde and his *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it has been analysed from the perspective of queer theory by different scholars before, a few of them were compiled even before the coining of the actual concept of *queer theory* in the 1990s, for example

works by Joseph Bristow (1992), Ed Cohen (1987 and 1993), Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1985) and Camille Paglia (1990). Therefore there is enough material to be analysed in this thesis, in addition to the theoretical works that help to set up the framework for the thesis. For example, analyses by Ed Cohen (1987), Henry Allen (2009), Edward S. Brinkley (1998) and Antonio Sanna (2012) are used to help set the framework and read the relevant parts of the novel closely, focusing on the wording that Wilde uses to describe the main three characters and their relationship with each other and other characters.

1.2. Homosexuality during the Victorian Era

Brady (2005: 10, 20, 85) asserts that during the Victorian Era, homosexuality was one of the topics that were not often spoken about in newspapers, legislature or medical journals (Brady 2005: 10, 20, 85). It was thought that if this information was not shared with the general public, the problem itself would disappear (Brady 2005: 54). Until 1861, it was possible to use capital punishment for sodomy offences (Adut 2005: 215). Labouchere's Amendment, Clause 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, imposed the following:

“...any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour. ...” (in Brady 2005: 84)

Previously, The Buggery Act of 1533 had outlawed sodomy; Cocks (2003: 6) points out that during the 19th century and onwards in urban settings sodomy was interpreted almost exclusively to be a sexual act between two men. Cocks, along with Cook (2003: chapter 1) demonstrates that the general public knew about sex and sexuality between men but it was a tacit knowledge in the 1860s and 1870s. Sex between men was usually ignored and not discussed, even if the sex involved underage youth. This can be seen from a case in 1877, in which according to the accusation, James Smith, a City of London secretary, a man of very good social connections, sexually corrupted three underage telegraph boys.

The trial did not reach any newspapers and Smith was quietly tried for a life sentence of penal servitude (Brady 2005: 89-90). The silence regarding homosexuality, and all attempts to keep the discussion of sexuality out of the public sphere is further exemplified by the fact that dossiers containing material about prosecution of sex between men that related to the 1870s to 1890s, compiled between the years 1892 and 1898, were closed using the one hundred year rule² (Brady 2005: 91).

Even though male homosexuality was known to the general public, most instances of it and acts of sodomy went unreported to the authorities to prevent scandals and to keep young men and female audience uncorrupted. In legal and journalistic discourse, sodomy was referred to as an “unmentionable” or “nameless” crime (Adut 2005: 222-223). After 1877, however, more incidents of sodomy were reported to the authorities (Brady 2005: 89). Although *The Times* did generally cover such cases, in October 1885 they published a report of a case where the defendant was found guilty under the new Criminal Law Amendment Act (*Ibid.*: 94). Brady (2005: 94) suggests that this broken silence was due to Clause 11 of the act of 1885. The Act also protected underage children, and even though most of the crimes of sex were between two adult men, the newspapers were quick to only report what they called unnatural crimes, crimes that involved men and boys³ (Brady 2005: 95-96).

Punishments for sodomy or for “gross indecency” varied, depending on the gravity of the offence and the judge. It could be as lenient as a jail sentence of mere months or as harsh as a sentence of ten years to life penal servitude (Brady 2005: 96, 104, 117). By 1888, any other acts than anal penetration or its attempts were punished more leniently using Clause 11, but the boys who were involved in male-male sexual intimate acts also

² This rule is applied to materials that are seen as confidential; restricting access to them until 100 years have passed (Hey 2003)

³ Two cases that Brady (2005: 95) brings as examples from *The Times* were the case of Moffat and Fillingham in 1886, and a trial of Hamer in 1891.

were punished, albeit less harsh (Brady 2005: 106). For example, in the prosecution of Smith in 1877, Smith was sentenced to a life penal servitude and the boy to ten years. On top of that, men who were prosecuted, and exposed to the press, lost their masculine social status, irrespective of their standing or class (Brady 2005: 103).

Oscar Wilde was, amongst others, punished using Clause 11 in 1895 (Brady 2005: 87). Adut (2005: 214) argues that although the evidence against Wilde was circumstantial and tainted, he was prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Cohen (1993) and Weeks (1981) claim that the trials of Wilde in 1895 and Cleveland Street Affair in 1889 helped to bring awareness to the public that sexuality (and sex) between men existed. The Cleveland Street scandal brought attention to the sexual exploitation of young telegraph boys in a West End brothel; one of the telegraph boys was under 16 years old. This scandal was rather big as there were connections between the male brothel and men of high standings (Brady 2005: 96). The scandal only came to light after the Post Office employers suspected the boys of theft because of the amounts of money they were carrying (*Ibid.*: 103). Lord Euston, who was named as a patron of the brothel by *North London Press*, sued the newspaper for libel and won; the reporter, however, was imprisoned for 12 months (Adut 2005: 226).

Wilde's homosexuality was public knowledge before his trial, and he was the stereotypical Victorian homosexual. Even though the discussion about his sexuality died down after he got married in 1884 and fathered two children, by the end of the decade he was wearing a green carnation boutonnière which symbolised homosexuality in France (Adut 2005: 227). Adut (2005: 230) claims that the Marquess of Queensberry, father of Lord Douglas, could afford to blame Wilde for being a sodomite only because he had no reputation to lose, and because he did not care about his family name.

Until 1967, The Buggery Act of 1533 remained as the basis of legislation when it came to regulating (anal) sex between two men. It was only the Sexual Offences Act of 1967⁴ that decriminalised sex between two men over the age of 21 (Montgomery-Hyde: 1970: 7). The same act that was used to punish Wilde stayed in effect for over half a century longer.

1.3. The Life of Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854. He had an older brother and a younger sister, who died when she was eight years old. Wilde and his brother attended the Portora Royal School in northern Ireland where Wilde developed a love for Ancient Greek literature and culture (Sloan 2009: 1-3), which helped him to win a scholarship to continue his studies at Trinity College in Dublin from 1871. He developed his wit and his knowledge as a Greek scholar in Trinity College and helped his tutor John Pentland Mahaffy, a Greek classicist and historian, to edit *Social Life in Greece* (1874), which emphasized the platonic, spiritual nature of attachment between men in Ancient Greece (Sloan 2009: 4-5). Despite the fact that male affection and admiration oftentimes occurred together, it was not unusual in Ancient Greece for the relationships between an older man and a younger man to be more than just mentorship. In Ancient-Greece it was customary for a younger man to be educated by an older man. This education often (but not always) included a sexual side, with the older gentleman being the *ἐραστής* (erastes) ‘the lover’ and the younger man (usually in his teens, or until he could grow a full beard) being *ἐρώμενος* (eromenos) ‘the loved’ (Younger 2004: 141-143).

Three years later in 1874, when he was 20, Wilde won a scholarship in classics at Magdalen College, Oxford. During the examination he marked his age to be eighteen as

⁴ This act however only decriminalised sex between men in England and Wales. The decriminalisation happened in Scotland and Northern Ireland in the 1970s, and in 1993 in Ireland. Anal penetration of women by men was not decriminalised until 2000. The Buggery Act is still the basis for criminalising the acts of bestiality.

the scholarship was for those under 20 years of age and he was only two months short of his 20th birthday at the time of the examination, but the question about his real age would cause problems later in his life, according to Ellmann (1988: 421-423) and Sloan (2009: 4-5) especially during his trial in 1895, during which his real age was revealed to be 40, not 38, and then used to further a case against him that he was an older corruptive man who was preying on younger men.

During his studies, Wilde was influenced by Walter Pater's *Renaissance* (1873) which became his "golden book" and also influenced what Wilde thought about life and beauty later in life. (Ellmann 1988: 46). Wilde would always remember his time at Oxford as the "most flower-like time" of his life (Hart-Davies in Sloan 2009: 9). During his time at Oxford, Wilde's literary activity started - he wrote a poem 'Ravenna', which won a Newdigate Prize in 1878 (Ellmann 1988: 87-88).

Wilde had become well-known to his peers already in Oxford during his university years, and this was in part owed to his flamboyant style and personality but Sloan (2009: 9) and Sturgis (2018: 63) claim that Wilde's fame was thanks to his good humour and proficiency in "pleasant talk" For example, Wilde was referred to as "our queer-looking freshman", partly because of his long hair and his dandy way of dressing, and he would hand people he met his cards, regardless of their social standing or age, introducing himself as "Mr. Oscar O'Flahertie Wilde, Magd. Coll.", which was seen as rather ignorant behaviour according to the Oxford etiquette (Sturgis 2018: 62). Thanks to his Oxford education, Wilde was invited to circles of highly educated people where he gained even more recognition, especially because he could change his persona to fit his companions. He was a part of every coterie but belonged exclusively to none (Sloan 2009: 9-10). Sturgis (2018: 156) argues that this was, at least in part, because women liked Wilde - were charmed by his effeminacy - and invited him to dinner parties where he could meet

influential people. Wilde settled in London in 1879 and shared a flat with a friend from Oxford, Frank Miles, through whom he was introduced to James McNeill Whistler, a painter (known for, *i. a. Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1* (1871), popularly known as *Whistler's Mother*) whose works Wilde had praised in a review (Sloan 2009: 9-11).

Already at Oxford, Wilde had told other students that he might one day become “a poet, a writer, a dramatist” (Sturgis 2018: 135). The first poems, written after his graduating in Oxford, were, according to Sturgis (2018: 142) suitable for a slim volume, and included a poem related to Greek gods and a poem, which Sturgis (2018: 142) describes as a “Keatsian classical fantasy”. These poems did not, however, interest editors, who did not even read them. Disappointed, Wilde then turned to playwriting. Wilde was asked by Edmund Yates to contribute to the inaugural number of *Time*, a new literary monthly in 1879. His first appearance in an English periodical and first formal debut on the literary scene of London took place in April 1879 with a poem titled ‘Conqueror of Time’ (Sturgis 2018: 143-144).

With his first play *Vera; or the Nihilist* (1880), Wilde hoped to find success in theatres but was met with indifference. However, more fame came from him being an “exemplary Aesthete” who was caricatured in different plays, such as *Where’s the Cat?* by du Maurier, performed in Criterion Theatre in November 1880 (Sturgis 2018: 170-171). Wilde came to see these plays and often commented on them in public, taking up the title of “aesthete”, and according to Sturgis (2018: 173), his fame seemed to nourish itself with slight nudges from Wilde and his older brother. Planning to use this fame, Wilde was determined to publish a book of poems. In June 1881, the first edition of his *Poems* was published, both in the United Kingdom and overseas in America (Sturgis 2018: 184-185).

Thanks to the *Poems* (1881) and being parodied in *Punch*, a British weekly magazine of humour and satire, and *Patience* (the opera which opened in Opera Comique

in London in April 1881 and in New York in September 1881), Wilde became well known in America and was invited overseas to the United States to give a series of lectures in 1881-1882 on the topics of the aesthetic movement and the English art and literature of his time which gave Wilde additional fame overseas. Wilde had always loved to dress extravagantly and sometimes femininely, for example having worn light coloured trousers and a flowered waistcoat when he moved to London (Sturgis 2018: 138), which created excitement in his American audience (Sloan 2009: 9-13).

Once he returned to Europe, he gave a lecture tour in Britain in 1883-85 and got married to Constance Lloyd. Most of Oscar Wilde's literary activity took place between the years 1885 and 1890; this burst of creative energy was due to a public quarrel with Whistler whom he had met, according to Sloan (2009: 16-17). Although they had been friends for many years, Sloan (2009: 11-16) points out that this friendship turned sour because Whistler believed that Wilde was plagiarising his ideas about art, mentioning his ire in a diary entry in March 1884 (Sturgis 2018: 321) and in 1885 gave a lecture to discredit Wilde. Wilde's reply in which he praised his friend's work was published the next day; Sturgis (2018: 323), however, reveals that Wilde did not publish the reply just because he wanted to – he had actually been paid to listen and to comment on the lecture for the behalf of *Pall Mall Gazette*.

It is possible that Whistler, a painter, influenced the creation and demise of Basil Hallward's character in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde admitted that in the original draft, the painter that Dorian kills is based on Whistler (Anderson, Koval 1995: 314). Wilde had told the likeness was not coincidental to the translator Jean-Joseph Renaud (J.J. Renaud 1904 in Ellmann 1988: 261), but this likeness was erased from the novel in fear of libel (Ellmann 1988: 261). The published versions of the novel (Frankel, Wilde 2012 and Wilde 2017) therefore do not have these similarities. One of the remaining similarities

between Whistler and Hallward's character is the fact that both are famous for a portrait painting - *Whistler's mother* (1871) and the portrait of Dorian respectively.

Wilde knew the dangers of being homosexual but was friends with those who were (Ellmann, 1988: 259). In her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1993: 172-177), Sedgwick divides the (male) homosexual culture of Victorian time into three categories, which are based on class – aristocratic men and their associates, middle-class gentlemen, and working-class men. Out of these categories, she assigns Wilde to the aristocratic subculture of homosexual men, which is described by secrecy but also by having people (*e.g.* male prostitutes) dependent on the homosexual aristocracy and by dissipation. Wilde certainly was a stereotypical aristocratic homosexual, whose traits, according to Sedgwick (1993: 93) include effeminacy, connoisseurship and high religion. Wilde indeed has been characterised by dressing effeminately; he was educated enough to know much about art and belonged to circles of artists and literary people.

Sloan (2009) brings out the source of Wilde's ideal relationship between two men to be similar to that of the Ancient Greek world where the affection and admiration between an older and a younger man was a usual practice. A well-known example would be Plato's *Republic*, where male attractions and liaisons are honoured, but intercourses condemned (Sloan 2009: 16–17). Wilde himself did, however, go further than his ideal of just admiring a younger man and offering him affection. When his wife Constance was pregnant in 1886, Wilde met then 17-year old Robert Ross who, according to Wilde (Ellmann 1988: 261) seduced him and initiated Wilde into homosexual acts for the first time, and therefore Wilde became a criminal under the law (Sloan 2009: 18, 128). Wilde was not attracted to anal sex, so, presumably, Ross introduced him to oral and intercrural sex. Ross would remain in Wilde's life until his death, first as a lover, then as a friend (Ellmann 1988: 259). This relationship inspired Wilde and he wrote *The Portrait of Mr W. H.* in which he tried

to prove that Shakespeare was in love with a boy-actor who inspired him to write his best works (Sloan 2009: 19). After the affair with Ross had begun, Wilde became increasingly involved with practising Greek love, which he had previously only alluded to and never really practised (Mendelsohn 2008: 218).

Ellmann (1988: 261) brings out similarities between Wilde's own life and the characters of *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. When the affair between Wilde and Ross began, Wilde was thirty-one – in the first version (1890) of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian Gray is thirty-two, close to Wilde's age, when Dorian Gray stabs the painter of his picture. In the republished version (1891), Dorian's age is changed to thirty-eight instead, which gives testimony to the wish to erase biographical links in the novel. Ross's age is also significant; when Wilde and Ross met, Ross was 17, and Dorian Gray's first love, Sibyl Vane, is also seventeen. In addition to this, in *The Portrait of Mr W. H.*, the age of Shakespeare's boy lover is also seventeen.

Three years later, in 1889, not long before he wrote the first draft of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde became intimate with John Gray, a library clerk, who became the alleged model for Dorian Gray. Even the last names of the so-called muse and the character are the same (Sloan 2009: 18). There are other similarities between Wilde's life and the novel: for example, according to some scholars Wilde himself, being an older man by the time, allegedly was the prototype for the painter Basil Hallward, since he has said that "Hallward is what I think I am" (Wilde in Hart-Davis, Holland: 116). Furthermore, John Gray and Wilde met in the house of Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, the Symbolist art couple, that was the centre of a bohemian circle; similarly, Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton meet in Basil Hallward's art studio (Sloan 2009: 18). Wilde himself also influenced Gray's career, going as far as to pay for the publication of Gray's first book of poems called *Silverpoints*. However, Sloan (2009: 16-19) points out that Wilde nurtured

the personalities and talents of other young men as well. Gray stopped seeing Wilde by March 1893, knowing that he had been replaced by Douglas (Ellmann 1988: 362, 370).

In May 1891, Wilde was introduced to Lord Alfred Douglas (by an Oxford undergraduate and poet Lionel Johnson). Douglas was eager to become Wilde's closest companion and soon replaced Gray. Although Douglas later claimed that Wilde was the one who seduced him, evidence points that Douglas was the one who introduced Wilde to the dangerous world of rent boys and blackmailers. Wilde himself found the danger to be half of the excitement (Ellmann 1988: 366-367, Sloan 2009: 22-23), describing the feeling of casual homosexual encounters with rent boys as "feasting with panthers" (Sloan 2009: 23).

Wilde's relationship with Douglas would lead him into bankruptcy, imprisonment and scandals. One of such scandals took place in October 1893 when a father of a schoolboy who had slept with Wilde, Robert Ross and Douglas threatened litigation. In addition to that, Wilde had to pay blackmail money for the return of a letter to Douglas which contained a romantic message (Sloan 2009: 23-24). Douglas was bold and boastful about being loved by Wilde, and in time Wilde began to see that Bosie, as Douglas was called, was not only beautiful but also reckless and temperamental (Ellmann 1988: 364). According to Ellmann (1988: 369) in late 1892 John Gray confided to a mutual friend of his and Wilde's that he was contemplating suicide because of Douglas's boasting.

Although Wilde tried on several occasions to break up with Douglas, they continued their relationship until Wilde's imprisonment. It was also Douglas who encouraged Wilde to press charges against Marquess of Queensberry, Douglas's own father (Sloan 2009: 23-25). Queensberry had accused Wilde of being a queer and threatened him. Queensberry even left a note for Wilde which read "To Oscar Wilde, posing sodomite". Robert Ross encouraged Wilde not to take action, but spurred on by Douglas, Wilde decided to sue him

for libel. On 3 April, Wilde realised that instead of Queensberry, it was he who was on trial (Sloan 2009: 25). He was being interrogated about his alleged homosexuality and corrupting young men through advances as well as writing. During the process Wilde was forced to admit that he was 40, not 38, hence the case for the defence of Queensberry as a father who was trying to protect his son from a predatory older man was made (Sloan 2009: 25). As a result, a warrant for Wilde's arrest was signed, on charges of "committing acts of gross indecency" (Sloan 2009: 25). Wilde was encouraged to leave the country, but he did not.

After being asked what the phrase "the Love that dare not speak its name" from a homosexual poem by Douglas meant, Wilde gave a speech in which he explained that there is nothing unnatural between love between an older and a younger man and that it is "the noblest form of affection" (Sloan 2009: 26). Furthermore, when asked if he kissed a certain boy, Wilde replied that he had not because the boy was "plain". Mendelsohn (2008:225) speculates that However, by such statements Wilde gave his opponents more material to work with. At the end of the trial, the jury could not come to a verdict. The second trial of Wilde took place from 22 May to 25 May 1895, and he was sentenced to imprisonment for two years with hard labour (Sloan 2009: 26).

1.4. Censorship

The Picture of Dorian Gray was first published in July 1890 simultaneously in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in Philadelphia, the USA and in England (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 4, 35). It is certain that when the first edition of the novel was published, James Stoddart and his associates, editors for Lippincott, had made some alterations to Wilde's work – more specifically they altered the punctuation, rewrote some words to conform to the American spelling and purged the text of some phrases that were seen as not appropriate at that day and age (Wilde and Frankel 2012: 38, 41-42). James Stoddart had

expressed his concern about the homoerotic tones in Wilde's writing, so he purged about 500 words and sentences alike (SP Books 2018). For instance, sentences and phrases that described Basil Hallward's homoerotic feelings towards Dorian more vividly were deleted (Wilde and Frankel 2012: 38, 41-42), as well as the sentence of Basil describing the portrait that he painted: "There was love in every line, and in every touch there was passion" (SP Books 2018).

Still, the reaction from the press was almost completely hostile, especially from the British press, and Wilde was accused of immorality (Wilde and Frankel 2012: 5; Sloan 2009: 93). It may be that it was because of the topics that the novel dealt with such as mortality of beauty and youth, corruption of the soul and art, and how art imitates life and it contained hints and allusions to same-sex love. Because the media, the police and political establishments felt that the government had not succeeded in prosecuting immoral behaviour among the wealthy; and because in 1890 Emile Zola's English publisher Henry Vizetelly was prosecuted twice for immorality, it is possible that Wilde's novel was read more closely (Wilde and Frankel 2012: 42). William Henley's *Scots Observer* claimed that Wilde had written for "none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys", which referenced to a scandal that had happened a year before and had involved telegraph boys and a nobleman at a homosexual brothel (Henley in Sloan 2009: 93-94).

Other Wilde's critics considered the novel as a confession of homosexuality at a time when sexual relations between two men were outlawed; Wilde himself said that such accusations stemmed from the minds of the accusers, and not from his intent. Some critics, for example, *The Fortnightly Review* thought the story was "too dangerous" and would corrupt people, and advised Wilde to not print it at all (Sloan 2009: 95, 97). Due to the backlash, an influential bookseller WH Smith refused to stock the July issue of *The Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* (SP Books 2018).

No matter what the reviews and critics said, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published in 1891 by Ward, Lock and Company in the United Kingdom (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 35). This, however, was already an altered, a censored version - Wilde was asked to clean the text from previously uncensored hints to homosexuality (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 38, 41-42). This version was furthermore expanded from thirteen chapters to twenty, went through some structural changes, has additional characters and introductory set of aphorisms, and is nowadays the basis of most editions that are published (*Ibid*: 35; SP Books 2018). However, the censorship resulted in the fact that some passages are lost from the original version, for example, the following confession from Basil to Dorian disappears from the novel: “It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow I have never loved a woman /.../ I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly” (SP Books 2018). More passages that have been deleted or altered together with explanations and comments will follow.

However, it is rather certain that Wilde himself self-censored his writing before sending it to James Stoddart, the editor of the first American edition of the novel. In 2018, SP Books published the original manuscript of the whole novel, which was submitted to *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1890. Wilde's grandson Merlin Holland helped to transcribe some of the passages from the manuscript to show how Wilde himself had censored phrases that could have been seen as homoerotic in the context of the 19th century English homophobia (Lithub 2018; SP Books 2018). Such phrases mostly concerned how Basil Hallward saw Dorian, and what he thought of the young man:

“...Basil Hallward's use of the word “beauty” in reference to Dorian Gray is, for example, replaced by the softer “good looks.” The word “passion” becomes “feeling,” “boy” is replaced by “lad.” Passages are also crossed out, such as Basil's confession: “The world becomes young to me when I hold [Dorian Gray's] hand.” (SP Books 2018).

As we can see from the omitted passage, Wilde himself changed the word “beauty” that is most often used when (men) are describing women, and toned down the romantic indications that would make it clearer that Basil Hallward’s feelings towards Dorian Gray were more romantic and sexual than just friendly. Furthermore, another passage disappears from the manuscript because of self-censorship: “It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow I have never loved a woman... I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly” (SP Books 2018).

These discarded sentences very clearly showcase both Basil Hallward’s homosexuality and his romantic feelings towards Dorian Gray as well as have parallels to Wilde’s personal life. Since Hallward explicitly admits he has never loved women, it is evident that this is another homosexual allusion that Oscar Wilde deleted in fear of backlash of the homophobic 19th Century public.

2. Empirical Analysis

2.1. Methodology

The basis for this analysis are two different versions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde – *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published by Alma Classics in 2017; and *The Uncensored Picture of Dorian Gray*, published by Harvard University Press in 2012, which has been edited by Nicholas Frankel. Frankel's edited version claims to be as close to the original publication that was published in 1890 by *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* as possible. However, most of the quotations used are from the novel published in 2017, to show how many allusions to queerness has stayed in the 1891 version of the novel, which was published by Ward, Lock and Company as it is the basis of most modern republished versions.

There are three main characters in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. In the following three subchapters this thesis will analyse the source text and the clues it gives. Additionally, papers and articles by Alley (2009), Brinkley (1998), Cohen (1987), Sanna (2012), SP Books (2018) and others will be used to link the text together with reasons why it is possible that the characters are intentionally depicted as queer. Alley (2009) takes a look at Basil Hallward's character and how his feelings for Dorian are shown in the text; additionally, Alley points out how homophobia is depicted by Wilde. While Brinkley closely analyses the relationships between Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton and how the two older men influence Dorian Gray in his road of self-exploration of queerness, he, like Alley (2009: 5-6), brings attention to internalised homophobia (1998: 72) that Dorian Gray has. Sanna (2012: 34-35) agrees that Dorian Gray carries internalised homophobia, but he also exemplifies how societal norms influenced the behaviour of the characters to be more secretive about their affections. These works inform this current thesis and help to find the

appropriate quotes and passages to analyse and are linked to the discussion in the following analyse.

There are different stylistic features indicating to homoeroticism in the novel that will be more closely examined in the following analysis. These features include metaphors, hidden references, implications but also the attitude and degree of emotionality that adjectives and adverbs carry. Furthermore, some phrases get a new meaning when put into the right context for it to be possible to queer read of the text; for the context, notes from the biography of Oscar Wilde have been made in addition to the general socio-cultural background. Moreover, as mentioned in the last subchapter, censorship of certain phrases and words refers to there having been inappropriate allusions linked to these phrases, which also will be analysed.

However, when reading the novel closely, there were no certain features that were looked at; instead, the material provided the examples and the answers. Additionally, it is examined how narrative situations and tools that the language uses are used in the novel to allude to homoeroticism or homosexuality.

2.2. Dorian Gray

According to Brinkley (1998: 65), the core of the relationship between Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry is a social experiment of homosexualisation, and that the structure of the relationship is of a homosexual triangle. The object of the experiment is Dorian who is a protégé for two older men. In Basil Hallward's studio where Lord Henry and Dorian meet for the first time, and where they, along with Hallward, sit and converse, we can see how Basil and Lord Henry try to seduce Dorian. Basil wishes to enamour Dorian through his art, Lord Henry tries to beguile the young man with his words. Lord Henry's "low musical voice" captivates Dorian (Cohen 1987: 807-808) and his words touch "some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now

vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses” (Wilde 2017: 21). The choice of words here has very clear sexual undertones. Lord Henry’s words having had touched a “secret chord” that was previously untouched could imply that previously nobody (no man) had said anything to Dorian that would make him feel the “vibrations” of what could be excitement or pleasure.

Furthermore, Lord Henry tries to persuade Dorian into acknowledging his desires, implying that Dorian has felt “passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, daydreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheek with shame” (Wilde 2017: 20). These desires may be shameful to Dorian just because he is still young and getting to know what he likes, but it is possible that Lord Henry means desires that are not towards young women and instead, Dorian’s desires lay with men. This last claim is supported by the choice of words which all refer to Dorian having felt fear and shame when thinking about passions. If Dorian’s passion and feelings had been related to women, it is unlikely that he would have felt afraid or ashamed, thus those passions must have been aimed towards men.

Cohen (1987: 808) argues that those words, which include Lord Henry’s thoughts about how a man (and the world) should return to the Hellenic ideals^{5,6}, affect Dorian so much that his “look” changes. This look is captured by Basil, who expresses it through his lens of desire, which adds to Dorian’s status as an object of desire. Dorian is both a subject and an object of desire – subject in the sense of being a young man, and an object in the sense of being the portrait that is painted of him. Cohen (1987: 809) argues that Dorian being objectified gives new subtext to Dorian’s wish that instead of him, the picture would age; that time would never steal his youth and beauty, which makes him desirable to men:

⁵ Wilde himself did approve of such ideals, thinking that the relationship between two men in Ancient Greece was ideal.

⁶ Brinkley (1998: 65) points out that the novel offers a vantage point for those who have “crushed grapes against [their] palate” (quoted in Brinkley 1998: 65, square brackets mine) and “know what the Greeks knew”.

“I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Til 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. /--/ Youth is the only thing worth having.” (Wilde 2017: 27). Dorian wishes to stay young for as long as possible so that men would like him as an object of desire for as long as possible; that men would look at him and admire him instead of the painting of him or the sculptures he mentions.

Dorian’s wish comes true and Dorian trades his soul for eternal beauty, but with every immoral deed he commits, his picture changes; each misdeed transforms the painting to a more grotesque form of Dorian’s face. As Dorian realises how his self-image [the picture] and self-representation [his own beauty] differ, he enters a world of self-abuse and destruction, through which he is the downfall of many women **and** men (Cohen 1987: 810). These misdeeds could *i.a.* be homosexual acts, which simply are not written explicitly in the book. Instead, the reader is just presented with a description that shows how Dorian and his picture change.

Although Dorian has a relationship with Sibyl Vane, a young actress, whom he also plans to marry, Brinkley (1998: 68) claims that Sibyl Vane is purely an object and an aesthetic phenomenon for him. This is further explored in chapter seven (Wilde 2017) in which Dorian claims that Sibyl has “killed his love“ for having not been as pleasing to watch on the stage as before. This further transforms his portrait to show his cruelty. It can also show how Dorian is less attracted to women and more attracted to men.

Additionally, Dorian seems not to cease his indulging in behaviour that is condemned even as he realises the consequences: “He grew more and more /--/ interested in the corruption of his own soul. /--/ He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them.” (Wilde 2017: 117-118). Sanna (2012: 28-29) argues that Dorian visiting the

distant parts of Whitechapel could be an allusion to encounters between queer men as in the 19th century Whitechapel was associated with criminality and because during the 19th-century homosexual acts between men were a criminal offence.

Furthermore, many of Dorian's male friends seem to be disgraced by his company (*Ibid.*: 31) and Basil remarks upon this later in the novel: "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men?" (Wilde 2017: 137). The implication of Dorian and the young men having more than friendship between them is even more explicit in the unedited manuscript: "Why is it that every young man you take up seems to come to grief, to go to the bad at once?" (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 182). The latter implies that Dorian either took a close interest in these young men or engaged in a relationship with them, which could have led to the demise of these young men once it was found out that they were having close relations with Dorian.

Even Dorian killing Basil and then forcing Alan Campbell to get rid of the body via the means of blackmail (Wilde 2017: 153-158) contributes to the hypothesis of Dorian being queer. Sanna (2012: 31) argues that because Dorian knew of Campbell's sin, it must have been committed within Dorian's presence. Although there are many 'sins' Campbell could have committed with/near Dorian, one of the possibilities is that they had a (romantic or sexual) relationship. Later, Campbell resorts to suicide – exemplifying how a (queer) man would rather prefer suicide⁷, which was also shameful, than the punishment of the law. This theory is supported by the text: "They had been great friends once, five years before /--/ Then the intimacy had come suddenly to an end. When they met in society now, it was only Dorian Gray who smiled: Alan Campbell never did. /--/ For eighteen months their intimacy lasted." (Wilde 2017: 150-151). Although it is possible that the intimacy that

⁷ See, for example, Brady 2005: 109-110.

was between Dorian and Alan Campbell was a close friendship, the alternative is that the intimacy refers to the two men having been intimate with each other in a romantic way.

However, Alley (2009: 6) and Brinkley (1998: 72) point out that Dorian killing Basil, and then destroying the painting, however, can be read as an act of internalised homophobia and killing the same-sex desire in himself. It can be read as an act of internalised homophobia because the painting is a representation of how beautiful Basil saw Dorian and his erotic homosexual desire towards Dorian. By eliminating the person who desired him and the painting that showed such desire, Dorian eliminates the homosexual desire surrounding himself, and as he destroys the object which incited Dorian's wish to be desired by men, Dorian eradicates his own same-sex desires.

2.3. Basil Hallward

Dorian Gray is not the only character in the book who can be read as being queer. The first chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* opens with a conversation between Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. The whole scene takes place outdoors, and as Basil says, Dorian absorbs his "whole nature" (Wilde 2017: 10). The first time that Basil saw Dorian, he was immediately attracted to his "personality". Dorian has captivated Basil and is all he thinks about or at least the only person he thinks about.

Furthermore, another passage that happens to be crossed out from the 20th page of the original manuscript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that was published by SP Books in 2018, has the lines: "[Dorian sat beside me] and as he leaned across to look at it his hand just brushed my cheek /--/ touched my hand. The world becomes young to me, when I hold his hand and when I see him the centuries yield all up their secrets" (SP Books 2018). This passage that Wilde himself omitted exemplifies how Basil responds to Dorian's touch, and how the response is not plainly platonic. The deletion of this passage furthermore enforces the idea that it must have had a homosexual romantic undertone to it.

Jeffrey Meyers (quoted in Alley 2009: 4) says that the novel is “about the jealousy and pain, the fear and guilt of being a homosexual”. This is illustrated by Basil explaining how he felt when he first saw Dorian: “that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows” (Wilde 2017: 10). This can easily be understood - while (requited) love can bring “exquisite joys”, same-sex relationships were seen as something vile when Wilde wrote the book (the events of the novel take place in Wilde’s contemporary time) and thus could bring “exquisite sorrows” in the form of just heartache or scorn of others, but also actual punishment in the form of hard labour, for example, as homosexual acts were punishable by law under either the Buggery Act of 1533 or under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 (Adut 2005: 215, Brady 2005: 84, Cocks 2003: 6).

In the following lines of the dialogue, Basil expresses how he cares greatly about Dorian, but his words could be interpreted as more than just friendly. For example, when Lord Henry asks how often Basil and Dorian meet, Basil exclaims: “Every day! /--/ He is absolutely necessary to me.” and “He is all my art to me.” (Wilde 2017: 13). Although this can show that Basil simply is amiable towards Dorian, there are more allusions that could be seen from the previously quoted passages that indicate there is another side to this intimacy, most of them showcasing how Basil finds Dorian beautiful.

Basil’s fixation on (Dorian’s) male beauty stems from his inability to bring his love into the contemporary context and because during the time that the novel was written, a physical union of two men was taboo and outlawed (Alley 2009: 4). As he cannot show his love to Dorian explicitly, Basil turns to art. Dorian rouses “curious artistic idolatry” (Wilde 2017: 14) in Basil, which makes the artist paint the portrait of Dorian. According to Alley (2009: 4) and Cohen (1987: 806), the portrait of Dorian is a representation of Basil’s love and his erotic desire, and Basil’s desire is apparent in the words “you shall be varnished”

(Wilde 2017: 29) when considering that this is an erotic substitution of Dorian with the painting⁸ (Brinkley 1998: 66).

The narrator implies that Basil's love for Dorian is the love of one man for another: (Brinkley 1998: 67) "The love that he [Basil] bore him [Dorian] - for it was really love- had nothing in it that was noble and intellectual./--/ It was such love as Michel Angelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself. (Wilde 2017: 109)" The men whose names are brought as examples of the unintellectual and ignoble love are thought to have had relationships or affairs with other men⁹.

Later in the novel, Basil speaks to Dorian like a disappointed lover, and in the same chapter confesses his feelings (Alley 2009: 5): "/--/ I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend. /--/ I adored you madly /--/ I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you." (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 144). Combined with the utterance: "Somehow, I had never loved a woman." (Wilde, Frankel 2012: 144), it is not hard to read Basil Hallward as a queer character, more specifically as a homosexual man. The specification can be made on the basis of Basil admitting he has never loved any women, and that he wished to be with Dorian, and only time spent with Dorian was when he was happy.

However, Alley (2009: 4-5) points out that it is not possible for Basil to take action other than subtly confessing his feelings. Basil turns to the proverbial closet and pursues art instead. In the end, Basil's fixation with Dorian is what will be his undoing (Alley 2009: 4). This points to how when it became public knowledge (and often caused a scandal) that two adult men or a man and an underage boy or young man had had sexual relations, it would bring punishment to both parties.

⁸ In the context of paintings, they usually get a thin coat of gloss applied onto them, but in the context of erotica, *varnish* alludes to a body liquid that is similar to varnish.

⁹ Wilde was sure that Shakespeare owed his genius to having a young male lover. He wrote a book *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.* based on this belief.

2.4. Lord Henry

Lord Henry is the third most important character in the novel, and even though he has a wife, there are certain hints that Lord Henry has a romantic or sexual interest in Dorian Gray. However, as Lord Henry also has romantic or sexual interests in women (and is married), his character can be considered queer and not homosexual.

At first, Lord Henry becomes interested in Dorian through Basil's passionate story and then tries to seduce Dorian with his ideas (Cohen 1987: 807-808). For example, Lord Henry tells Dorian that he is very charming, but he also talks about how there are no good influences, and to influence someone else is to lend them your sins and virtues (Wilde 2017: 19-21). Lord Henry emphasises how it would be greatly beneficial to the whole world if a man could live out his life fully and to give into every dream he has (Wilde 2017: 20). Dorian reacts by asking Lord Henry to stop, and then stands still, thinking for a while: "with parted lips and eyes strangely bright" (Wilde 2017: 20). Albeit Lord Henry seducing Dorian can be seen as Lord Henry trying to outdo Basil and not necessarily finding Dorian attractive, he does more than just discussing ideas of hedonism and youth with Dorian.

More specifically, Brinkley (1987: 71) claims that it is Lord Henry who gives Dorian a little yellow book, which "converts" him into a "new Hedonist" and a homosexual "Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed" (Wilde 2017: 115). It is as if Dorian realises, after reading the book, that the same-sex desire in him can be acknowledged and acted upon. And even if those allusions are just seen as coincidental, meaning that Lord Henry was simply sharing his ideas or recommending a good book for Dorian, Lord Henry is the one who influences Dorian to engage in "splendid sins" and "sordid shame", which again

could point to Dorian indulging in same-sex desire (Sanna 2012: 28). It is also possible that Lord Henry suggests Dorian take up something that he himself knows about in great detail.

Additionally, a conversation that Lord Henry has with Gladys in chapter XVII (Wilde 2017: 176-180) plays out as if they are fighting over Dorian – Lord Henry, again, on the side of the Greeks (Brinkley 1998: 69): “Greek meets Greek then?” (Wilde 2017: 179) Lord Henry asks his cousin, who replies: “I am on the side of the Trojans.” (Wilde 2017: 179). Although this may not mean much, Lord Henry has earlier made sure to emphasise the Greek way of life as the right way to live when talking to Dorian, which hints at the relationship between an older and a younger man in Ancient Greece. Lord Henry blames Gladys for not flirting with Dorian gracefully enough and agrees that Dorian is fascinating. Furthermore, Lord Henry admits that he thinks beauty is more important than being good, but being good is better than being ugly (Wilde 2017: 176, 179). As being good can also mean being morally good, it is possible to argue that Lord Henry thinks that as long as a person, no matter their gender, is beautiful, they can be “bad” *i.e.* they can go against the law with their behaviour (*i.a.* they can have same-sex relationships that were seen as unlawful).

However, compared to Basil, who is focused on Dorian and never expresses attraction towards women, Lord Henry exclaims: “Because I have loved so many of [actresses], Dorian.” (Wilde 2017: 49) and that he likes “men who have future, and women who have a past,” (Wilde 2017: 163). This can point to Lord Henry being attracted to both men and women, but only those who gain his interest because of their pasts or possible futures, or who, as Lord Henry has mentioned before, are beautiful.

2.5. Conclusion

All three main characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* have been written in a way that it is possible to read and depict the characters as queer (or homosexual, in the case of

Basil Hallward). Although two of the three characters (Dorian and Lord Henry) are shown to be interested in women; Dorian in Sibyl and Lord Henry has a wife; this does not mean they are exclusively attracted to women. Through dialogue, mostly between the three main characters, and descriptions of these characters, *e.g.* Dorian standing quietly and thinking after Lord Henry has spoken to him in Basil's studio, hints are given about how the three main characters feel and express same-sex desires – this is shown most frequently through depicting Basil Hallward, *e.g.* how Dorian is what art means to him now.

These hints are not always explicitly stated and most often the allusions to queerness have to be read between the lines, which applies the best to Lord Henry Wotton, who tells Dorian how Hellenic ideals are good and that men should return to those. This love for Ancient Greek ideals and the relationship between men in Ancient Greek relates back to Oscar Wilde's own life, which is another hint of how Wilde has queer-coded the characters of Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray, them mirroring the older man who teaches a younger man relationship, with homosexual undertones.

CONCLUSION

This thesis gave an overview of Oscar Wilde's biography and his relations to homosexuality and in addition to that, queer theory and regarding the terms *queer* and *homosexual* the thesis explained how they were coined and their usage to help set up the framework. Furthermore, the explanation of the terms helped to describe how the terms were used in the context of this thesis while discussing the characters. In the thesis, it was explored how Oscar Wilde hints at the queerness of the three main characters in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* through text – through dialogue between the characters, and describing passages.

This thesis explained the background of legislature during the time of the novel being written, brought examples on how Oscar Wilde censored his own writing and how his writing was further censored by editors, and to help further read the text critically from the perspective of queer theory, an overview of Oscar Wilde's biography was given. Moreover, the legislature that has been discussed helps to show the reasons why it was important to Oscar Wilde to be very careful about censorship and to word everything so that the writing could not be used to claim that Wilde was promoting immorality, although later such claims still were made.

The aim of this thesis was to find textual evidence from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* about the queerness of the three main characters of the novel – Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. This thesis found that there are plenty of passages that when analysed through the lens of queer perspective allude to the three main characters of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* being queer characters and having been initially intended as such, and that them having been portrayed this way could have allusions to Oscar Wilde's own life.

This thesis used different previous analyses and queer readings of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, e.g. analyses by Alley (2009), Brinkley (1998), Cohen (1987) and Sanna (2012), to help with locate the relevant passages and to analyse the findings better. Some of these passages are from the original manuscript that dates back to the year 1890 and were later edited out, but most of them are still found in the modern editions of the novel, more precisely in editions that have been published in 2012 by Harvard University Press and 2017 by Alma Classics. These passages often include dialogue in which characters express their feelings, but there are also implications to queerness in the descriptions that Wilde uses. When the findings are put into the socio-cultural context or the legislative context is given, the allusions to queerness become more apparent.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Amanda Poopuu

Oscar Wilde and the Allusions to Queerness in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* / Oscar Wilde ja vihjed mitte-heteroseksuaalsusele „Dorian Gray portrees“

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Töö koosneb kahest peatükist. Esimene, teoreetiline, peatükk annab ülevaate *queer*-teooriast ning sõnavalikust (*queer* versus homoseksuaalne), mida hiljem töös kasutatakse; Wilde'i kaasaja seadusandlusest homoseksuaalsusega seotud teemadega seoses; Wilde'i eluloost ning sellest, kuidas ning mil määral muudeti teksti, et romaan ei satuks inimeste pahameele alla kuna on liiga ebamoraalne. Teine peatükk on empiiriline analüüs, milles vaadeldakse lähemalt kolme peategelase käitumist ning dialoogi tekstis ning analüüsitakse vihjeid tegelaste mitte-heteroseksuaalsusele.

Bakalaureusetööst selgub analüüsi tulemusena, et romaanis leidub hulgaliselt viiteid peategelaste mitte-heteroseksuaalsele seksuaalsele sättumusele, millest on paremini võimalik aru saada teades Wilde'i kaasaja tabuteemasid ning kuidas selliseid vihjeid sõnadesse peideti.

Märksõnad:

Oscar Wilde, inglise kirjandus, *queer*-teooria, lähilugemine, Victoria aja kirjandus

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