THE ARCHIVE OF THE YOUNGER MAN IN NOVELS BY OSCAR WILDE, STAN PERSKY, AND STEPHEN GRAY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

University of Manitoba

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Robert W. Gray

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ABSTRACT

What pervades novels such as Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, Stan Persky's Buddy's, and Stephen Gray's Time of Our Darkness, is an older man's fantasy which is facilitated and maintained through discursive power. The fantasy requires a representation of the younger man that signifies what Edward Said calls "a privileged communal significance." The older men this study discusses make themselves the cognitive and discursive centres of the texts they inhabit so that they may conceal their corrupting, abusive relations of power and preserve the representation and the fantasy of a reciprocated desire.

This study will attempt to construct an archive of the younger man as a series of cultural representations. The concept of the archive in this study comes from Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge, but it will also follow Said's assertion that there is an affinity between texts that shapes an archive. Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray is the first modern deposit in that archive; Persky's Buddy's literally incorporates other texts from that archive; and Gray's Time of Our Darkness less self-consciously puts that archive into action in the social and political world.

The uniformity with which these narratives reappear, and the uncomfortable relationship they share with real socio-economic conditions, is politically revealing. In an attempt to reconcile this study with the "real" world the conclusion will approach "affiliation" by looking at two recent gay cultural developments which show how the issues around representation raised in this study are heavily implicated in the search for a

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My advisor Dr. David Williams helped make this a highly rewarding process. His work ethic is unparalleled and will serve as a standard of excellence I will always attempt to achieve. Without him I could not have made the journey from inarticulate conviction to completed thesis. Dr. Judith Weil and Dr. Robert Kroetsch were also instrumental in this process. I also wish to thank Dr. Smaro Kamboureli for her friendship, her encouragment and her advice.

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INTRODUCTION:

> They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.
>
> --Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

* * *

> The extent to which male prostitution has invaded our social life is evidenced by the existence of the infamous crew who admitted at the Old Bailey their intercourse with Oscar Wilde for monetary consideration. These unsexed blackguards are the putrid spawn of civilization. It did not require Wilde to degrade them. They were brutes before he ever set eyes upon them. It is appalling to think that the conviction of any man should depend upon the testimony of such loathsome creatures.
>
> --Reynolds' Newspaper
> May 26, 1895

The day after Oscar Wilde was convicted of indecency, a curious indictment, fraught with class distinctions, appeared on the front page of Reynolds' Newspaper under the simple headline, "Male Prostitution." The article seems to be rallying support to Wilde by denouncing and denigrating the young men who testified against Wilde, going so far as to say that Wilde could have had little influence on these "putrid spawn of civilization" because they "were brutes before he set eyes upon them." Richard Ellmann

likewise suggests that Wilde "did not corrupt [these young men]"(Ellmann 390). They "were ready to say anything to stay free"(Ellmann 449).

What a nineteenth-century publication and a twentieth-century academic take as a given is this representation of the lower-class younger man, a representation which holds what Edward Said calls "a privileged communal significance"(Said 1979, 1). Although ostensibly the male prostitutes had something at stake in the legal, commercial, and criminal arrangements in which they were involved, this representation of the younger man as "putrid spawn of civilization," always already corrupt, was produced by, and of service to, those of a more privileged class.

The image of the younger man as an object of beauty and as a catalyst in "homoerotic" and "gay" texts is so exhaustively represented in the Western canon that a comprehensive study is not only unimaginable but undesirable. What may prove more productive in this more limited study will be an approach which looks at what Foucault terms "events": significant moments in which the younger-man figure appears and functions. This study will analyze "events" in order to suggest how they together form what Foucault calls a "statement" wherein the "archive...is the system of [the statement's] functioning. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, [the archive] is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration"(Foucault 1972, 129).

Edward Said, whose study of Orientalism as a discursive system of power is based upon Foucault's notion of the archive, candidly admits that he "depends neither

upon an exhaustive catalogue of texts dealing with the Orient nor upon a clearly delimited set of texts, authors, and ideas that together make up the Orientalist canon"(Said 4). Like Said, I am not interested so much in delimiting a canon as I am in exposing a systematic practice of representation which may be said to constitute an archive, or a system of knowledge. In this study, I choose to focus on an archaeological process which will examine "discourses as practices specified in the element of the [younger man/older man] archive"(Foucault 1972, 131).

In order to understand the production and control of "younger men" within a system of representation, it is necessary to examine them as a discourse. Said argues that "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possible understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage--and even produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (Said 3). The younger-man as an object of discourse is subject to a similar form of "systematic discipline" with which he is managed and produced. Through a discourse-analysis of the younger man as "event" in homosocial Western culture, this study will attempt to reveal how this figure functions in the older man's economy.

Such a discursive approach should not imply that the younger man is only an image, a creation without a corresponding reality. This study's focus will not be to flesh out that reality, but only to suggest where there are traces of that reality. What must preface this study is the assertion that the younger-man figure is always already eroticised and controlled because he can be; he is spoken for and represented because the older man

is able to appropriate him for his discourse. This assertion does not condone the older man's fantasy, the authority that operates within these texts; it only resists the illusion of any absolute authority: authority does not naturally and completely reside within the older man, though the older man invariably seeks to make himself the "author."

The older man can be involved in a whole series of possible relationships with the younger man without ever losing the relative upper hand. Said suggests that "[t]here is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed" (Said 20).

The discursive authority which is maintained by the older men in the three novels of this study is prone to ruptures: sites at which the older man's desire for authority and his fantasy of reciprocated desire are incompatible. Fissuring occurs when the older man transgresses the space between exhibitionist/voyeur and must relinquish--if only temporarily--his strategic location. It is this strategic location, the place in which he positions himself in relation to the younger man, which will be analyzed.

Terminology itself could become a site of struggle for authority, given the relative nature of terms like "younger" and "older" man. Physiology is often a determining factor in the sciences for differentiating between boyhood, puberty, and manhood, but socially these borders can be concealed, occluded, or transposed. Since the younger men in these three novels vary in age from thirteen to their early twenties, the term of difference

between "younger" and "older" man must be access to print, the potential for authorship. It is not one's age which admits one to the archive which is the focus of this study; it is instead the degree to which one can be produced and controlled by the older-man. To call these older men "pedophiles" or "pederasts" would be inaccurate in at least two of these works, and would limit the focus of this study. A more useful term can be derived from Ken Dowden's description of the rituals which took place in ancient Crete in which a younger man is "kidnapped" by an older man. He points out that Strabo called these young men "*parastathentes*...[or] stood-by...[or] kidnapped"(Dowden 114). To "capture" the younger-man in discourse, then, could be called an act of *parastathentism*, an action perpetrated upon a younger other regardless of specific age.

This study is divided into three chapters, each focusing on a single novel in an attempt to abstract the major characteristics of the archive of parastathentes. Chapter One, "Narcissus and the Art of Reflection," will explore the manipulation of desire in Oscar Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray. A central concern of this analysis will be the aesthetic theories advanced by Lord Wotton to shape the younger man in the "writer's" image, and the relation of these theories to Walter Pater's own influential doctrines. This chapter will begin a discussion of the older man's consolidation of self, his narcissism--a discussion which will pervade the entire study.

Chapter Two, "Inscribing Hyacinthus," will further the discussion on narcissism begun in the first chapter by examining the older man's consolidation of self through his retrieval into his own text of the archive developed in the century since Wilde wrote. In Stan Persky's Buddy's (1989), the older-man/narrator uses gossip and the guise of an

artist to protect and privilege his own position in the erotic episode. He controls the scene of representation so that he may conceal the socio-economic differences which threaten his identification with the younger men's desirability.

Chapter Three, "Rape of the Black Ganymede," adds questions of race to the archive. Stephen Gray's Time of Our Darkness (1988) will require not only an analysis of racial difference since the younger man is a black boy, but also of class difference because of the socio-economic and political situation under apartheid in South Africa. This third chapter will be followed by a conclusion wherein this study will approach two modern dilemmas of gay culture in order to demonstrate how such abuses of power affect the search for a personal and cultural gay identity.

Each of the titles I have used has incorporated a Greek myth as an analogy. Since they are my analogies, not images from the texts themselves--except in the case of The Picture of Dorian Gray--I will analyze them only in passing; and yet I advance them as exhibits within the larger archive, if only as metaphors for modern meaning. Already, a lot of work has been done in the analysis of Greek Love, four of the most notable works being Christine Downing's Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love, David Halperin's One Hundred Years of Homosexuality, and the last two volumes of Michel Foucault's The History of Sexuality, but for the purposes of this study I have chosen to maintain that Greek Love was culturally and historically specific, barely resembling modern homosexuality. Its use as an affirmation for the modern archive cannot be incorporated into this limited study, but is thoroughly analyzed in the four critical texts mentioned above.

In many ways this study is my attempt to understand my own strategic location in the archive of *parastathentes*, and the ways in which I have in the past participated in my own "kidnapping." In still other ways this study issues from a frustration I felt at the age of sixteen when I first considered my "difference" and went in search of myself in my local bookstore. At the time I was unable to articulate my desire, and the few books I found also seemed unable to: they were uncritically given almost entirely to the representation of older-man/younger-man relationships.

In the years that followed, what was at first bewilderment became anger as I could not relate to the inequality implicit in these texts and feared the influence that such narratives held over other young, gay men in their search for identity and their attempts to understand their own desire. As Edmund White suggests, "That our feelings run high when we discuss queer fiction only attests to the central role it plays in the formation of our culture. It sometimes seems more people discuss fiction than read it, but this intense scrutiny, even anxiety, reveals that for us, perhaps more than for any other group, fiction is a way of preserving the past, recording the present, creating the future"(White 40). This study, then, is an attempt to examine that past through what Foucault calls "the questioning of the document"(Foucault 1972, 6).

What I have tried to elucidate in these last few paragraphs is my own critical desire. Kaja Silverman suggests that "history itself may be both initially penetrable and subsequently recoverable only through fantasy"(Silverman 300). This study, then, is a detective story in search of a community and a profoundly confusing, sometimes paradoxical desire. For Said, "[t]he nexus of knowledge and power creating 'the Oriental'

and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not...an exclusively academic matter"(Said 27). Similarly for my study, there is at all times something personal in the analysis, even though it "is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance"(Said 27).

CHAPTER ONE

NARCISSUS AND THE ART OF REFLECTION: THE MANIPULATION OF DESIRE IN OSCAR WILDE'S THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

Oscar Wilde once commented to a correspondent, "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian is what I would like to be--in other ages, perhaps"(Ellmann 1988, 319). Although Wilde confesses that he identifies with all three of these characters, his readership in nineteenth *fin-de-siècle* England read the novel as a confession of his own crimes of desire for and influence over younger men, specifically Lord Alfred Douglas. By contrast, modern critics such as Richard Ellmann and Robert K. Martin argue that the character of Lord Wotton most likely "echoes Pater's early ascendancy over Wilde...[and] is the spokesman for an aestheticism gone extreme and insensitive"(Ellmann 320).

Dorian Gray, the novel's namesake, does insist that "there was to be, as Lord Henry had prophesied, a new Hedonism...Its aim indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be"(143). Dorian's description most obviously links Lord Henry to Walter Pater's rejection of a didactic purpose in art, wherein "[n]ot the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number

of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life"(Pater 1410). Lord Wotton is in many ways Wilde's version of Pater whose theories had a large impact on Wilde and his work. Thus, the triangular structure of desire between Lord Wotton, Basil, and Dorian is less a stage for confession than it is a demonstration of the narcissism and lack of empathy which characterizes decadent aestheticism--an exploration of the fruits of such an approach to life and art. Wotton employs the discourse of aesthetics and advocates life as a work of art in order to disguise the real influence he wields over Dorian.

Wotton's influence over Dorian is evident soon after their first meeting. When they part, Dorian gives up Basil's company for Lord Henry's, a choice which will lead to moral and mortal consequences. For this moment begins Dorian's choice between two opposing artistic philosophies: one a decadent aesthetics which Lord Henry embodies, and the other a "Platonic," Greek idealism in art which Basil represents. Basil Hallward is aware of Lord Henry's power to influence others, and fears its effect on young Dorian. He urges Lord Henry, "Don't spoil [Dorian]. Don't try to influence him. Your influence would be bad"(31). Wotton then denies that any influence could be good, since "the aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly--that is what each of us is here for"(34).

The ambiguity in Wotton's denial only becomes evident later in the novel when he confesses in private that he derives pleasure from influencing Dorian: "There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the music of passion and

youth"(51). It is in this private speech that Wotton's true intent and the tension between his public and private statements are revealed. Although it sounds like Lord Henry denounces influence, what he rejects is the morality which sets up an opposition between good influence and bad influence. When he tells Dorian that "to influence a person is to give him one's own soul"(34), he both confesses and conceals his desire to do just that.

From a narratological perspective, Wotton's private speech on the "terribly enthralling... exercise of influence" is also decisive, since it introduces a distinction in the novel between public and private pronouncements. Here, the third-person objective form of narration allows the implied author to judge the ethics of the "impersonal" aesthete who pretends to a perfectly disinterested appreciation of beauty. And so the reader, who is granted access to Lord Henry's thoughts, already knows what Basil suspects, but what Dorian will not see before he is utterly corrupted: Lord Henry's intent to seduce the boy and influence him.

The first step in Wotton's aesthetic seduction of Dorian is to reveal to Dorian an appreciation for his own beauty. He accomplishes this in his first monologues where he estimates for Dorian his value as an aesthetic object and encourages the heedless youth to become a split subject: both art object and connoisseur. Before Wotton has even been introduced to Dorian he names him "Narcissus," and this naming foreshadows the effect Wotton's speeches on the appreciation of beauty and youth will have on the young man: "Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus, and you--well, of course you have an intellectual expression and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of the

face"(21). Wotton's separation of beauty from intelligence is not, however, an anti-intellectual position; rather, he reserves for himself the power of intellect to dominate, while "freeing" beauty to accept unthinkingly his domination.

Wotton's later suggestion to Dorian that consciousness leads to self-realization is no less hypocritical, since he hints at the real economy of his aesthetic system:"The moment I met you I saw that you were quite unconscious of what you really are, of what you really might be"(39). In using "what" instead of "who," Wotton betrays his underlying view of the subject as an *objet d'art*, and of beauty as a commodity. Though he has just assured Dorian that his beauty is a gift, to be enjoyed as his private possession, he also reminds him that it is a gift which is not in his own keeping: "But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully....Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations"(39). Lord Henry thus creates in Dorian a desire for permanence as well as for passing sensation; he urges him to spend what he cannot keep, but he also enables him to think of his soul as a commodity which can be exchanged for eternal youth and beauty.

After he has heard Lord Henry's provocative words, Dorian looks at Basil's picture of him through new eyes and "the sense of his own beauty [comes] on him like a revelation"(41). The picture, he realizes, "will never be older than this particular day of June...If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old!...I would give my soul for that!"(42). This is the moment of fissure in the novel: Dorian wants to split himself into the art object which can be enjoyed by Dorian the connoisseur. When Basil fears that Dorian dislikes the painting, Dorian

reassures him by telling him, "I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself. I feel that"(44). Later in the novel Dorian will compare his reflection with the decaying picture using a hand-held mirror that has tiny cupids framing the reflective surface--a mirror which Wotton gave him as a gift. Wotton trains Dorian's gaze and directs it towards his own image, the picture which Basil has painted. But Wotton has already recreated Dorian the man in the image of Narcissus.

This act of recreating the subject in one's own image is ennabled, in part, by Dorian's lack of an immediate family. Such an accident of family history makes Dorian himself a virtual "blank canvas" on which Lord Henry can "paint" his desire. He is enticed by Dorian's lack of ancestry and seeks out his own uncle whom he is sure must know of Dorian's family. When Wotton finds that Uncle George tells the story "crudely"(51), he retells the story, cutting it down to what he sees as its romantic core:

> A beautiful woman risking everything for a mad passion. A few wild weeks of happiness cut short by a hideous, treacherous crime. Months of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man. Yes; it was an interesting background. It posed the lad, made him more perfect, as it were. Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic.
> (51)

This story provides a sketch of Dorian's past, a romantic stereotype of "this son of Love and Death"(52). This "tragedy" is merely an aesthetic category for Wotton that "posed the lad, made him more perfect, as it were"(51). When Lord Henry rewrites Dorian's story, he authorizes it and appropriates it as a frame for the work of art he will "paint" in the spaces

that this mere sketch of a history provides.

Both Dorian's parents are dead and he has had only a loveless old man as a parent: there is ample room for Lord Wotton to create his own design. Not only does the absence of parents allow Wotton to wear the disguise of a father, it also insures that his influence will not be questioned, and most of all, that Dorian will be a youth desiring influence--the absence of parents will have created a desire in the youth to be lovingly, attentively led. In the parentless youth, Wotton has an (almost) empty and eager canvas waiting for him.

Lord Henry thus sees himself as more than a consumer or connoisseur of Dorian's life; he also sees their relationship as one of an artist to a work of art. He decides that "he [will] try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait"(52). The paradox here escapes Wotton: he employs the comparison to illustrate how he wants to be an inspiration to Dorian, but the comparison also puts Wotton in the position of Narcissus desiring an image which is not the other (Dorian) but himself: "He would make that wonderful spirit his own"(52). The desired image is really a convoluted mirror: a mixture of the subject (Dorian, Wotton) with the other (Basil, Dorian), held in an image that displaces the other in the narcissistic subject's affections. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan argues that within this type of a "narcissistic structure, Imaginary relations--be they between individuals or societies--are governed by jealousy, competition, and aggressivity, mediated through idealization, love and the rationalizations which Lacan calls misrecognition"(Ragland-Sullivan 174). Ultimately, this process of misrecognition is a process whereby, as Gayatri Spivak argues, "the other must always be constituted by way of consolidating the self"(Spivak 521). Wotton's

aesthetic interest in Dorian evidently turns into a process of identification which seeks to consolidate the self of the voyeur.

When Wotton compares himself to Basil, he also reveals his view that for him life is art and Dorian will be his to mould:

> Grace was [Dorian's], and the white purity of boyhood, and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us. There was nothing that one could not do with him. He could be made a Titan or a toy. (52)

Though Wotton publicly professes to uphold the autonomy and freedom of the other--"Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul"(34)--the omniscient narrator later reveals that Wotton contradicts himself. He is not only aware of his influence over the youth, but he revels in it:

> Talking to [Dorian] was [for Wotton] like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow....There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. (51)

The musical image further emphasizes Wotton's conflating of the categories of art and life. This is an unspoken reminiscence within the text and all Dorian will ever hear are Wotton's speeches on the immorality of influence; even to the end, Wotton will insist to Dorian that "Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile"(228). But Wotton's "sterility" as an artist is in fact a mask for his view of the other as "instrument."

Dorian often senses that art and Wotton are not as sterile as Wotton claims. When Dorian argues that a book Wotton gave him is "a poisonous book"(138), Wotton replies that "the books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame"(228). Wotton would prefer to have Dorian believe that "Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets"(227). But what he conceals is how Dorian has been the instrument--"an exquisite violin"(51)--upon which he has played his own music. When his influence is called "poisonous" he can only retreat into a complete separation of life from art. But Dorian's life, like Wilde's novel[1] a piece of art, proves otherwise.

Lord Wotton first erases the boundary between art and life when he decides to shape the youth into an image according to his own desire. He will not paint a picture or sculpt a statue, he will manipulate Dorian's very life into a likeness of his ideal. In Sexual Personae[2], Camille Paglia argues that Wotton's influence creates "the fullest study of the

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[1]The Picture of Dorian Gray would go on to be an influential book in its own right. While Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde's sometime lover, was travelling in Egypt his travelling companions Robert Hichens, E.F. Benson (both novelists), Reggie Turner and his half-brother Frank Lawson "all knew *Dorian Gray* almost by heart and vied with one another in quoting bits of it"(Ellmann 1988, 415). Wilde had argued in his previous work that life imitates art, and his own art proved that "it is art which gives the age its character--Life, straggling after art, seizes upon forms in art to express itself, so that life imitates art rather than art life"(Ellmann 1985, 100).

[2]Paglia's critical study of Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson offers a wealth of knowledge on Decadent aestheticism, but her work is undermined by an essentialist agenda. Also, she seeks to illuminate the history of Decadent Art though a binary opposition: the opposition of Apollo and Dionysus. Her arguments replicate binary oppositions on almost every level and she has been denounced by most feminisms which recognize the shackles of such a structuralist system. I wish to glean a few of her useful insights here and to avoid, if at all possible, validating or importing her essentialism.

Decadent erotic principle: the transformation of person into objet d'art"(Paglia 512). The disguise of the artist nonetheless helps to cloak Wotton's voyeurism so that he will escape blame as the novel escalates.

Ostensibly Wotton's masks complicate any attempts to define his intentions or his desire. Each mask is an act of concealment and a device of power. When Wotton poses as a paternal figure, he evokes illusions of charity and selflessness in order to conceal his real intentions to mould Dorian into his aesthetic ideal. When he fashions himself as the artist he wears Basil as a disguise, aspiring to a detachment and disinterested observation that conceal his desire and interest in the actions and experiences in Dorian's life. He is, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's words, the one who "presides over the dispensation of discursive authority"(Sedgwick 48), so that he may maintain his power and seduce Dorian into becoming Narcissus.

Lord Wotton desires the split in Dorian's identity because, as Philip K. Cohen argues, "[his] lust for life is matched only by his timidity and fear of it. So he seeks vicarious self-realization through Dorian Gray"(Cohen 139). Wotton fashions Dorian into a split-consciousness, but because of his fear of life secures certain contingencies, as Cohen argues, "[i]n order to avoid responsibility"(138).[3] He uses paradox as one of these contingencies whenever he becomes too much the focus of any conversation. He will traverse the border between voyeurism and manipulation so long as he is not exposed, but

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[3] Cohen goes on to argue that this is a "moral evasion"(139), and oversimplifies Wotton's manipulations, since, as this thesis argues, he also conceals his own desire and his own intentions. Cohen's "moral" reading is too reductive.

as soon as he is exposed he employs devices of concealment: paradox and contradiction. In chapter seventeen he entertains the idea of rechristening everyone present, but when Dorian rechristens him as "Prince Paradox"(206), he exclaims that "From a label there is no escape!"(206), and refuses the title. Yet, there is no escape for Wotton from this label, for it names his typical means of concealment.

Both "Prince" and "Paradox" are revealing terms of power for Wotton: he has his class privilege (his title), and he has the power of the clever paradox which conceals; by such means, he maintains his discursive authority. And yet the reader is afforded the luxury of an "objective" perspective in the voice of the third-person narrator who sees past the cloak of paradox to Wotton's intentions and his desires. While reminiscing over his dinner with Dorian the night before, Wotton's intentions to dominate Dorian are exposed in the indirect discourse of the "objective" narrator:

> To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume: there was a real joy in that--perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims. (51)

Wotton originally named Dorian "a Narcissus"(21), but it is a name he should have also kept for himself. For Wotton's narcissism is already a nostalgic narcissism; aware of his age, he desires his "own intellectual views" with "the added music of passion and youth."

What he wants to shape Dorian into is an individual with his views but Dorian's youth and passion so that he can see himself with the face of another, more young and more beautiful. More specifically, Wotton has recreated Dorian in the image of Narcissus' reflection. Wotton tells Dorian that he is unconscious "of what [he] really might be"(39), but does not disclose to Dorian that his potential Dorian is really a narcissistic construction based on his own desire.

Contrary to Lord Henry's narcissistic desire is Basil's faith in the priority of the subject to his or her art; to him, art is mimetic, the mimesis of an idea, an idealism which is surely "Greek," if not consistently "Platonic." Typically, Basil describes his relationship with Dorian as one where Dorian has all the influence: "Some subtle influence passed from him to me, and for the first time in my life I saw in the plain woodland the wonder I had always looked for and always missed"(28). Basil, though, has a different concept of influence from Lord Henry. For Basil, the idea, or ideal, passes from the subject to the artist who "copies" the ideal by which he is "influenced." Basil identifies his artistic principle in nineteenth-century romantic terms which would have been familiar to Coleridge and Wordsworth: he seeks to create "a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek. The harmony of soul and body"(28). Basil sees the portrait he has painted of Dorian as the embodiment of this harmony, but from the moment Dorian lays eyes upon it he feels divided between the ideal image and the reality of his life. It is not the portrait in itself which causes these disruptions, it is the manner in which Lord Henry employs Basil's ideal. Through his influence on Dorian, Wotton makes a mockery of Basil's desire

for this harmony, and changes the way in which Dorian will look at the portrait even before he has seen the picture.

It is Basil's desire for harmony and his ideal of Dorian which frame and permeate the first chapter, initiating a structure that Wotton's desire transgresses. A more detailed examination of Basil's artistic idealism and his relationship with Dorian is necessary in order to understand the limits and boundaries Lord Wotton transgresses when he assumes the discourse of painting--Basil's discourse--as a mask. Basil's desire for Dorian is detached and disinterested, reflecting the idealism he desires in his art. The ethics[4] of his artistry and his desire become evident when he first describes Dorian to Lord Henry:

> Unconsciously he defines for me the lines of a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit which is Greek. The harmony of soul and body--how much that is! We in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an identity that is void.
>
> (28)

His desire is ambiguous: it is the desire of the artist for his muse and it is the desire of the loving subject for an unattainable beloved. Both desires are consistently detached, and disinterested, compared to Lord Wotton's.

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[4]I deliberately choose the term "ethics"(from the Greek *ethos*, which means character) rather than "morals"(from the Latin *mos*, *moris* which means a custom] because the former implies a reflection on the process of constructing the latter. Also, the term "moral" has socially and historically become contaminated by religious doctrine which uses "morality" to persecute (Gays and Lesbians) rather than to encourage a humanitarianism which would include difference.

This harmony Basil describes echoes the concept of "Platonic" love that is derived from Plato's Symposium. Christine Downing argues in her Myth and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love that Diotima's dialogue in Plato's Symposium embraces a harmony, differentiated from current misconceptions of the term "Platonic love":

> Yet Diotima's insistence on calling the relationship she is describing "erotic" makes clear we should not move to too simplistic an understanding of "Platonic" love. The persistent reference to bodily metaphors suggests that they are not "only metaphors," that she sees real continuity--not radical disjunction--between embodied and spiritual love. Thus her position is very different from that voiced by Pausanias. The soul's love for the good and the beautiful is a passionate love, a knowing of the good that includes desire, that is anything but sterile cognition.
>
> (Downing 250)

The "Platonic" harmony Basil describes stands as an ethical signature over the ensuing text, identifying his image of Dorian as his own perception of "the real Dorian"(45), by which he means the ideal, eternal Dorian, from which the actual, flesh-and-blood Dorian is free to deviate or to remain faithful. But "'[w]hat a fuss people make about fidelity!' exclaimed Lord Henry"(46). The Prince of Paradox swiftly reduces any question of fidelity, in life as in art, to a question of physiology: "Young men want to be faithful, and are not; old men want to be faithless and cannot"(46). And so Wotton turns fidelity into a *bon mot*, quite as impossible to be found in art as in life.

In a sense, Wotton has already collapsed the difference between life and art in a way parallel, but opposite, to Basil since the latter sees the man as a copy of the idea realized in art. But Wotton is bent on mocking any higher ideal in the man, and on

treating life itself as the artist's *bon mot*: "When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving one's self, and one always ends by deceiving others"(67). The difference between the two men is, of course, an ethical difference: Wotton transgresses the boundary between art and life so that he may manipulate Dorian into the image of his own projection. Basil projects upon Dorian all that is good in himself, but that is bequeathed as a gift to him (as the painting is given into his possession), so that Dorian represents for him an ethical and artistic ideal. He describes Dorian as "made to be worshipped"(129), and argues that "He is not like other men. He would never bring misery upon any one. His nature is too fine for that"(91). Even after he has seen Dorian's insensitive reaction to Sibyl Vane's suicide, Basil insists that "There was so much in [Dorian] that was good, so much in him that was noble"(124). His construction of Dorian is an idealist's construction that elides the worst and elevates the best that is in the character of the man.

Basil is nonetheless mistaken in what he sees in Dorian and he secures his own demise by equating a pretty face with ethical goodness. In their final meeting together, just before Dorian murders him, Basil attempts to reconcile his ideal with the rumours he has heard about Dorian:

> But you, Dorian, with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvellous untroubled youth--I can't believe anything against you. And yet I see you very seldom, and you never come down to the studio now, and when I am away from you, and I hear all these hideous things that people are whispering about you, I don't know what to say.
>
> (162)

So Basil becomes a victim of his own ideal. Dorian's brutal murder of him is the ultimate performance of what Basil would not leave space for in his idealism: Dorian's cruelty, his lack of empathy. Dorian tells Basil that "Each of us has heaven and hell in him"(169), and the ultimate proof of such a claim is the murder which follows.

When Basil had confessed to Wotton,"I have put too much of myself into [the picture]"(20), and that "He is all my art to me now"(27), he had unwittingly anticipated Lord Wotton's own crimes. The difference between the two men is that Basil puts too much of himself into an object--the image he constructs on canvas--while Wotton puts too much of himself into the living subject. Dorian admits that "He had known Basil Hallward for months, but the friendship between them had never altered him"(38), and that the reason he does not wish to see Basil is because "He gives me good advice"(71). Basil is only guilty of projecting all that is good, kind, and ethical upon Dorian. This projection is unbearably heavy and it figures Basil as an external manifestation of Dorian's ethical conscience. Dorian kills Basil to rid himself of such an ethical conscience instead of ridding himself of the negative influence in his life, Lord Wotton.

What Basil's idealism leaves no room for and what Wotton's aesthetic theories cultivate in Dorian is a refusal of empathy. And yet, Dorian never falls into a caricature of the stock villain. What preserves the reader's empathy with Dorian is a frame of desire established from the very beginning of the novel. Throughout the first chapter Dorian Gray is represented by Basil Hallward's unfinished portrait and this image of Dorian is only described in the abstract as, for instance, Lord Wotton does when he argues with

Basil over the painting:

> Too much of yourself in it! Upon my word, Basil, I didn't know you were so vain; and I really can't see any resemblance between you, with your rugged strong face and your coal-black hair, and this young Adonis, who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose leaves.
>
> (21)

There are no adjectives used in Wotton's description, only similes and metaphors providing the reader with an image of Dorian which is impressionistic. This opening chapter, then, is an exercise in concealment--Dorian is absent so as to instil desire in the reader and in Wotton. Before either of the two characters present ever speak, the omniscient narrator describes the youth in the picture as possessing "extraordinary personal beauty"(19). Even before the painting is completed, Dorian's image is framed by desire, and this process continues throughout the text right up until the final scene of his suicide.

The reader's desire for Dorian is likewise sustained over the course of the novel through the constant process of framing and concealment which repeatedly provokes a desire in the reader, paralleling Wotton's and Basil's desire within the text. The reader is placed in a position where, through desire, he/she can empathize with the two older men, thus concealing to some extent the power and influence they have in Dorian's ultimate destruction and corruption. Dorian's desirability precludes any analysis of power; they are, like the reader, enamoured. Crimes of passion are always tried differently.

Basil's frame of desire is initially predicated on Dorian's physical absence, and

once he enters the scene of the novel that frame, as locus of desire, must be displaced. Dorian enters the scene of the novel and concurrently enters the narrative perspective which allows the reader access to his private thoughts. This change in the reader's perspective displaces the locus of desire from a position as "frame" to the space between Dorian and his portrait--the site that will become the fissure in Dorian's identity--the absence of a unified identity.

The locus of desire and the introduction of Dorian as a subject are concurrent with Wotton's and the reader's introduction to Dorian. More importantly, it is immediately following this introduction that Wotton introduces Dorian to his "reflection" and leads Dorian to utter those fatal words:

> If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that--for that--I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that! (42)

Dorian destroys the harmony of Basil's Platonic, Greek ideal, effectually splitting "the harmony of soul and body"(28) into a body which refuses to take its identity from "soul," but which lends that body the permanence and immortality of art.

To reaffirm the split identity that he has fostered in Dorian, Wotton confuses the picture with Dorian for the rest of chapter two, and Basil unwittingly participates. When Dorian claims that the picture is a part of him, Basil replies, "Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like

with yourself"(44). When Basil chastises Wotton for saying something outrageous in front of Dorian, Wotton replies, "Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture"(45)?

The final leverage for the split is provided by Basil who still believes the painting represents a unified body and soul:

> The painter bit his lip and walked over, cup in hand, to the picture. "I shall stay with the real Dorian," he said, sadly.
>
> "Is it the real Dorian?" cried the original of the portrait, strolling across to him. "Am I really like that?"
>
> "Yes; you are just like that."
>
> "How wonderful, Basil!"
>
> "At least you are like it in appearance. But it will never alter," sighed Hallward. "That is something."
>
> (45)

Basil roundly privileges the painting, his ideal, which he believes will never change, thus reinforcing Dorian's desire to change places with the painting, to convert the work of art into his life and his life into art. When Lord Wotton and Basil participate in Dorian's transformation from object of action to a consciousness split between action and contemplation, it is Wotton who has the most to gain. Basil's participation is unwitting in the sense that he in no way desires the life as a work of art which Wotton produces in Dorian.

The decadent aesthetic insistence that life is art and art is life thus allows Wotton to think, when Dorian first falls in love, that this love is a work of art, a creation of his

own:

> [Lord Wotton] was conscious--and the thought brought a gleam of pleasure into his brown agate eyes--that it was through certain words of his, musical words said with musical utterance, that Dorian Gray's soul had turned to this white girl and bowed in worship before her. To a large extent the lad was his own creation. He had made him premature. (72)

Wotton goes on to muse, through the objective narrator, that "now and then a complex personality took the place and assumed the office of art, was indeed, in its way, a real work of art, life having its elaborate masterpieces, just as poetry has, or sculpture, or painting"(72). He goes on to compare Dorian to "one of those gracious figures in a pageant or a play, whose joys seem to be remote from one, but whose sorrows stir one's sense of beauty, and whose wounds are like red roses"(73). This capacity to treat sorrows and wounds as *objets d'art* rids one of the need to feel another's pain, to suffer through compassion, or to feel empathy.

Dorian also sees his relationship with Sibyl Vane as a work of art in which he is a character as well as a spectator. Dorian knows that Sibyl is an exquisite individual incapable of perceiving reality--reality for her is art. Dorian admits, "She regarded me merely as a person in a play. She knows nothing of life"(69). To Dorian, "She is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual"(69). He can then propose to her, for, if she is all the great heroines in the world, a marriage in art would make him all the great heroes in the world. When Lord Wotton and Basil accompany

Dorian to see Sibyl perform in "Romeo and Juliet," the performance is appalling because her love for Dorian has made her see "what reality really is"(98), and she admits to him in jubilation that he has brought her "something higher, something of which all art is but a reflection"(100). Dorian replies, "you have killed my love"(101) and tells her that "Without [her] art, [she] is nothing"(101). Sibyl has made the vulgar error of re-establishing the boundary between art and life.

Sibyl's subsequent suicide reveals the defense mechanism built into Wotton's aesthetic attitude to life. Later in the novel the third-person objective narrator will describe a similar reaction in Dorian where "There was neither real sorrow in it nor real joy. There was simply the passion of the spectator"(168). Sibyl vulgarly embraces "reality," but her image is restored to the aesthetic system when she commits suicide. Dorian tells Lord Wotton that her suicide is "simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which [he] took a great part, but by which [he has] not been wounded"(114). Wotton is certain of his intent in this scene and has even sent a note to Dorian asking him "not to see any one till [he] came"(111). He educates Dorian in his aesthetic philosophy and tries to protect him from the "realities" of guilt and grief:

> Sometimes, however, a tragedy that possesses artistic elements of beauty crosses our lives. If these elements of beauty are real, the whole thing simply appeals to our sense of dramatic effect. Suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play. Or rather we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthrals us. (114)

> She has played her last part. But you must think of that lonely death in the tawdry dressing-room simply as a strange lurid fragment from some Jacobean tragedy, as a wonderful scene from Webster, or Ford, or Cyril Tourneur. The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died. (117)

There is a facile dismissal of life in these aphorisms and a complete lack of empathy. Such a defense mechanism keeps aesthetic pleasure from lapsing into pain, but more importantly it protects the aesthete from the guilt that may make it necessary for him/her to recognize the influence he has on other lives which are cast about like stage props.

Such damaging effects of Lord Wotton's visit and the aesthetic education he provides for the youth are only revealed when Basil comes to console Dorian and finds that he has, instead of mourning, been at the Opera with Lord Wotton and Wotton's sister. Dorian says to Basil, "Don't talk about horrid subjects. If one doesn't talk about a thing, it has never happened"(122). Basil replies, "You talk as if you have no heart, no pity in you. It is all Harry's influence. I see that"(122). Basil remains the voice of empathy, of compassion, a potential antidote to Lord Henry's poison. Where Wotton insists on the artistic merit of Sibyl's suicide, Basil exclaims, "Why, man, there are horrors in store for that little white body of hers"(122), but nothing near as horrible or grotesque as what awaits Basil's own corpse when Dorian kills him.

Ultimately, another corpse in Wilde's novel--Dorian's own body--is left to signify this total absence of empathy, for it is an excess sign which will not fit into Wotton's aesthetic system. In order for a death to become a work of art there can be no body, no trace to signify--its significance will exceed any tidy resolution of art. Sibyl's suicide thus

cannot affect Dorian the way Basil's or James Vane's deaths do, for there is no untidy mess to reckon with. And yet this puts a strain on the aesthetic system that Wotton has taught Dorian. As I argued earlier, Dorian is almost an empty and eager canvas waiting for Wotton, though what precedes and exceeds Wotton's influence--and consequently his aesthetic system--is Dorian's body. The novel ends with a corpse--Dorian's own--which exceeds the closure of the text: the corpse is identified by the rings on its fingers, though the repercussions of the corpse's discovery and the fate of the corpse are left unresolved. The aesthete is unable to dispose of at least one body--his own. He is unable to conceal the murder of his own "conscience"(D. Williams 45-6), which leaves behind his own disfigured body.

This particular corpse is in many ways the corpse of Wilde's own aesthetic Intentions, announced in a book of essays by that name. Many of Wilde's critics have called The Picture of Dorian Gray the application of the theories he put forward in Intentions. Philip K. Cohen in The Moral Vision of Oscar Wilde calls The Picture of Dorian Gray "the crucible of experience into which these theories must pass"(Cohen 108). To further the analogy he argues that "There they prove to be dross, not gold"(Cohen 108). It is true that the novel's application appears to overshadow Wilde's aesthetic theories with what may seem like a strong "morality tale," but for the purposes of this thesis the terms "evil," "sin," and "morality" which Cohen uses must be interrogated.[5]

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[5]Cohen frequently uses the term "evil" in relation to Dorian Gray, but without questioning its import, or defining what he means by "evil": "But rather than freeing

The theories tested in the crucible of Dorian's experience are not simply Wilde's, they are also an inheritance from Walter Pater. Pater's aesthetic theories are best known from his two major works Studies in the History of the Renaissance and Marius the Epicurean, the former a critical study and the latter a novel. Pater's style, as Camille Paglia notes, is singular and solipsistic:

> Gautier needs his polemical preface to do what Pater does through style alone: to neutralize all social and moral limitations on art. Swinburne is ruled by sexual hierarchies, and his poetry is energized by daemonic nature. But there is no energy in Pater; his writing is the ultimate in Decadent lassitude and closure. There is no sex or even emotion in him. Nothing exists but the perceiving self. Pater perfects Romantic solipsism. (Paglia 481)

Were Wotton a writer, Paglia's description could also be a description of his style.

Robert K. Martin argues further, in his essay "Parody and Homage: The Presence of Pater in *Dorian Gray*," that Pater's Decadent style, his theories, and his character are parodied in The Picture of Dorian Gray. The first chapter of the novel is bursting with floral scents and the images of flowers and bees and it all "is the first indication of [the novel's] ironic intent. The language of this section is a parody of Decadent style"(Martin 16). Martin goes on to argue that The Picture of Dorian Gray is evidence that Wilde had

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[Dorian] from evil, as in Arthur's case, the act binds him irrevocably to it"(Cohen 107); "Though Wilde does tentatively consider heredity as a cause for Dorian's evil nature..."(Cohen 112); "Prior to this crime, Dorian views his evil behaviour as a positive means of self-realization"(Cohen 123). These are only a few examples of Cohen's unquestioning moral condemnation of Dorian Gray, a condemnation he reads as implicit in Wilde's construction of the youth.

come "to a new determination to speak and write openly of his own sexuality and to mock those who, like Pater, refused to express openly what was diffused fully throughout their works"(Martin 16). For Pater, like Wilde's Lord Wotton, was in truth a man of concealment, contemplation, and oblique influence. As Paglia notes, "Pater's distress at misreadings of [the Studies in the History of the Renaissance's] 'Conclusion' came from his horror of action, sexual or otherwise"(Paglia 482). Both Lord Wotton in particular, and The Picture of Dorian Gray in general, offer useful parodies of Pater, his life and works, which not only expose Pater, but expose the limitations of aesthetic theories which Wilde had inherited.

Wilde himself still resisted a moral reading of The Picture of Dorian Gray, mostly because to enter a charge of "moral" or "immoral" against Art is to enter into a moral framework, and as Wilde argued in "The Truth of Masks," "A truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true"(Ellmann 1988, 99). If one is intent on labelling this novel a moral tale one must realize that the opposite is true as well. This is not to argue that Wilde wrote this novel free of a moral framework, but instead to point to the fact that the extremes of the moral/immoral debate present in *fin-de-siècle* England were distasteful to Wilde, and he instilled his own sense of "morality."[6] In a letter to an editor, Wilde argued

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[6] Cohen argues that Dorian "willfully fragments himself in order to escape moral responsibility(Cohen 139), and contradicts his earlier argument that "Wilde fails to resolve questions of cause and morality on the speculative level"(Cohen 122). Although he discusses Basil and Harry's influences over Dorian he ultimately constructs Dorian as a creature of volition when the text itself resists such a thorough condemnation. Because of this it is impossible to conflate either Basil's or Wilde's "morality" with Cohen's. Both Basil and Wilde define "evil" in terms of wilful damage done to others. Cohen separates Dorian from his influences and scapegoats him in the same way Wotton does.

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"(Letters 266). In his preface to the novel he echoes this argument when he writes that "It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors"(129); but, in naming the reader a spectator, he draws him/her into his ethical system. Basil confronts Dorian with a list of friends he has "corrupted," but this list is a list of elisions, crimes unstated and repercussions hinted at. The corrupted lives of his friends become a series in a palimpsest re-written by each reader. Ultimately Wilde is criticising his critics in his preface and in this letter to the editor for what he sees ethically lacking in Dorian: a New Testament sympathy for others and their trespasses.[7] What consistently alters the canvas that bears Dorian's conscience is his lack of empathy, his lack of feeling for the destruction in other's lives.[8]

Since Dorian increasingly lacks empathy in the novel, he begins to resemble the insensitive character of Lord Henry. It was Lord Henry that claimed he could "sympathize with everything except suffering...There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain"(55). Dorian has developed the intellect and personality of an older man--who strongly resembles Lord Henry--but he still maintains a facade of innocence and youth; he is caught between boyhood and manhood. This position between

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[7]Cohen argues that Wilde is caught between New Testament and Old Testament concepts of sin, but the novel does not support this as much as it does a call for the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

[8]Cohen conflates the act of sin and the repercussions inflicted by society, too often lapsing into condemnation rather than understanding Wilde's own reconstituted sense of "morality."

two roles strongly resembles the liminality which Christine Downing argues is present in the etymology of the name "Narcissus":

> As Ovid tells it, the story is prefigured in its first line: Narcissus "had reached his sixteenth year and could be counted as at once boy and man." On the other hand, we might say that the boy and man become so enamoured of each other that no outward other has a chance. On the other, we might say Narcissus becomes caught *between* the two roles. For Narcissus--as his name, which derives from *narke*, lassitude, suggests--is passive, not in the so-called "feminine" sense of taking on a receptive, responsive rather than initiating role, but in a kind of unwillingness to take on any role, that of man or boy.
>
> (Downing 173)

Dorian, as Narcissus, embraces a type of lassitude that refuses to take on either the role of the man or the boy. The result is a type of hybrid that, while resisting both roles, capitalizes on the privilege each affords. But there is more than one price he must pay to inhabit this liminal space.

In his wanderings through the portrait gallery of his ancestors he stumbles upon a relative whose story reveals the corporeal price of Dorian's narcissism and immortal youth. Dorian discovers that he "has ancestors in literature as well as in...race"(156), and particularly remembers the story of "Giambatista Cibo, who in mockery took the name of Innocent and into whose torpid veins the blood of three lads was infused by a Jewish doctor"(157-8). It is easy for Dorian to call another man's attempts at reclaiming youth as a "mockery," for he need not take such elaborate measures as Cibo. To all appearances, Dorian is forever young. But this mask of youth becomes the device he uses to hide his

corruption and influence.

Dorian also employs Lord Wotton's paradoxes and contradictions, but he does not need to rely on them, for he has the appearance of innocence and youth. A letter from an unnamed lover to Dorian expresses the power of such an appearance: "The world is changed because you are made of ivory and gold. The curves of your lips rewrite history"(231). Dorian's youthful appearance survives the murders of Basil Hallward and James Vane; in a sense, it is due to their blood that his youth remains intact. Three other young men and one young girl have shed their own blood in his history, and though he will not accept any responsibility in these matters, it is obvious from the text that he is in some way implicated. The corruption of the flesh of others is a necessary means to his lasting youth and a product of it as well--he is more like Cibo than he might expect. Dorian thus manipulates the economy of youth both as a consumer and a product within the system; with his knowledge as an older man, he is that much more capable of capitalizing on his appearance.

While Dorian refuses the role of older man or younger man, he also refuses, in the mise-en-scene of desire, two other roles: he refuses to be trapped in the lassitude of the voyeur or the passive aggression of the exhibitionist, but instead plays both roles against each other. There are several scenes in which Dorian stands, with the hand-mirror Wotton gave him as a gift, and compares his reflection with the decaying portrait Basil painted of him, the reflection of his actions. In these scenes Dorian as a split subject derives pleasure from the exhibition of his own actions, and from comparing his defaced image to his unaltered reflection. The decaying portrait fascinates him:

> He wondered, and hoped that some day he would see the change [in the picture] taking place before his very eyes, shuddering as he hoped it. (118)

> Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and ageing face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. (141)

Dorian's pleasure here is ambiguous: it is both the pleasure of the exhibitor and the voyeur. The portrait reflects his lack of empathy for the pain of others while the pleasure he derives from watching the ruin of his own soul reflects the lack of empathy he has for his own soul. Dorian embodies Wotton, in the sense that where Wotton is mostly a contemplative mind, Dorian takes the mind and gives it an active body that exhibits and revels in its actions. Dorian confesses to being such a product of Wotton's desire when he says to him, "That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practice, as I do everything that you say"(62). As Cohen rightly concludes, "Poor Harry exists--and merely exists--at several removes from actuality. Selecting the stance recommended by Pater and championed by Wilde in 'The Critic,' Wotton views life, specifically Dorian's life, as though it were art"(Cohen 141).

The split life that Dorian leads at first brings him unbearable pleasure, but then it

becomes only unbearable. Dorian finds too much conscience in one room after Basil witnesses the changes in the portrait he once painted. His crisis comes when Dorian no longer has the power of the mask of his youth, because Basil has witnessed his soul's decline; the face of youth has been revealed as an imperfect signifier. When Dorian can no longer control the relationship between voyeur and exhibitor, the split in his conscious self brings absolute, unbearable pain. Dorian chooses to become a split self partly to maintain the unified reflection he saw in the eyes of Basil and Lord Wotton. Since Basil, however, sees that Dorian is not his ideal and Dorian cannot control his fall from the pedestal, Basil must be killed.

Basil's death temporarily assuages the growing pain Dorian feels from the paradox of appearing to be a unified image in the eyes of the older men (Wotton and Basil), and yet feeling such a definite division in himself. He attends Lady Narborough's dinner and, while "wondering at the calm of his demeanour, for a moment felt keenly the terrible pleasure of a double life"(187). The pressure of a double life will return when, close to the end of the novel and just before his own suicide, he will confess the result of such a double life. Here, his lament finally echoes the despair of Ovid's Narcissus:

> "I wish I could love," cried Dorian Gray with a deep note of pathos in his voice. "But I seem to have lost the passion and forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself. My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget." (216)

In the final scene of the novel he feels "a wild longing for the unstained purity of his

boyhood--his rose-white boyhood, as Lord Henry had once called it"(230), and admits that "All his failure had been due to [his prayer about the picture]"(231). He loathes his own beauty and desires the youth he was before he met Lord Wotton; both attitudes are indications of a desire to be once again a unified self, unaware of his narcissistic image. Even his attempt to destroy the painting is an attempt to realize that desire to become, again, a unified subject, and he nearly succeeds, for the picture lives on--an icon of the meeting of body and soul, as Basil once described it. Only the image of the ideal Dorian is no longer connected to the Dorian he has chosen to be.

The only character left alive when the novel closes is Lord Wotton[9], after Dorian has become a scapegoat for his crimes. Wotton himself escapes through the mask of contradiction since the contradictions within his aesthetic system are both reconcilable and mutually affirming. It is more difficult to penetrate the contradictory aesthetic ideas in The Picture of Dorian Gray because aestheticism is portrayed in a more negative manner than in Wilde's "The Critic as Artist" and "The Soul of Man Under Socialism."[10]

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[9]When the novel closes, the only significant character left alive and privy to most of the intimate information which makes up this text is Lord Henry Wotton. This re-writing of Dorian's history in the second chapter of the text may meta-textually reveal an implied author who is Lord Wotton. Indeed, the "objective" narrator of this novel shares Wotton's voyeurism and fascination with tragic emotions, though he has none himself: "I can sympathize with everything except suffering"(55). Wotton is less a tragic artist than he is a voyeur of tragedy, much in the same sense as the third-person "objective" narrator in the text. These tragic events do not occur to him except vicariously as one experiences a beautiful piece of art. On the level of the third-person "objective" narrator The Picture of Dorian Gray could be an implied confession.

[10] These were published in July and September 1890, respectively, in the *Nineteenth Century* and were republished with a few changes for the volume Intentions, published the same year as The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Through these two essays Wilde explores seemingly contradictory ideas on art which are similar to the ones voiced by Wotton in the novel. Both Wilde and Wotton agree that "art is disengaged from actual life ...[a] point of view sometimes taken by Yeats"(Ellmann 1985, 105), while Wilde argues and Wotton demonstrates that art "is deeply incriminated with actual life...[a point of view taken by] Genet"(Ellmann 1985, 105).

Richard Ellmann in his biography of Wilde goes so far as to claim that the attitudes "That art is sterile, and that art is infectious, are...not beyond reconciliation"(329). He maintains that, although "Wilde never formulated their union...he implied something like this: by its creation of beauty, art reproaches the world, calling attention to the world's faults by disregarding them, so the sterility of art is an affront or a parable"(329). This aesthetic stance, or performance, cleanses the aesthetic artist from any social responsibility: instead of writing in a mode of realism towards social reform, the aesthetic artist is free to explore all things beautiful. Aesthetic principles also authorize the lover's misrecognition of the beloved and the occlusion of his or her economic and social reality. Thus, the sterility Ellmann describes is really only a vague social disinterest. Within the aesthetic system Wotton's and Wilde's seemingly contradictory theories are reconcilable because they exclude any social interest or empathy for those of other classes. Ellmann goes on to argue that Wilde posits two other purposes for Art:

> Art may also outrage the world by flouting its laws or by indulgently positing their violation. Or art may seduce the world by making it follow an example which seems bad but is really salutary. In these ways the artist moves the world

> towards self-recognition, with at least a tinge of self-redemption, as he compels himself towards the same end. (329)

Art as a profitable transgression and art that seduces towards a salutary end still need to be analyzed from a class perspective as well as an aesthetic perspective. For an aesthetic perspective concedes the very power and privilege flaunted in Dorian's condescending affections for Sibyl Vane and for Hetty the country girl.

Art as a transgressive force was still socially useful in the late nineteenth-century, and it could be just as profitable for the artist. Although Wilde argued against his critics "that of all men in England [he was] the one who require[d] least advertisement"(Ellmann 321), he certainly could manage the financial profits that such controversy brought. And certainly it is easy to forgive and even to enjoy the seductive element of art if its end is salutary, though one must interrogate that end: salutary for whom? How does an aesthetic seduction particularly profit the aesthete? Lord Wotton reveals that "Beautiful sins, like beautiful things, [and beautiful art, I would add] are the privilege of the rich"(92). Perhaps Wilde's aestheticism and Ellmann's criticism of it both participate too much in a hierarchical class structure, never questioning the function of art outside of the privileged classes.

But Wilde, unlike Wotton, eventually realized that there was something impoverished in this aesthetic system. When Ellmann in his biography describes Wilde's exile, he writes that Wilde "was struggling to realize pathos"(531). Later in the biography, Ellmann reveals that there was an "essay [Wilde] had planned which would

have allowed pity into his aesthetic system, making explicit what he had always underplayed--the power of art to exorcise cruelty and to offer a perpetual Last Judgment in which the verdict was always merciful--[but it] never got written"(556-7).[11] But if one regards Wilde's life as a form of art, in the manner he did, then there is evidence that he was finally able to write empathy into his theories. The hustlers--or younger men--who encountered both Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas remembered Wilde for his "generosity and good will of which they took shameless advantage"(Ellmann 1988, 389).[12] Wilde's personal conduct reflected the empathy for want of which Dorian is sympathetically judged in The Picture of Dorian Gray. He may have lived his life as though it were as sterile as art, but his life was not finally lacking in empathy for others.

As art, The Picture of Dorian Gray also criticizes the privileged position which Pater's aesthetic theories can afford the aesthete. As a moment in social and literary history, Wilde's novel finally can be seen as the first deposit in an archive which has been used to justify and to normalize unequal relations of power in gay culture. The archive now begins to take shape through the apparant fantasy projected upon the younger man

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[11] Neil Bartlett, in Who Was That Man: A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde, argues that "*De Profundis* is a letter from a man who realizes that the method of his pleasure concealed the fact that pleasure has both origins and consequences, that it takes place within a specific economy and that it can, at any moment, be taken away"(186).

[12]Ellmann on more than one occasion criticizes these younger men for employing what power they could find. One of the few devices of power available to a young hustler would be black-mail, and the laws against blackmail were far stronger than the laws against employing a hustler, or against sodomy. The laws privileged the upper classes, and Ellmann's account of Wilde's life often betrays the prejudices of a privileged academic.

and the discursive means used to maintain that fantasy. It is Wotton's privilege which ensures his escape at the end of the novel and it is this privilege which reappears wearing other masks in Buddy's and Time of Our Darkness.

CHAPTER TWO

INSCRIBING HYACINTHUS: 'THE MASTER OF TRUTH' IN STAN PERSKY'S BUDDY'S

In Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, Lord Henry Wotton is a disembodied aesthete, living his life vicariously through Dorian and others. The narrator in Stan Persky's Buddy's is also disembodied, but only on the level of the confession, for there are traces of his body within the action of the text even though his body is never made the focus of his confessional gaze. The absent narrator's body becomes a privileged space within the pornographic system of the text which the reader can inhabit. It secures the ambivalence, the ambiguity of a split identity in the mise-en-scene of desire, and it allows the narrator to construct his identity through the desirability of the others in the text.

Essential to Buddy's narrative economy is the softening of the commercial arrangement between the young hustlers and the unnamed narrator as well as in the pornography he consumes. He constructs himself as archivist and biographer, revealing a resemblance to Ovid's Apollo who, in his attempt to make Hyacinthus immortal, only succeeds in producing a narcissistic construction which reflects his loss, and represses the

discourse of the youth--what lives on is a reflection of Apollo, not Hyacinthus. Persky's nameless narrator authorizes his singular perspective and asserts discursive power through the manipulation of intertextual references (which the beloved never hears) and a subtle series of discursive positionings. This affords him an artistic privilege which conceals his acts of coercion, manipulation, and consumption of the "other."

"Buddy's" is a possessive article that possesses an unnamed object (the text? the bar? the desire?) for an undescribed subject. It is a possessiveness partially concealed because it sounds the same as the endearing term of fraternity, "buddies." This ambiguity names a text, a bar, and an illusion of equality and reciprocity that is exhaustively maintained throughout the text. Persky's narrator situates himself within this possessive structure--"Buddy's--which reflects the pornographic system of the text, and then finds the reader "an available parking space"(3). What the narrator is offering is a position in the architecture of desire which he will construct, a peep-hole from which the reader can be a voyeur.

In The Sadeian Woman, Angela Carter explores the voyeurism inherent in the texts of the Marquis de Sade, claiming that "In pornographic literature, the text has a gap in it on purpose so that the reader may, in imagination, step inside it"(Carter 14). In imagination, then, the reader is invited to take Persky's narrator's place in his sexual accounts. Buddy's is a text littered with bodies, and yet the absence of the narrator's body leaves a gap for the reader to inhabit. By offering only indirect references to his body, and several rather inadequate representations--such as the photos someone gives him of his younger self--the narrator shields himself from scrutiny. He vaguely reveals several

photos to the reader, and writes that "Both of those in which [he appears] are so badly focused as to be almost unrecognizable"(119). The most he will reveal of himself is that he is of "middle age"(55); there are also fleeting glimpses of him through his association with the character of George who considers them physically similar when he argues that they can't wear "Shimmels" because this revealing shirt would reveal their "convex stomach[s]"(27). Such narrative "disembodiment" is primarily a system of actions and associations which trace the limits of the narrator's concealment. He is the faceless space in the mise-en-scene[1] of desire which excites the reader with the spectacle and offers his place, its ambivalence, its power.

When Persky's narrator frames his text with the symbolic architecture of "Buddy's" and creates an apparent privilege through the absence of his own body, he is reinforcing an illusion of what Michel Foucault calls a "juridico-discursive" power. The powerful fiction this system maintains is the illusion that "there is no escaping from [it], that it is always-already present, constituting that very thing which one attempts to counter with"(Foucault 1978, 82). Without this illusion--this system which promises power--there could be no tempting gap, no fantasy.

The gap--or site of textual penetration--promises access to the fantasy that is the text just as it promises the fantasy's integrity. It is the illusion of a fixed structure that is impenetrable to socio-economic reality. Foucault argues that conceptualizing power in

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[1]The term "mise-en-scene" in English translates as "production", but primarily in the theatrical sense, although Silverman seems to use the untranslated term so as to employ an ambiguity which could include economic "production."

terms of a fixed structure only reinforces this type of power: "One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society"(Foucault 1978, 93). A system of narrative sustained by the "juridico-discursive" power of a narrator who is "always-already" absent tempts the reader to participate in the illusion of the law of his power. The pornographic space in the text thus constitutes itself as a one-way peep-hole permitting voyeurism and ensuring that the voyeur as reader, as well as narrator, remains concealed.

But if the reader reads the text, the text likewise reads the reader; penetration occurs in both directions. Carter argues that the penetration and the withdrawal are inseparable and characteristic of the pornographic system which also leads the reader to a confrontation with the self:

> But the activity the text describes, into which the reader enters, is not a whole world into which the reader is absorbed and, as they say, 'taken out of himself'. It is one basic activity extracted from the world in its totality in such a way that the text constantly reminds the reader of his own troubling self, his own reality--and the limitations of that reality since, however much he wants to fuck the willing women or men in his story, he cannot do so but must be content with some form of substitute activity.
> (Carter 14)

The trajectory of penetration in the pornographic system of Persky's text implies the penetration of a body in the word made flesh. The withdrawal details a return to social reality and all the conditions which complicate the erotic episode. The reader of Persky's text is reminded of his own troubling self and must be content with some "substitute

activity"--the power and privilege afforded by the fantasy. Foucault argues that power "is produced from one moment to the next, at every point...[it] is everywhere...it comes from everywhere"(Foucault 1978, 93). The very conditions that the narrative seeks to occlude through the erasure of the narrator's body become the sites of resistance to the--juridico-discursive--fantasy.

The absent, or concealed, body of the narrator must then conceive its identity through what is present and specular in the text--through the other. Here, too, near the beginning of the text the narrator describes "box-like electronic devices whose floating liquid crystal figures give the appearance of a dark aquarium, which invariably draw, intentionally so, a pretty youth gazing into its pool"(19). Like Lord Henry Wotton in The Picture of Dorian Gray, Persky's narrator names the other as Narcissus, and yet, by naming the other, avoids the name himself. Here, the pool in which Narcissus sees his reflection is a video game, a representation of the game in which the narrator's desire employs the other. When describing B., the narrator remarks that the "capacity of youth for solipsism should not be underestimated"(44), and yet he does not see the solipsism of his own text, or the narcissism of his own desire.

When the narrator discovers some old photos of himself, he narcissistically desires his own image, and this narcissism provides a segue or bridge to his narcissistic desire for the young men in the text. The photos he refers to are "almost unrecognizable," so the reader must rely on the narrator's claim that he once possessed youthful beauty:

> Both of those in which I appear are so badly focused as to

> be almost unrecognizable....I can almost see my beauty, which I was unaware of at the time, and at the same time, before the unfocused quality of the photos allows me to identify myself, I simply see a handsome young man for whom, *now*, before I slowly discern it is myself, I feel a flash of lust, as though for anyone I might be attracted by. How exciting--almost a form of incest--to desire one's *past self.* (119)

The narrator's desire, his nostalgia for youth and lost innocence, is reminiscent of Lord Wotton's desire for the youthful image of Dorian in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Both older men--Lord Henry and Persky's narrator--feel a nostalgic narcissism. Lord Henry desires his "own intellectual views" with "the added music of passion and youth." What he wants to shape Dorian into is an individual with his own views and Dorian's youth and passion so that he can see himself with the face of another, more young and more beautiful. Persky's narrator feels nostalgia for the "desirable" body he once had. When he purchases and manipulates the younger men in the text they act as surrogate images for his own lost body.

The narrator claims that he was unaware of his beauty at the time, which is something that he also observes in the first figure on Sartre and "beauty": "YET WHAT struck me about the young men or boys I was attracted to in my youth was that they apparently didn't know they were beautiful. This seemed to me incredible. But they were invariably unaware of their beauty"(Persky 14). It is only in retrospect, through blurry photos, that the narrator decides he was attractive and transforms his past self from consciously ugly to unconsciously attractive. The narrator becomes an ambiguous entity--both art object and connoisseur--and like Wilde's Dorian Gray he becomes the beautiful

object which he also wants to consume.

His unconscious beauty, once established, associates him with the young men to whom he is presently most attracted. He attempts to bifurcate his exclusive position as subject because he wants to be both desiring subject and desired object, but his inability to represent his own body as subject leaves only unrequited narcissistic desire. In his present shape, he cannot identify with his own youthful attractiveness through nostalgic erotic attraction alone. He requires the mediation and specular association of attractive young men in the present tense of the text in order to bring his absent beauty to his present body. The narrator relies on the specular younger men in the text because, as he quotes Sartre,"beauty is something others bestow on you"(13).

Now Persky's narrator not only purchases a reflection of beauty from the young men in the text, but imports a nostalgic image of beauty from his remembered past. But, like Lord Wotton in The Picture of Dorian Gray, he seeks in such reflections no more than a means to an end where he desires "[t]o project one's soul into some gracious form...to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume"(Wilde 51). Wotton's own image suggests insemination or introjection whereby the other becomes only a corporeal envelope with a specific use or function. Perky's narrator likewise uses corporeal envelopes both to beautify his own reflection and to act as erotic vessels or the expression of his desire for past selves.

Throughout the text he uses the specular presence of beautiful young men and the concealment of his own body so that he can gain something by association with their beauty. Kaja Silverman, in the introduction to her critical text Male Subjectivity at the

Margins, explores the relationship between identity and desire which is also the relationship between the narrator's absent body and the many bodies of young men and boys he pursues:

> Identity and desire are so complexly imbricated that neither can be explained without recourse to the other. Furthermore, although these constitutive features of subjectivity are never entirely "fixed," neither are they in a state of absolute flux or "free-play"; on the contrary, they are synonymous with the compulsion to repeat certain images and personalities, which are relinquished only with difficulty. (Silverman 6)

In this relationship between identity and desire, the objects of desire (the boys and young men) become signifiers corresponding to the meaning or the image which the narrator indirectly constructs as his identity. It is not the image of the other that the narrator desires most of all, but a convoluted mirror with elements of beauty reflected from the other. Like Wilde's Lord Henry Wotton, Persky's narrator attempts to "project [his] soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment"(Wilde 51). These constructions of the other, then, are usually a process of misrecognition and association where the narrator simultaneously refuses the other and creates a subjectivity for him which suits his own desire, his own search for a desirable identity.

The narrator's deifications of the others in the text are frequent and relentless: M. becomes Cupid; Trevor becomes God; Duane becomes the King of Hell. What is implied is that by elevating the other to the status of a god, he not only offers the beloved a gift but establishes his own identity as Father of the gods, giver of immortality. He even

claims that he "sought to immortalize"(139) these young men, employing a passage from Proust to illustrate the importance of his purpose:

> "But these recurrences of desire oblige us to reflect that if we wish to rediscover these boys with the same pleasure we must also return to the year which has since been followed by ten others in the course of which his bloom has faded. We sometimes find a person again, but we cannot abolish time." Whoever he was--and the point perhaps is simply that *he was*--he would be lost to us but for the accident of Proust writing about his ineffable beauty.
>
> (141)

The artist as the giver of immortality is the one who can recover the lost time of these youths, "or else they will be lost"(140). But, in elevating M. to the status of a god, the narrator himself is lifted into the "charmed circles"(57) of the gods. The cupidity of M., which is encouraged by the narrator and other consumers of prostitution, is exalted to the name of a god--Cupid--who now becomes responsible for the narrator's desire and consequent follies: he is the first muse in this text.

The narrator's worship of Trevor as God likewise allows him to construct an image of God that is "narcissistic, perplexed, rather dispassionate, [and] flawed in various ways"(65). Although the narrator uses this image to define his own difference and his sacrificial nature in the face of one so "dispassionate," the rest of the text interferes here and reveals an inversion of the biblical one: here God is made in the image of the man, in the image of the unnamed narrator.

The "King of Hell," or Duane as his friends call him, is, like the other two major

deities, "a creature of mirrors"(112), and a reflection of the narrator's desire. The narrator observes that he "knew this idol best by the reflection of his glory in those who worshipped him"(105). What is concealed, and yet revealed, by the narrator's fascination is his own desire and worship for Duane. At one point the narrator says, "Indeed, I had availed myself of his services on occasion"(106), and, although he then describes an introduction Duane choreographed, the word "services" and the narrator's association with Duane exceeds the récit.[2] The narrator is fascinated by Duane's transgressions, by his violence. When the narrator pays R. to have sex, he reveals that "[i]t was impossible for [him] to sleep with R. without experiencing the vicarious delight of desiring the same smooth flesh as had given pleasure to the fabled Duane"(107). R.'s skin becomes a fetish that signifies a different subject position in relation to R.: he desires Duane's eroticism, his power of transgression, his criminality. His worship of Duane initiates him into a religion of the transgressive.

What makes this narrator's worship of the three deities he creates distinct from Lord Wotton's construction of Dorian in The Picture of Dorian Gray is the difference between their respective narrative structures. In Wilde's novel the reader is dependent on the "objective" third-person narrator to reveal Lord Wotton's intentions, or the desires he conceals from the public, social realm of the novel. Wotton confesses nothing, but he is exposed by a third-person narrator who does not let him know he is revealing Wotton's

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[2] Translated from the French, "récit" can be an account, a story or a narrative. In Barthes' A Lover's Discourse the récit is "the love story" or "the tribute the lover must pay to the world in order to be reconciled with it"(Barthes 7).

inmost thoughts. Persky's narrator, on the other hand, appears to "confess" his desires. In Buddy's, Wilde's third person "objective" narrator and the narcissistic subjectivity of Lord Wotton are amalgamated into one nameless narrator. The text becomes a confessional or an erotic diary that will, like Roger Casement's own Black Diaries commented on in the text, allow the narrator to "savour the pleasure when rereading"(124), while simultaneously establishing what Foucault argues is the true imperative: "Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse"(Foucault, 1978, 21). For Persky's narrator, the attempt to transform his desire into discourse is also, implicitly, "pleasure in the truth of pleasure"(71). Such a "pleasure of analysis"(71) frames this text within a border of seeming confession, the "lover's" reconciliation with the world.

The consequence of this amalgamation of Wilde's third-person narrator and Lord Wotton is that Persky's narrator is a split confessional subject, bifurcated between the roles of contemplator and concealer. Colleen Donnelly, in her essay "The Non-Homogenous I," analyzes the narrative structure of Roland Barthes' A Lover's Discourse which Persky imitates stylistically in his narrative and his structure. She argues that Barthes' subject "is the innocent who cannot see beyond the situation of the récit"(Donnelly 169). The narrator of Barthes' text is made distinct from the subject by his uses of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and intertextual comparisons to analyze the "figure" that is being presented. While the subject also uses intertextual references, he uses them to justify and voice the emotions he is experiencing. The narrative voice brackets the subject's unreality--his amorous situation--through language in the objective,

"real" world. Persky's narrator is a conflation of a narrator and a character, but an imperfect conflation whereby the integrity of each is undermined. This hybrid subject uses intertextuality to justify and voice the emotions he experiences but his unreality is never properly bracketed, for to do so would require the bracketing or specularization of the subject's own concealed body.

The concealed body facilitates not only specular incorporation, but also what Silverman calls a "structural incorporation":

> We are clearly dealing here with two different kinds of "incorporation" from outside, one of a specular variety, and the other of which is more properly characterized as "structural"--that incorporation through which the *moi* is formed, and upon which the fantasmatic draws for its images of "self" and other, and that through which the subject assumes a position within the *mise-en-scene* of desire. (Silverman 7)

This chapter has already suggested the character of the narrator's specular incorporation, his narcissistic identification with the specular other through his absent/concealed body. What becomes evident through an analysis of the narrator's technologies of power--of his place in the mise-en-scene of desire--is the extent to which he relies on a structural incorporation which, Silverman argues, affords him a "political" privilege: "What I am attempting to say is that it not only makes a political difference where the subject "stands" within the mise-en-scene of its desire, but what identity it there assumes, or--to state the case somewhat differently--by what values it is marked"(Silverman 8).

Persky's narrator not only "stands" as a voyeur or as a consumer in the skin-trade,

he also assumes the identity of a writer, the "author" of discursive power. When he describes the process of reading personal advertisements, he reveals the multiplicity of roles with which he identifies: "Throughout, I vacillate, both in poring over the texts as reader, and in writing about them. On the one hand they call forth a gently mocking light journalism; on the other, and equally, they invite Talmudic commentary"(81). His position within the mise-en-scene of desire is divided between the realm of experience--as reader--and that of reflection--as writer. This split has the two-fold function of accommodating the fantasy experience and framing that experience for the reader. He plays several positions within the text while he always maintains the authority of writer or interlocutor who translates the events in the mise-en-scene of desire.

Persky's narrator will assume the identity of a writer in the *mise-en-scene* of desire so that as a voyeur he can delight in the erotic episodes he hears from the younger men he encounters, and so that he can possess them in his text. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that the desire to gossip--as in Persky's narrator's desire to recount the younger men's tales--contains a flavour of the erotic and has a fascination similar to that of pornography:

> [Gossip's] fascination bears some relation to that of pornography, although many feel gossip's pull who loathe pornography. Gossip, even when it avoids the sexual, bears about it a faint flavour of the erotic. (Of course, sexual activities and emotions supply the most familiar staple of gossip--as of the Western realistic novel.) The atmosphere of erotic titillation suggests gossip's implicit voyeurism.
> (Spacks 11)

The narrator's transcription of "gossip" is problematic because of what the narrator has

invested in the retelling: his power over the teller, the tale, and the reader alike. For, by exhibiting the one who told him the tale, and by making a voyeur of the reader, he displaces his own exhibitionism and voyeurism onto others without losing control of the scene.

This "gossip" that the narrator retails fascinates him and yet often frustrates his aesthetic sense. When he tries "to obtain from [Michael] an account of being fucked by Duane"(103), he becomes frustrated because "[Michael's] prose was not equal to the poetry of his posterior, and we could do little more than establish that Duane had indeed screwed him"(103). Earlier in the text he describes a nameless boy who "feels a stirring, for which he has no words"(70). The narrator thus characteristically offers himself as the one who has the words, and so simultaneously denies the other's ability to articulate desire even as he privileges his own discourse on desire.

Even when the narrator describes the pornographic video Young and Ready, he refers to the dialogue only in passing and never quotes what the two young men say. He reveals that, while "[w]atching Young and Ready or similar productions, [he is] entranced by the minimalist plots and simple-minded, often non-synch dialogue in these films"(117). It is as if he must deny the authenticity of the young men's discourse in order to justify "mentally rewriting the dialogues to make them sexier, more complex, nakedly confessional"(117). He immediately follows this confession with a récit that describes a way in which life imitates porn, and this observation subversively condones his gossip--his discursive rewriting of the discourses of the young men he knows.

Only after he has placed an aesthetic demand upon it will the narrator transcribe

the oral story into the written word--the text of gossip. This is an aesthetic demand which seeks to control the finished product. For instance, he identifies in the narratives of his friend George a quality which typifies his own rewriting of these oral récits:

> I like the way George resists, either with a word or by a gesture of indifference, announcements of sexual exploits ("I slept with so-and-so last night") unless, that is, the teller can provide details specific, tender and penetrating enough to render the event singular and, thus, of interest. Which is to say, George demands of narrated erotic adventures the same standard of intellectual or literary quality he requires of political ideas, poems or good travel writing.
>
> (92)

Even George's oral récits are appropriated, altered, and then integrated into the narrator's texts. And written texts, such as an early draft of the story about Jay which George "didn't like"(9), or the "vague, abstract and asexual"(143) stories that Bret shows the narrator, are either excluded or are signified only by traces in the form of the narrator's own criticism. In both media the narrator's process of gossip is defined by occlusion, exclusion, and alteration.

To authorize his retailing of gossip, the narrator recounts how M. not only gave his permission, but desired his stories to be rewritten and recorded: "He asked, more than once, if I might write about him. I was curious as to what advantage he saw. Well, just as letters are better than phone calls, he sensibly replied, the written word is preferable to memories. 'You can read it again, you can have it,' M. said. Votary of Cupid, his wish is my command"(54-5). This anecdote supplies the authorization Persky's narrator desires.

What is clear in this passage is that the written word belongs to the narrator and not to M.--the younger man approves of the black diary which will allow the narrator to "savour the pleasure when rereading"(124). It is the same privilege which the mythic Apollo enjoys in conferring immortality on Hyacinthus; Apollo keeps the pleasure of the utterance--the cry of loss inscribed on the leaves of the flower--and the pleasure of the *récit à fleurs*.

If language is the sole province of Apollo, god of poetry, there are nevertheless other discourses available to the modern Hyacinthus. To the younger men whom Persky's narrator encounters, discourse manifests itself in many ways: video footage, tattoos, scars, semen, erections, smells, moans. The body is the primary site of discourse for the younger "Hyacinthus": a site where technologies of power are acted out, both for and against him. Persky's narrator attempts to impose a hierarchy between language and silence, but silence, as Foucault argues, is an implicit part of discourse and cannot be segregated into a binary where it opposes speech:

> There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.
>
> (Foucault 1978, 27)

Persky's narrator authorizes his written discourse over the more "silent" forms of discourse in the text which are most often manifested through the bodies of the younger

men. The other's body is a gossiping body which must be silenced.

When the narrator recalls hiring a hustler named Sean for an evening, the body becomes--as it does in Wilde's Lord Wotton's aesthetic system--that form of excess which challenges the discursive power of the older man: "His beautiful torso was rather mutilated. In addition to a few small old scars on his belly and thigh, and possibly some track-marks, he had nearly a dozen tattoos, seemingly randomly placed, some of them elaborate and professional (a scaly dragon crawling down his bicep), others crudely amateurish"(33). One of the tattoos contains the letters "S.W.P." which, Sean explains, means "Superior White Power." The narrator does not approve of this expression, but he realizes it is "pointless to deliver a sermon"(34). When he jacks Sean off the semen "[surges] onto his belly coating the 'S.W.P.' tattoo"(34), and effectively conceals it; what the narrator disapproves of has seemingly been erased. The narrator thus uses the physical discourses of Sean's body (the semen and the tattoo) against themselves.[3]

The hustler's body becomes a site of competing discourses from which the narrator develops his technologies of power. Linda Williams in her critical text Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible" argues that "Foucault's idea that the pleasures of the body are subject to historically changing social constructions has been influential, especially the idea that pleasures of the body do not exist in immutable

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[3]If the narrator's body could speak--could gossip--through the visual what would it betray of his desire and of his desirability? Since this line of interrogation relies completely on conjecture, suffice it to say that the absence of the narrator's body effectively silences it from speaking and this silence is part of his discourse, shaping it through its absence.

opposition to a controlling and repressive power but instead are produced within configurations of power that put pleasures to particular use"(L. Williams 3). The moment when Sean's semen conceals the writing on his body (the tattoo) becomes an analogy for the narrator's prolific activity of putting pleasure to his own uses in the text.

In typical fashion, Persky's narrator subordinates Sean's *parole* to his *langue*, or discursive system, by framing Sean's body with intellectual displays of discursive authority. When Sean says "I can get a job anytime I want one"(32), Persky's narrator recalls hearing a news reporter "in reporting a local plant closure, [note] that the unemployment rate was in the double digits"(32). When Sean asks if Saigon is in Korea, the narrator is "startled" and replies, "No, Saigon's in Vietnam. You didn't know that"(33)? The narrator also analyzes Sean's accent which he thinks is from the American South, and critiques his "curious use of the word 'illusions'"(33). These observations frame Sean for the reader and construct the narrator's intellectual, discursive dominance.

Another technology of power which establishes the narrator's dominance is his use of intertextuality. The narrator explicitly refers to over thirty-two other authors; to a select few he returns more than once: Barthes, Plato, Montaigne, Proust, Cavafy, Robin Blaser, and Roger Casement. He even dedicates the text as an "*homage á Roland Barthes*"(1), thereby authorizing his imitation of Barthes' characteristic use of intertextuality and his disregard for typical rules of citation:

> The references supplied in this fashion are not authoritative but amical: I am not invoking guarantees, merely recalling,

> by a kind of salute given in passing, what has seduced, convinced, or what has momentarily given the delight of understanding (of being understood?). Therefore, these reminders of reading, of listening, have been left in the frequently uncertain, incompleted state suitable to a discourse whose occasion is indeed the memory of the sites (books, encounters) where such and such a thing has been read, spoken, heard. (Barthes 8-9)

In practice, however, Persky's narrator is far less "amical" and less "dialogical" than Barthes in his use of quotations. The récit in which the narrator meets Sean, the hustler, is concluded parenthetically:"(*Never saw him again*)"(35). The line is an intertextual reference to Renaud Camus' Tricks, which Persky's narrator has just discussed in the preceding meditation. Here, this use of intertextuality is a "dialogical" device that brings the narrator's past experience and the narrator's current interpretation into play with one another. By contrast, the dialogical relationship in Barthes' text is between the implicit author who "lends his 'culture' to the amorous subject, [and] the amorous subject [who] affords [the implicit author] the innocence of his image-repertoire, indifferent to the proprieties of knowledge"(Barthes 9). In both Barthes' text and Persky's text the beloved--or other--is excluded from this dialogical relationship, but Barthes' text excludes the beloved's experience because his focus is the "solitary" experience of the Lover and the eternal absence of the beloved. For other reasons, Persky's narrator excludes Sean--the younger man--from the dialogical relationship; his exclusion proves to be political because the other--unlike Barthes' beloved--has a face. Sean is excluded from the fraternity and privilege of the dialogical relationship so that Persky's narrator can

preserve his dialogical relationship with himself as the object and subject of desire.

Even when he includes the discourses of the younger men in the text, his perspective as a reader of intertexts reveals him to be jaundiced by his own desire. When in the midst of the sexual transaction, and "[o]n the receiving end [M.] urges [the narrator] on, uttering confessions one would whisper only to God"(45), the narrator actually aligns himself with God, hearing the confessions, but also controlling the discourse by concealing the words of the confession. As the only one who hears the confession, the interlocutor--like a priest--must not betray his confidence. But, as Foucault suggests, the one who hears the confession is not simply the one who interrogates the confessor, he is also responsible for interpreting the confession:

> It was the [interlocutor's] function to verify this obscure truth: the revelation of confession had to be coupled with the decipherment of what it said. The one who listened was not simply the forgiving master, the judge who condemned or acquitted; he was the master of truth. His was a hermeneutic function. With regard to the confession, his power was not only to demand it before it was made, or decide what was to follow after it, but also to constitute a discourse of truth on the basis of decipherment.
>
> (Foucault 1978, 66-7)

The discourse of confession serves the narrator well because it authorizes him to conceal M.'s *parole* both to maintain confidence and in order to interpret the confession.

Most incidents of interpretation (and so translation) in Buddy's have this same purpose in mind: the production of the other's desire for the narrator. In his meditation on anal sex, the narrator observes that M. consents to let him "fuck him for the first time

since [they] started having sex. [M.] declares: 'It was the only way I could think of to let you know you're really special'"(89). The narrator has just finished arguing that "the acceptance by males of anal penetration is an inescapable confession of desire--abandonment of heterosexual manhood"(88)--thus, consenting to penetration equals desire. Earlier in the text he observes that M. "announced his 'horniness,'" and that it "was formidably visible"(42)--thus, stimulation equals desire. The narrator affords himself the privileged position of the interlocutor so that he can translate the oral and "silent" confessions of the other into evidence of a desire in the other that reciprocates the narrator's desire.

What complicates the narrator's production of reciprocal desire is the commercial arrangements that exist between the narrator and the younger men, arrangements mentioned only in passing. With the first younger man he describes, B., he confesses his knowledge of the inequities between them:

> I'd have to be particularly obtuse--moreso[sic] than my dimmer moments--not to recognize the inequities in class power between B. and myself. Worse, there's also, as it's known in Marxist argot, a cash nexus, which poses its own set of inescapable culpabilities, but I think I'll save that one for a rainier day. Nonetheless, as I began seeing B., I was struck by how the structure of the homoerotic tends to even out the standard imbalances in relationships--class, age, education, whatever.
>
> (Persky 40)

There is no "rainier day" in Persky's text where he will explicate the social reality of the sex-trade and its relationship to his desire. Even in the above quotation he obscures his

reference to the sex-trade by describing it with an academic, authoritative discourse just as he dismisses it. The narrator justifies the occlusion of the "economic matters" by authorizing it from the perspective of the younger man/hustler:

> B., from our first encounters, sought to diffuse the boundaries of code, to make them ragged as a fjord, invoking ambiguous borders between coded and open relationships, in sex as well as within economic matters. In bed, one or the other of us "fully impaled," as pornographic purple prose has it, it was soon mutually obvious that we were engaged in "something more" than a protocol. And how often he transformed monetary transactions, for his own sake as much as mine, with the utterance, "You're helping me out," as though it was but a munificent loan whose return was not pressing.
>
> (Persky 41)

The narrator translates the younger man's aversion to the monetary transaction as a sign of affection or desire that transcends the "boundaries of code" which define a commercial agreement. The economic conditions are not removed, but the narrator tries to use desire to obscure their presence.

The narrator also tries to obscure any commercial arrangement in his discussion of Young and Ready, the one pornographic film he regards as distinct from all other pornography. He observes that as he watches this film he finds himself "looking for moments not required by the 'script,'" because they "serve to 'soften' the brutality of the commercial arrangement"(Persky 116). Angela Carter discusses the importance of this type of softening in pornography in general. She argues that "To concentrate on the prostitute's trade *as* trade would introduce too much reality into a scheme that is first and

foremost one of libidinous fantasy, and pornographic writers, in general, are not interested in extending the genre in which they work to include a wider view of the world"(Carter 13). The "wider view of the world" that Carter refers to would, in Persky's narrator's case, have to include the commercial arrangement and his body; as it stands it does not escape libidinal fantasy. Persky's narrator attempts to conceal the commercial agreement in order to blur the boundary between life and pornography just as Wilde's Lord Wotton must conceal any "reality" which would interrupt aesthetic pleasure. Each is at least provisionally successful, but as Ragland-Sullivan argues, "Imaginary collusions continually break down"(Wright 174), and this impermanence is the reason the fantasy has to be so exhaustively maintained.

The "ambiguous borders" that Persky's narrator discusses when he tries to obscure "economic matters" signify a fantasy of a particular social fiction that he constructs. He obscures the economic conditions surrounding the young men whom he pays for sex so that he can construct his identity and his desirability; but, as Carter's analysis suggests, what he obscures inevitably defines those relationships: "If one sexual partner is economically dependent on the other, then the question of sexual coercion of contractual obligation raises its ugly head in the very abode of love and inevitably colours the nature of the sexual expression of affection"(Carter 9). The fantasy of his association with the young men attempts to deflect the possibilities of obligation or sexual coercion, but no amount of occlusion can erase the social reality of the sex-trade, or prevent it from undermining the narrator's argument that "among the pleasures of that celebrated homoerotic sexual preference...are its *equalities, reciprocities, reversals*"(Persky 40). The

"democracy" of same-sex desire is supposed to blur all these distinctions and dependencies.

The mercurial nature of desire thus provides the ambiguity the narrator needs in order to obscure the socio-economic reality of the sex-trade. He uses a quotation by Roland Barthes to reveal this dynamic: "Desire is no respecter of objects. When a hustler looked at A., A. read in his eyes not the desire for money but just desire--and he was moved by it"(53). Persky disagrees with Barthes, or at least imagines his situation is different because with M., "When you win his love, it is not the sex he loves, since he is already a past master of that, but *you*--for yourself, and for treating him as a human"(53). In an effort to illustrate his humane treatment of M., the narrator recalls how, "When he got to M., the M.C. [of Buddy's] pretended to peer under his loin cloth, joking, 'That's what pays the rent,' as he flashed an exaggerated leer to the Roman mob"(50). The narrator feigns his own kindliness while he constructs as an inhumane gesture the M.C.'s exposure of the commercial agreement. It is the other's desire which must be interpreted against itself, against the evidence of its desire for any other object than Persky's narrator.

Just as the narrator characteristically overlooks the commercial agreement, he likes to compare some of his more sparse notebook entries to those of Roger Casement, the "philanthropic" author of The Black Diaries. Intertextually, Persky's narrator tries to appropriate Casement's philanthropy as a disguise:

> Perhaps each of us locates one historical figure with whom, because of various correspondences of character or uses of the language, he most identifies. Casement, British

> consul in various outposts--I savour the glamour of Boma, Madeira, Lourenço Marques on my tongue--was an officer of the state, political writer, amorous subject, revolutionary.
>
> Entering Conrad's heart of darkness, he travelled the Congo, 1903, meticulous gatherer of the evidence of the atrocities in the rubber plantations of Leopold's African kingdom. Back in London, he feverishly penned the Congo Report, 6,000 words at a sitting. In between, he cruised for boys in the parks. (123)

Since Persky's narrator claims he identifies with Casement, he obviously intends the reader to identify him with Casement also. He ignores their differences--he is neither an officer of the state, nor a revolutionary--to argue that his desire is similarly connected to a greater social purpose, "cruising" for boys as well as for evidence of "colonial atrocities." Or perhaps he feels he will be wrongly persecuted for his desire, as Casement himself was persecuted.

Significantly, however, when he does quote Casement's diaries, he neglects to reveal the name that the 1911 diary has been given since Scotland Yard reproduced it:"the cash ledger"(Singleton-Gates 537). His revelation of this name would have drawn too much attention to his ellipses in quotations from the diaries. For example, he quotes from the July 28th entry in the 1910 diary: *"July 28. Hotel. Splendid* testiminhos. *Soft as silk and big and full. No bush to speak of. Good wine needs no bush"*(Persky 219). According to Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias in their The Black Diaries: An account of Roger Casement's life and times with a collection of his diaries and public writings, the entry for July 28th should read, in its entirety:

> *Hotel. Splendid testiminhos, no bush to speak of. Good wine needs no bush. Soft as silk and big and full. £1.0/-. Carlos Augusta Costa--189 Rua dos Ferreiros, Funchal. Very fine one, big, long, thick--wants awfully and likes very much. 7/6. Joao Big £1.12/6. Internacional Hotel. Bella Vista.* (Gates and Girodias 219)

There seems no reason for the discrepancy between Persky's narrator's quotation and the Gates and Girodias reproduction of the Scotland Yard typewritten copy. Persky's quotation leaves off just where Casement's record of measurements and prices begins.

The next quotation is from the August 8th entry and the ellipses with which the quotation begins elides nine days' entries. What Persky omits when he quotes Casement is what he omits from his own meditations--any mention of the commercial arrangement. Evidently Persky's narrator's identification with Casement is highly selective, refusing the difference of Casement as other, but reflecting what he would like to see of the subject constructed in his own image. Intertextuality thus exceeds the intentions of Persky's narrator and "frames" him in ways which he cannot control. The elision of the commercial arrangement is accompanied by an attempt to place the younger men's discourses within parentheses, narratively controlling the récit. Under the figure "...and then what?", Persky's narrator discusses Renaud Camus' Tricks--"two dozen or so literal accounts of one-night stands"(29)--in order to establish a precedent for the double act of elision he will commit with the younger men in the text:

> But as well, tacked on to each "trick," in parentheses and set in italic type, is a little epilogue--the "...and then what happened?" Sometimes it is no more than a terse entry:

> "*(Never saw him again.)*"; at other times, a more elaborate explanation is called for, e.g.: "*(Seen again several times, but for five minutes, and always by accident. I interest him, he says, but not for the reasons which make him interesting to me. He'd like to have discussions with me. He gave me his telephone number. One night, when I called him, he was obviously making love. He declined the offer of my telephone number ('I know I won't use it, that's how I am') but urged me to telephone him again, which I won't do.)*"
> (29)

Camus' longer, "more elaborate explanation" displays its humiliation--there is a sense of equality between the amorous subject and the beloved, or at least a humiliation the amorous subject feels when his desire is not reciprocated.

By association, the narrator of Buddy's pretends to argue for such an equality between himself--dispenser of discursive authority--and the younger men in the text. He explicitly claims a "humanizing" function for those epilogues:

> Simply this: in a text that is programmatically superficial, [these epilogues] invoke, however casually, depths of being. The "tricks," by definition, argue a kind of anonymity of person; i.e., they appear in their role as objects of desire, which is to say, non-persons; the epilogues insist on humanizing them by conceding their endurance beyond the recounted episode. Even the announcement of a disappearance--"(Never saw him again.)"--is a declaration that "he" nonetheless continues to exist, merely elsewhere. (31)

Although it is true that the epilogue leaves a trace, Persky's narrator uses the epilogue discursively as a technology of power. The epilogue has a two-fold purpose for

him: it effectively kills off or removes the younger man from the narrative so that the younger man (and vicariously, the narrator) will be eternally young; it likewise frames the episode discursively and reasserts the narrator's position as the dispenser of discursive authority.

In the epilogue appended to the 1991 edition of Buddy's the narrator's desire for discursive authority becomes excessively obvious. This epilogue can only be described as an unabashed display of narrative power--a forum for gossip--where the narrator returns to reassert the illusion of his discursive authority and the integrity of his fantasy. Patricia Meyer Spacks reveals a connection between such gossiping and the desire for "imaginary" discursive control: "A relatively innocent form of the erotics of power (we mostly don't expect to affect the course of people's lives by talking about them--or we don't consciously acknowledge any such expectation), this excitement includes the heady experience of imaginary control: gossip claims other people's experience by translating it into story"(Spacks 11). This desire for "imaginary control" is evident throughout the text, but becomes blatant in the appended epilogue where he casually discloses the names he concealed in the main body of the text: B. = Bret; M. = Mel. What he does not disclose is whether these men were indignant that their full names did not make it into the book, or whether this is an unauthorized action.

When he discusses the first piece of criticism he received from "a minor character from [the] book"(136), he makes fun of the man's angry response to a degrading representation. When the man asks Persky's narrator, "Do you even know me?", the narrator then rhetorically asks, "Was he likely to be mollified by a discussion of

irony"(137)? The narrator recalls that the man then offered a fact about his life that was not included in the novel: "I'm an environmentalist"(137)--a mundane fact included to counter the man's anger at a degrading representation with another degrading representation. The narrator's treatment of the man is gratuitously cruel, meta-textually revenging himself on the man's indignation by revealing that the man no longer runs a frame store, but has "since gone on to a more sensitive posting in government service"(136). All Persky's narrator seems to have resisted including is the man's phone number.

When the narrator returns to the two major objects of his affection in the epilogue it is to impose a defensive sense of closure. Bret returns to Vancouver, briefly, but long enough for the narrator to observe that "the total effect Bret gives off is somewhat desperate"(142), and "rather painfully nuts, still hyper, and the intensity, as before, seems to [him] narcissistic"(143). The narrator then notes Bret's "fragile psyche"(144) as a way of undermining Bret's response to Buddy's: "He read *Buddy's*--painfully, because of the mental scrambling from the accident--but denied that it had anything to do with him, with his body"(144). In order to refute Bret's claim--that the narrator's art does not imitate life effectively--the narrator emphasizes Bret's infirmity, his "mental scrambling." While the epilogue "is a declaration that 'he' nonetheless continues to exist"(31) and expresses his objection to the text proper, it only raises these issues so that they may be framed by the narrator within the text.

In order, discursively, to close and place all criticisms of Buddy's in parentheses, the narrator chooses to close with Mel and Jason who only offer a minor aesthetic

criticism: "It wasn't a leather thong that he tied my hands with...It was an electrical cord..and I was on my *back*"(147). Addressing the reader directly, the narrator then translates what this *should* mean: "Are you with me? *I.e.*, Jason is simply telling me what happened. Good god, not a criticism, but a correction, a crucial correction to ensure the truth and accuracy of this testament of love"(147). Mel and Jason's correction and subsequent approval of the text confirms the "juridico-discursive" power of this text by suggesting that there is no escaping its representations. The narrator justifies his own discursive authority by finding approval for it in the eyes of its represented subjects.

A last entry in the epilogue also reasserts the fantasy of "Equalities, reciprocities, and reversals"(116): "There is absolutely nothing between us, nothing held back--this young man of 25 or so and I have the transparent intimacy of both having loved Mel, of both having submitted ourselves--many times...I marvelled at this rarest of gifts, the literal truth"(147-8). The narrator closes the text by reasserting his position as the "master of truth" when he appropriates what Jason has said as "the rarest of gifts, the literal truth." What the narrator has rarely given or been given--literal truth--he has had to create for himself, and when the fantasy coincides with the particulars of reality, then he calls it "literal truth."

When the narrator notes that both he and Jason have submitted themselves to Mel, he is claiming finally that they have both held the same position in the mise-en-scene of desire. This attempt to conflate the sexual position and the position one holds in the mise-en-scene of desire into one is the narrator's last attempt at closely identifying with the other--his last attempt at concealing his economic, social, and physical otherness so that

he may maintain his fantasy of union.

The narrator of Persky's text presumes throughout to construct a position within the erotic episode that is equal and reciprocal, to erase social differences which are nonetheless reinscribed in the text. The position he takes in this particular erotic episode still reflects his desire to identify with the young man's desirability: if there is no power/political/social differences between them, then the narrator can be equally desirable. The paradox of the pornographic system is that it rules out the object's need for desire and yet creates the illusion, for the privileged subject, that it still exists. Persky's narrator sets out to make the actors in pornography into people, but the absence of his own body makes these "people" into a class of pure functionaries of his voyeuristic fantasy.

CHAPTER THREE
RAPE OF THE BLACK GANYMEDE: COLONIZATION, SUBLIMATION AND SADOMASOCHISM IN STEPHEN GRAY'S TIME OF OUR DARKNESS

In the first chapter of Stephen Gray's Time of Our Darkness, Pete, the first-person narrator, admits that "[he has] the need to chop everything down to fit"(2). Ostensibly he is talking about his "hydrangea bush," but immediately following this concern, he finds a "black child at the gate...[and he goes] to dispose of whatever it was"(2). Likewise, in The Picture of Dorian Gray and Buddy's the older men "chop down" and objectify the younger men so they can remake them in their own image. This is a discursive process wherein the older man (Lord Wotton, Persky's nameless narrator, and Pete) reserves for himself a position of discursive authority. Wilde's Lord Wotton desires "To project [his] soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear [his] own intellectual views echoed back to [him] with all the music of passion and youth"(Wilde 51). Persky's narrator similarly uses younger surrogates as extensions of himself, concealing his own body to project his image of lost youth onto their very visible, specularized bodies. In brief, these older men seek to "reproduce" themselves without the mediation of female bodies; they father themselves upon the minds and even the bodies

of younger men. But in Stephen Gray's Time of Our Darkness the physiologies of these others in the text complicate this process: one is a thirteen-year-old black boy named Disley while another is a woman named Jenny.

Disley is initially little more than a black student who has come to Pete's school "on a scholarship from an educational improvement scheme indirectly funded by the US Congress"(1). He is introduced before the reader is made aware of Pete's own difficult domestic situation and before any crisis seems evident in the teacher's life. Disley arrives at Pete's house, like Dorian Gray or like the younger men in Persky's text, without parents. When Pete drives him home, he notes that "[c]ertainly there was no one at home to receive their curiously named son"(12). Disley returns to Pete's house the next day and proffers what Pete calls "the famous note" from Disley's mother:

> Master
> It is no good for my chile in the township. My husband he is in single hostel. Myself I am wekking in Prospect. There is trouble trouble Master. My chile must keep in Saints Pols until everything is finish. He must follow a good education. Look after my chile until everything is finish. My chile says to me you are a good Master. I have a good jersey for him. Humble greetings -
>
> Magdalena Mashinini (Mrs)
>
> (30)

Pete reads this letter--a note of permission--essentially giving him authority over Disley. They all make it a discursive act of resignation, the price Disley and his mother will pay for his protection and assimilation.

This letter is also the first indication of Disley's own linguistic difference, a

difference which must be erased. Language, both written and oral, plays a significant role in Disley's identity as reconstituted under Pete's tutelage--an identity that aspires to acceptable "whiteness." For what Pete teaches at St. Paul's is Afrikaans--the language of apartheid--though he would prefer to teach English. What he fails to see, however, is that English is equally the language of colonization and apartheid.

Like Wilde's Lord Henry Wotton and Persky's unnamed narrator, Pete is the obvious dispenser of discursive authority in the novel. So his rendering of non-standard English becomes the mark of marginality in the world he represents. Trudi, a German immigrant who has taught for several decades at the school, becomes another linguistic type of social displacement: "Zis one you must read, I got it out zpecilly for you"(117); "'Zis will be a story very after your heart,' Trudi continued, 'because it is about a brovezzor who valls in love vid a tart, and all his bubils tease him, you know how they are'"(117). Even Pete's transcription of a soldier's stutter emphasizes the young man's speech impediment: "Th-that's just--grazing for cattle"(197); "Th-that's Mount Balmoral"(198); "Next week I go-go"(198). But perhaps the person whose speech is most marginalized by Pete is the young man who rivals him for André's affection. Prince's English is not only imperfect and often laced with Afrikaans exclamations, his references to English-speaking culture are mocked. When he is trying to explain what was stolen when the house was robbed he tells Pete that "they only took *Gone in the Wind* and *Officer or a Gentleman*"(225). Characteristically, Pete uses the accents and linguistic errors of others to assert the superiority of his class, race, culture, and intellect--his position of privilege as dispenser of discursive authority.

Pete's narrative attention to locution only lapses with Disley, suggesting his affectionate desire to erase Disley's cultural difference. Disley's accent and his poor English are recorded throughout the first chapter, though not beyond the point whre Pete is drawn to him. When Disley is reciting a speech from *Macbeth*, Pete reveals that there is a difference between the transcribed version of Disley's speech and what Pete is hearing: "There were areas of Disley no teacher would reach. 'What bloody man is that?' He announced it like 'Wet very men is *there-t*?' There was a long way for us to go"(64). In less than six months this thirteen-year-old will be capable of sophisticated utterance, but the irregular evidence of Disley's obscured *parole* will always undermine and throw into question Pete's translations.

When Pete says that "[t]his was no longer teaching, but a mutual, never exhausted joint monologue"(124), he reveals more than he might have intended. Ostensibly he is saying that he no longer has to lecture Disley, and implying that they are involved in a dialogue. But he substitutes "joint monologue" for "dialogue," and this substitution reveals the hybrid form of locution that Pete has constructed for Disley. Just as he transcribes others' accents, linguistic errors, and speech impediments to illustrate their inferiority, so must he create a new locution for Disley, a "joint monologue." In his role as a language instructor, Pete, the lover framing the beloved, constructs a white mask for Disley, re-casting him in his own image, subsumed into his "monologue" which is redeemed by "joint" expression.

Before Disley met Pete, he had been left to flounder at the school, receiving little help, and as Jenny Carter his teacher observes, if he is to fail, "[t]here's plenty more

where he comes from"(22). Disley is an almost valueless commodity under South African apartheid, a system of oppression which values most those colonized subjects who imitate the colonizing subject. Pete argues that St. Paul's is an international school, that it will have students from all over the world, but there is no contingency for cultural specificity, or other ways of learning. St. Paul's international focus is only a disguise for the assimilation they expect from their students. This desire for assimilation, from the colonial subject's point of view, is well described by Frantz Fanon in Black Skins, White Masks:

> Every colonized people...finds itself face to face with the language of the civilized nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness. (Fanon 18)

This elevation in status through mimesis is what is offered to Disley at St. Paul's and, at least initially, within his relationship with Pete. Under Pete's influence, Disley's status at the school changes and he is "seen less as a retarded black and more as a brainy white"(180). Pete's influence has fathered a white mask for Disley.

When Disley wins an award for scholastic improvement at the end of the school year, Pete and Jenny decide that it is not only Disley's parents who are generally unsuitable for St. Paul's:

> We reviewed the problem of Disley's real parents. To put it uncharitably, we could only think that should the Mashininis pitch up for speech day Disley would be done

> for. To him it would be an excruciating social embarrassment, to them an otherworldly bafflement. Were the chairman of the school trustees to approach his mother with a compliment, and she just to stare at him, the name of Mashinini would be mud. Were the managing director of Barlow-Rand to take his father aside and learn that all he felt a growing lad needed was occasional clysters with a cow's horn, Disley would no longer be able to hold his head up in civilized society. (232-3)

Pete degrades the Mashininis and their cultural difference in order to consolidate his own colonial position.

In a scene just prior to this, Pete has already justified his prejudice against the unassimilated blacks by making Mrs Mashinini appear beast-like in her lack of comprehension. Jenny says she feels sympathy for "poor Disley, having that lump of vagueness to haul around"(187). She follows this with other derogatory remarks, all aimed at Mrs. Mashinini's size:

> "That's why they're so fat! Because with the consumer boycott, they gorge themselves thick in their madams' kitchens!"
> "Where does a black baby sleep?" I slipped in.
> "And sick it up for their offspring-- like pelicans!" (187)

The third-person pronouns and possessive pronouns (they, their) mark a racial difference that reduces the women to a stereotyped Other. But Jenny cannot conceal her own racist motives: "Jealous. That's what I am. That huge--blob--has a child like Disley, and I--we....You don't have a child, I don't--and she has that total little black gem"(187-8). At

best, Pete does not disagree, and at worst he offers the first line of a racist joke ("Where does a black baby sleep?"). When Jenny says, "They sick [the food] up for their offspring," he gives himself a narrative alibi by asking an ambiguous question: "'How can you--?'"(187). But not even Pete will expose Jenny's rants as racist, since he clearly participates in a colonialist perspective which segregates the child from the parents because the child has embraced a "whiteness" that the parents lack.

Disley's "whiteness" contaminates his identity, dividing him between his racial, cultural difference and the standards of St. Paul's which will make him desirable in Pete's eyes. Pete is ignorant of this contamination, this identity crisis, and instead admires Disley's good fortune as a colonized subject:

> The point was, could the white world provide enough to satisfy Disley in life? Unlike most of my circle, he always had access to the black world. He didn't have to choose, for he could exist in both, have hair-driers and double handshakes. No one else I knew was that fortunate, had that much going for him. (127)

Pete refuses to see the result of his own colonizing influence on Disley and, instead, constructs Disley's bifurcation as an asset.

What Pete desires in Disley is his ability to traverse the border between two distinct cultures and wear two masks. This transgressive ability reveals that neither "blackness" nor "whiteness" is a term signifying skin colour within this text; they are constructions which function within the constitution of Pete's identity and his libidinal economy. He describes the social construction of black skin he grew up with in an

attempt to explain his desire for Disley:

> I was brought up not to touch black skin. Black skin was unhealthy, scaly like a reptile's, gave you TB. A whole country has been divided on that prejudice. When I was a child my mother pulled me out of reach of the nanny, feeding me herself, bathing me. (138)

"Blackness" then is a construction of prejudice; but if he accepts a touch of "blackness," he does so to justify touching a child sexually on the grounds of his "liberal" acceptance of colour. He is not "sick" as the rest of white South Africa is "sick with their aversion for black skin"(138). So Pete's acceptance of "blackness" becomes a virtue, a mask for concealing the child behind the colour.

Pete no sooner uses his willingness to "touch" blackness as a virtue, a sign of healthiness, than he removes the "blackness" to "universalize" the body of the child, in fact, to make the reader think the child is an adult: "Do I need to describe the sensation that I experienced as the blackness went out of Disley's skin for me, and I felt the person beneath. All of him"(138). For Pete, Disley's essential self--his intrinsic "value" removed from age and colour--cannot be revealed until his "blackness" is dissolved and his childhood is erased.

If "Blackness" appears fluid within Time of Our Darkness, it is because such fluidity allows it to function as a device of psychic coloration. When, for example, Disley and Pete first have sex Pete turns the light out and immerses them both into "blackness," because he wants to conceal more than his colour difference: "I switched off the reading

lamp so that, if I would not see his tense, lean body, he would not see my overused pink nipples, my gathering paunch. We were more equal in the dark"(78). The darkness serves to conceal Pete's body, but reveals his fear of the difference between their ages. In order for Pete to psychically identify with Disley he must blur the hierarchy between "black" and "white" and between "agedness" and "youth."

Pete seeks to dissolve the binary of age/youth by rationalizing that if a child is mature enough to be a revolutionary--and old enough to be killed by the government--then he is mature and old enough to be a lover. Failing to recognize his own double standard, Pete rails against the hypocrisy of apartheid, echoed in André's words when he says that "[y]ou can shoot [black minors] in the back but you can't go to bed with them"(33). When Pete finally has sex with Disley, he frames it with the prosecution of other black children by his government:

> Why I write all this down must be pondered as well. I can record only the following: as hundreds of kids were being slammed behind bars that night, criminals twenty to a cell, asleep by the bell, awake by the bell, to be tried by the magistrate in batches of ten--I am talking about my country now--I crawled beside Disley, eased the hot-water bottle to our feet, and stroked his thin back and round his arse and paddled the side of his neck with my thumb.
>
> (76)

What Pete never seems to take into account in this rationalization is the difference between a child fighting for freedom from apartheid and a child in a relationship with an older man: the former is trying to break out of a system of oppression while the latter is

subjected to oppression.

Pete also tries to rationalize the dissolution he desires through a discourse based on physiology. He argues that "[t]his was not a child, but a lover...This was not a schoolboy, but a man beginning. I wanted to know more of him. Like a doctor, I should ask him to cough....No child, no schoolboy"(77). "Like a doctor," Pete makes a discourse of Disley's body, using the thirteen-year-old body to signify a maturity that exceeds his years: "Certainly Disley had been busting his considerable rod for the last few years, and producing bucketfuls of splash. He could have fathered a whole new generation on the girls at Saint Paul's"(78). The child is thus made father to the "man," at least in Pete's mind. He must maintain the illusion that there can be no better choice for Disley than himself, given his privilege, his money, his power, and his position. He argues that Disley, "[t]his black-skinned child had twice crossed town for this moment, knowing he would get it"(77). He conflates desire and consent, implying that a thirteen-year-old boy is both self-conscious about his choices, and mature enough to be attracted to Pete for his own unique personality.

Pete conflates Disley's desire and "consent" in an attempt to exempt the relationship he shares with Disley from the social and economic reality of apartheid. The paradox is that while Pete argues that Disley is capable of informed consent, he also maintains that Disley is a child: "We were an adult and a consenting child, making our own world by our mutual wishes.... only under cover of night could we emerge together"(123). It must follow then that not only does the ambiguity serve Pete, but the faculty of consent and the identity of Disley as a "child" each serve Pete some psychic or

libidinal purpose.

The illusion of consent conceals the possibility of economic coercion and to some extent glosses over issues of power which are inherent in such relations of disparity. Kevin Kopelson argues in his study of André Gide and Ronald Firbank that this kind of concealment is a type of "pastoral" project:

> Gide is both repelled by the womanishness of sexual inversion and sodomitical submission, and drawn to a "pastoral" project, one engaged in by writers who would like to conceive of the sexual "apart from all relations of power," to see it as only "belatedly contaminated by power from elsewhere"(Bersani 221). In other words, Gide would rather not acknowledge the colonial context of his sexual initiation. (Kopelson 63)

Pete's seemingly "pastoral" project conceals the significance of Disley's age while it maintains that age's significance in the mise-en-scene of desire. Pete tells Disley that "we white people won't let you be a man tomorrow"(206), neglecting to add that his own "project" is to keep him from ever becoming a man.

Pete's desire for youth and Disley's liminal state--no longer a boy and not yet a man--recalls the myth of Ganymede and Zeus in which the beautiful youth Ganymede is made immortal through Zeus's love, but will never grow past pubescence; the implication is that, if he were to become a man, then Zeus would be made effeminate. Disley's "untimely" death in the end thus becomes very timely, and death becomes the ultimate castration of the other. This novel, perhaps more than the other two, reveals the paradox in which the pederastic or aged subject finds himself: his desire and his power are

ultimately incompatible.

This complex imbrication of consent with childish innocence typically operates within and depends upon the social construction of blackness. For, when it comes to the white Afrikaner youth, Prince, Pete notes that "[w]hat he wanted was not a sex scene, but a home"(94). Pete betrays an understanding of Prince's desire which he does not extend to the almost parentless Disley. In a curious way, he maintains a double-standard so as to preserve Disley's difference, for he identifies himself masochistically with Disley's colour, youth, and political situation.

Pete's desire nonetheless to be subsumed into "blackness" and "youth" is similar to what Kevin Kopelson calls the desire for "self-recovery" through "dissolution":

> Yet Gide, like Firbank, conceives of love, and in particular pederastic love, as the dissolution of the black/white (Blanche/ Negress) complementarity upon which it is also based. The pastoral mode of *If It Die*--the apolitical and nonpederastic egalitarianism, the *face à face* sexual preference, the attempt to pass himself off as non-exploitive, as something other than a sexual tourist--should, in fact, be traced to this investment in erotic dissolution...Love, for Gide, is self-loss, (white) subject / (black) other merger. After love, as he imagined both Wilde and Verlaine realized, comes "self-recovery."
>
> (Kopelson 66)

This desire for dissolution of the black/white binary, and the desire to be subsumed into "blackness" and youth, are all part of a desire to appropriate Disley's otherness. Kaja Silverman, in Male Subjectivity at the Margins, describes the desire to be subsumed into blackness as "psychic coloration"(299). Pete's desire to assimilate Disley into white South

Africa is complicated by his own libidinal economy, whereby he also identifies with Disley as a racial and "youthful" other.

Perhaps the most significant example of this psychic coloration is revealed through a memory of Pete's that he revisits through fantasy several times in the novel. As a child he is travelling with his mother when he sees a black man bathing in the river:

> This was how I first saw a nude male. An old-fashioned steel bridge over a broad, reedy river. My mother replacing the spoon in the marmalade. The coffee jerking in its flat cup. A muscular, thin-waisted stark naked man standing on a mudbank, a bar of soap foaming in his fist, white suds dripping down his armpits and from his groin, and he waved gracefully to us, flecks of suds splashing on his head and chest.
>
> My mother clipped her eyes shut. "They have no sense of shame," she said.
>
> I kept staring through the double glass, at his smiling movement, the silver reach of the water, and was never the same again. (34)

The mise-en-scene of desire begins with transgression and the black man's lack of "shame" with which Pete, as a boy, wants to identify. This scene also provides the opposite case of the desire to subsume age difference: here it is a child identifying with the man. The "dining car of a cross-country train"(34) serves as the space of "whiteness" and "youth" defined by the difference of the racial other--the man--bathing shamelessly in the river.

The "double glass," if it is double-paned, is also double in its function of mirroring the double to himself. This scene is a metaphor or performance of Jacques

Lacan's mirror-stage which he argues is "*an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image"(Lacan 2). Pete, as a child, looks prospectively in the Lacanian mirror at the adult he wishes to become: a stereotypical, primitively physical, sexual, shameless, black man. This tension between the white boy on the train and the black man washing in the river is based on a desire that is derived from the separation of the two. It is an antiseptic fantasy that permits a type of disembodied identification; disembodied because their two bodies--their two worlds--are still separated by the glass of the train car window. Pete's desire for--and identification with--the black man washing on the river bank is the primary moment of identification which disperses into a pervasive fantasy that saturates the text.

When he returns to this memory again near the end of the novel it is altered and, through fantasy, the double glass (read mirror) is shattered so he can take on "blackness," leaving behind his class and racial privilege: "I broke from my mother's table in the dining car, scattered coffee, toast, marmalade. So great was the force of my recognition the double glass shattered"(304). There is no longer mediation or a division between Pete and the object he desires--it is no longer that he identifies with the black man, but that he has, in fantasy, become black. The fantasy of shattering the double glass also permits the return of Pete's youthful body, a kind of desublimation of his homosexual and cross-racial desires. The initial separation--between Pete and the black man--that the Imaginary relation entailed provided a limit to be transgressed. Just as Pete has made Disley into a transgressive body moving from culture to culture and language to language, in fantasy

he imagines his own mimesis of that transgressive body.

Pete is bifurcated, caught between two itineraries in his relationship with Disley: he seeks to create a colonized, "acceptable" white mask for Disley while he concurrently fetishizes Disley's skin colour. The fetishized skin provokes Pete's nostalgia for the moment when he was a child on the train seeing the naked black man washing in the river. For Pete, black skin signifies a "shameless" body, a body that can express desire physically, without sublimation. He desires such a body but cannot give up the privilege afforded by his "whiteness." Disley thus becomes the prototype, the hybrid of what Pete both desires and refuses to relinquish--his power. Pete wants not only to construct Disley as other, but to become the other and thus to imitate the prototype. This desire is predicated on the need to desublimate the body and, concurrently, to act out sadomasochistic and masochistic impulses. Silverman argues that "[f]or Edward Said, [T.E.] Lawrence is one of those benighted Westerners who, not content merely to construct 'the Orient,' seeks to provide its best representative"(Silverman 299). Whereas Lawrence recreates himself in the image of the other so that they will imitate him back--what she calls the double mimesis--Pete's process is inverted: he recreates Disley into a desirable image and then imitates that image. Whether the colonizing subject identifies with his own "masquerade"(like Lawrence) or the image he creates in the other (like Pete or Wilde's Lord Wotton), he is still, according to Silverman, "finding himself within the racial and social other"(Silverman 299); in the latter case an other that also wears the (socially acceptable under apartheid) mask of "whiteness."

This socially transgressive body--like the complex mix of beautiful object and

desiring subject that Lord Wotton creates in Dorian Gray--is finally a complex, hybrid tool for the subject's consolidation of the self. Like Lord Wotton, Pete's identification with Disley for most of the novel is vicarious just as though he has moulded Disley into a useful reflection of himself. Pete's identification with Disley and Disley's potential as a leader of the oppressed Other conceals an erotic identification with apartheid. He nonetheless disclaims his privilege when he claims that, although "[i]t seems quibbling and petty" to mention the criminal aspect of his love for Disley, "when multitudes starve, more are forced into removals before the blade of the bulldozer, but it is all part of the same. We were all living across the law"(133). In one sense, Pete identifies with those marginalized and oppressed under apartheid through Disley; in another sense, he reduces his molestation of a child to the same level as breaking the law of apartheid.

When Pete sees Disley within a context of other black children who participate in the revolution, he does so to point out what he sees as the paradox under which black children must fight adult battles against a regime fighting to keep all blacks as wards of the state, as children under the rule of white South Africa.[1] Pete reminds the reader that "[i]n South Africa the government killed black children"(13), and that under such a government Disley has only two choices: "These were Disley's previous school fellows, the children who had decided on Liberation before education--freedom fighters, truants

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[1]In one of the rare articles on Gray, Shaun de Waal reports that "Gray has said that an element he wished to thematise in the novel was the proposition that the entire impetus of the uprising in South Africa in the mid-1980s, during which children assumed the role of adults and adults became, to say the least, vindictively childish, should be acted out literally"(de Waal 240).

and then vagrants. They were starving"(9). Pete points to the destroyed schools and seems to criticize these child revolutionaries for not choosing education, but does not seem aware of what kind of education he, much less the government of South Africa, is offering black youth. He says that "[his] life had been spent this far protecting such kids from the adult world, preparing them to cope with it, not defy it"(64).

Pete's pedagogical approach encourages black students to "cope" with the "[white] adult world," but does not reflect on the cost of such an approach: the racial other's split consciousness and the loss of childhood without the consolation of adulthood. With Disley in particular, Pete observes that "[a]t that awkward age between boy and man, he didn't know whether to be utterly obedient or to have rights of his own"(37), but this is only mentioned as a disclaimer to prevent any interrogation of the sexual advances he is about to make on Disley.

Pete's crisis of identity--his nostalgia for his lost youth and his desire to lose himself in "blackness"--is precipitated by a weakened relationship with his long-time lover, André; they sleep in different rooms and appear to be more roommates than lovers. The problems in Pete and André's relationship pervade the text and all other relationships are implicated in the complicated game of desire which they play. Ostensibly, the novel seems to be the story of Pete's relationship with Disley, but in one very revealing passage Pete confesses to André and to the reader that there is another story, another desire, running through this:

> But why can't we have one relationship completely our own? We do everything by proxy--through Jenny and through the Prince, through even Disley. It's as if we can

> touch each other only through other people. I don't care who you sleep with; pray God you don't care about that with me, and I'm not even going to tell you half. Because it's none of your business. But it's only to get back in touch with you. You see? (274)

The proxy, then, is a body through which desire traffics and any identification with that discrete body--its colour, its gender, its specificity--is a narcissistic identification. The proxy is what Ellie Ragland-Sullivan calls an "Imaginary relation," subject to misrecognition and idealization: "As a narcissistic structure, Imaginary relations--be they between individuals or societies--are governed by jealousy, competition and aggressivity, mediated through idealization, love and the rationalizations which Lacan calls misrecognition. Although consensus between people seems to offer a guarantee of certainty and stability, Imaginary collusions continually break down"(174). Desire both traffics the proxy's body and identifies with it as an Imaginary relation, thereby deriving vicarious pleasure--the proxy is both conduit and agent.

Liza is perhaps the first "Imaginary relation" that Pete constructs in the text, and it is not so much that he identifies with her as it is that he becomes her. Liza is not there to act as domestic/feminine proxy--she is on vacation--and Pete identifies masochistically with her role as servant in their household. Indeed, Pete's descriptions of himself in the first chapters all construct him as feminine, or more specifically, he identifies with what he constructs as stereotypically feminine: passive; accommodating; loving more than one is loved. When Pete tells Jenny Carter that "[h]omes are maintained by those who stay at home and weep"(19), he takes on a role which has been defined by Roland Barthes in A

Lover's Discourse. He becomes "something feminine":

> Historically, the discourse of absence is carried on by the woman: Woman is sedentary, Man hunts, journeys; Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises). It is woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction, for she has time to do so; she weaves and she sings; the Spinning Songs express both immobility (by the hum of the Wheel) and absence (far away, rhythms of travel, sea urges, cavalcades). It follows that in any man who utters the other's absence *something feminine* is declared: this man who waits and who suffers from his waiting is miraculously feminized.
>
> (Barthes 13-4; emphasis his)

Liza is away on a tour of the Holy Land, and Pete has assumed her position in her absence. He argues that "it had fallen to [him] to keep the house in shape"(2); on another occasion, he tells Disley that André is coming back and "[he] must cook for him"(6). Pete's identification with Liza as servant signifies a breakdown in his relationship with André: "All I could do was patiently provide the normality, hoping [André would] join me again; stay in my room"(16). Liza does not return to work until after Pete has already moved out and rented an apartment. This is not to say that if Liza had been present Pete and André's relationship would not have deteriorated. Rather, her absence provides a space where Pete can act out his identity crisis.[2]

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[2]What is also interesting to note is the gender privilege which apartheid offers to a gay household--and perhaps any household--since apartheid provides the economic privilege of keeping household help. Hiring help can prevent either party from identifying with what has been typically constructed as undervalued, subordinate, servile, feminized work.

Pete's relationship with Jenny, a fellow teacher, is nonetheless a crucible in which his usual constructions of gender are challenged. It is during what Jenny calls "a good hen's night out"(21) that the two identify with each other as "feminized" subjects. It is then that Pete identifies himself as the one who waits at home and declares through desire "something feminine." Pete eventually thinks that a sex scene between him and Jenny is her version of a "moral rescue operation, trying to turn gays into straights. It has to do with [her] own sexuality, both André's or [his]. If [she] was happy with Leon, [she] would not try to alleviate [her] misery by converting others to [her] way of life"(248). Even in the moment of seduction--where he is more like a child in his fear and inexperience than he ever is with Disley--he preserves a clear psychological distance from Jenny's body: "I don't think I can go right in there. Don't you see how funny this kind of sex is, that the whole of the human race has to crash around like this?"(219).[3]

He is likewise childishly fascinated with the topless Jenny's breasts in the swimming pool, luridly objectifying them and detaching them from her person:

> Now was my opportunity to study two buoyed-up pink breasts wobbling across the water towards me. They were so vulnerable to sunburn, compared with the rest of her. When she stood, they righted themselves, nipples pointing up in different directions to the encircling mountains. When a gardener with a wheelbarrow full of dahlia bulbs passed by, she grabbed my arm and kicked herself horizontal. "I've

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[3]de Waal strangely writes that "this sexually explicit episode is played mostly for laughs"(de Waal 240), and that "[i]n an almost satirical way, thus, Gray turns the heterosexual encounter into a symbol of abnormality"(de Waal 240). What de Waal does not recognize is that all sexual relations with adults in the novel are constructed as "abnormal" insofar as the other is humiliated, degraded and figured in all his/her abject corporeality.

> got waterwings and you haven't."
> "Phew, it must be a business schlepping those around, " I said. (211-2)
>
> One of her breasts was squashed on the towel on the tiles, printing a Lifesaver pattern. (212)
>
> I raised my arms around her, but the breasts got in the way. (215)

When he introduces her private parts, he offers a crude, abject tour of her genitalia: "I could feel knotted hair and moisture. I drew my hand away"(216); "All of me was in my middle right finger. I slid it over the very prominent pubic arch, finding moisture, finding the abrupt little head of her *whatever*. She stroked my arse upwards, I stroked her *whatever* upwards. I could run my second and fourth fingers alongside; it was gummy and plush"[*emphasis mine*](218). His explorations of the female body are mechanical, lacking real desire and reflecting a child's fascination with pleasure as a mere product, like the noise a certain toy can make: "I was causing this, it was in answer to me. It was like playing an instrument, if you knew the keys"(218). And yet his ability to produce pleasure in the female body excites him because he perceives it to be a masculine ability--Jenny's pleasure is an affirmation of his masculinity: "I felt vaguely used, but reasonably heroic, contented"(221).

Pete nonetheless refuses to name Jenny's biological otherness--her physiological difference--because of the impact such difference will have on his "feminine" identification with her. His fear of "her whatever" is a metonym of his fear that he must define his gender against that physiological difference. Psychically, this scene in which

Jenny is degraded and Pete's masculinity is affirmed serves to redefine his ego--masculinity is no longer something he must rely on an external object to produce. Such a psychological reading is anticipated and substantiated by an earlier sex scene with Prince, André's lover, in which Pete penetrates him. When describing the scene, Pete notes that this is "what it was all about--confirming [their] manhood"(176). He describes how he fucked Prince while "[g]athered inside [him] at burning point was anger, rage, despair like acid, rotten dreams, rancid desire"(176). Pete equates the act of penetration with a masculinity which finds its genesis in a sadistic desire to violate and humiliate, to dominate the abject, "feminized" object. Such "confirmation" of his masculinity enables him the freedom to express what he has been suppressing in his relationship with André: his anger, his corporeal desire, and his sadomasochistic impulses.

The exhibition of Jenny's body provokes Pete's cultural coding of sex: what he fears in the feminine is what it expects of his masculinity. This fear reveals itself to be a type of masochism when, faced with sex with Jenny, he confesses that sadomasochism and masculinity are conflated in his libidinal economy: "I'm not your butch Leon fuck-machine who buys you and violates you all the time. You want me to be a patriarch who violates you, and I detest that whole fucking breed, don't you see?"(220). Pete has confused penetration with violation: he has conflated the physical act and the social construction into one. His rejection of "that whole fucking breed" signifies his repression of his own sadomasochistic potential. Even when he develops an erection in this scene he fetishizes it and tries to distinguish it from himself: "I looked at this thing I had bulging out despite myself, like a satyr's; maybe it wasn't part of me after all"(220). Then, before

penetrating Jenny with his penis, he discovers his testicles[4] and has "the most peculiar notion to fill the yielding absence with them"(220). The "yielding absence" is Jenny's sex and this offering of his testicles is a provisional penetration, an increment in the process of his masculinization.

The sex scene with Jenny also reconstructs Pete's phallic power, and irrevocably changes his identity. At first he says that he "felt vaguely used, but reasonably heroic"(221), but then reveals that he has become "robust and macho like other men"(231). Strangely, he also describes this psychic transformation as having physiological implications: "My cock was a completely different shape now"(222). Pete conflates penis and phallus into one and this process signifies--on the psychic level--an integration of the sadomasochistic object choice into his ego.

Following the sex scenes with Prince and Jenny is a second sex scene with Prince which seems to correspond inversely to the first two. Indeed, within the binary of penetrator and penetrated that Pete constructs in order to define masculinity it is simply an inversion: Prince and Jenny are fucked in the first two scenes while Pete is in the third. However, a closer analysis reveals that for Pete all three scenes are imbricated--Pete plays out a similar desire in each.

Pete's sexual scenes with Prince and Jenny involve parallel processes: the

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[4]"Testicle" comes from the Latin *testis*, which means witness. The implication is that the testicles testify to a man's manhood. Jenny later comments that the "[t]rouble with homosexuals is they're so insecure"(250). Pete's anxiety about penetrating the female body and his identification with the "feminine" other instigate a desire to "bear witness" to his own masculinity, to confirm it for himself.

aesthetic desublimation of the corporeal body and the realization of his (sado)masochistic desire. Silverman says that "[Freud] suggests that throughout life the subject is able to relinquish a love-object only by incorporating it--that "identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects"(Silverman 317). Freud repeatedly demonstrates this promotion of self-love in Thomas Woodrow Wilson: "Identification seeks to satisfy the instinctive desire by transforming the Ego itself into the desired object, so that the self represents both the desiring subject and the desired object"(Freud 43). This transformation promotes a narcissism which rejects the other and privileges an Imaginary economy. It is a profound type of narcissism which Silverman terms "reflexive masochism," where within "the libidinal economy the ego itself assumes the partial status of a tyrannical ideal"(Silverman 324-5). This "reflexive masochism," Silverman argues, "in its maintenance of the active, masculine position, can best be seen as a defense against the castrating consequences of feminine masochism. As a number of important passages suggest, it is compatible with--indeed, perhaps a prerequisite for--extreme virility"(Silverman 327). Pete develops this "reflexive masochism" through an incorporation of the sadomasochistic object and a continued identification with those he sees as stereotypically feminine and masochistic: Prince whose masculinity is castrated when he is penetrated by Pete, and Jenny who cannot escape a masochism which Pete considers "physiologically" determined. Through these "feminine" and masochistic others Pete negotiates his own identity and seeks to consolidate the proxies which operate between himself and André.

This reflexive masochism is performed most explicitly in the last sex scene

between Pete and Prince. Pete confesses just before the sexual act that he feels segregated from pain: "Sometimes I feel I'm living behind glass--very thick glass, the kind you get for windshields or in aquariums. I know that others are feeling pain, out there. Inside myself--nothing. Something must break right through me"(290). Pete's segregation from pain signifies an inability to identify with what he considers the role of women: "There's something inside every woman that wants to be a martyr"(279).

He returns to the position of the abject, "feminized" other only after he has experienced and incorporated the sadomasochistic role. The last sex scene with Prince represents Pete's transition to an ambivalent identification where he is caught between his own sadomasochistic and masochistic impulses. Prince is little more than an agent to this ambivalent desire:

> "Prince--" I gagged--"just fuck me to death. It's your turn, see?"
> "You haven't got any vaseline," he said.
> "I don't need it. Just do it. I want it to hurt, badly."
> (292)

The most violent and abject part of this scene involves the two of them in front of a mirror in a reenactment of the narcissus myth. This myth becomes a metaphor for the psychic and erotic processes in which Pete and Prince--as Pete's proxy--are involved:

> Then his face came up to meet mine in the mirror. He looked apologetic, and I winked. We were both covered in oil, stinking, snot dangling like a plumbline from one of his nostrils. He sniffed, wiped it on my shoulder. "Sorry," he said. (294)

What is held in the mirror is an image of Pete's reflexive masochism and desublimation of the (sado)masochistic body, both of which will signify a refusal of otherness and a final refusal of proxies.

Ultimately, Pete's (sado)masochistic body is a metonym of the larger corpus of the nation. His violent sexual experience with Prince parallels the violence occurring all across the nation:

> This time tomorrow Jenny would be over the Atlantic, strapped in a seat, heading through turbulence. Disley had a cow's horn up his rear, funnelling herbs in hot water. What difference did it make? Others had electrodes wound around their balls, knife blades entering their ribs, stones crushing their foreheads. I had Prince, clasping me now so that my spine would crack. (293)

When Pete demands his own penetration he does so out of a desire to identify with Jenny, Disley, and a whole nation of victims under apartheid.

In his attempts to create in Disley a prototype of his own ideal--an other who facilitates the dissolution of the age and colour binaries--Pete refuses to see the effects it has on Disley. This lack of empathy is a common feature of all three novels that have been discussed. There is a flatness to the ending of the novel, a lack of feeling concerning Disley's death. Pete has recognized himself in the other--in Disley--but when he destroys the double-paned glass, he no longer has any use for Disley--as proxy or otherwise. Pete characteristically argues that this dissolution of the black/white binary is evidence of his "liberalism," but he has shattered the dividing glass so that he can incorporate the

symbolic other into his own identity and so refuse otherness; his narcissism is finally absorbed in his white privilege.

Pete's psychic development in the novel has required the use of proxies who have facilitated a narcissistic exploration of his own sadomasochism and masochism: an exploration perhaps predicated on his desire for a move towards a desublimation which would save him from his perpetually unsatisfied idealism. The novel ends after Jenny is deported, Disley is killed, and Prince is put on the train home where he will have to join the army.[5] These scenes signify the resolution of the process whereby Pete and Andre remove the proxies they have employed in the trafficking of their desire, the removal of all significant otherness. It is a process ended only by the development of Pete's narcissism to a state of reflexive-masochism. Although this may be a "happy ending" for Pete and Andre's relationship, the cost to the others in the novel is great.

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[5]Prince is the only one Pete and André will see again, and this is only mentioned in a Persky-esque epilogue that affirms the power of the narrator: "On weekends when he has passes [from the army], he hitches to us to drink it up and play musical beds...Mostly the three of us chaff around, being friends"(296). The epilogue seems frivolous and reflects the manner in which Prince's significance has diminished.

CONCLUSION

TOWARDS AFFILIATION

What Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray measures, and what the narrators of Persky's and Gray's novels attempt to conceal, is the power of--and intent to--influence. This study began by drawing attention to a representation of the younger man that has "a privileged communal significance"(Said 1). The introduction and discussion of the three novels that follow reveal that this "communal significance" has also been maintained by critics of the texts and other media such as the Reynolds' Newspaper; that there is a corresponding cultural reality blind to its own privilege. Indeed, the risk most literary analyses run--and what this one has tried to resist--is one of a failure to realize their own indifference to social and cultural reality, a willingness that is in practice an aesthetic principle. Edward Said in "Reflections on American 'Left' Literary Criticism" describes the problem wherein the history of 'Left' criticism "has been a period characterized by a willingness to accept the isolation of literature and literary studies away from the world"(Said 1989, 591).

Said first disagreed with 'Left' Criticism's "isolation" when he argued against the ahistoricity of structuralist and poststructuralist approaches in his critical text

Orientalism. It was in that work that he used "Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in The Archaeology of Knowledge and in Discipline and Punish to identify Orientalism"(Said 1979, 3). It was Said's contention then that there is a social residue left by individual writers: "Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism. The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyze is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other: Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors"(Said 1979, 23).

His attention to "unity" develops into an assertion in The World, the Text, and the Critic that for all texts there is an "affiliation, that implicit network of peculiarly cultural associations between forms, statements, and other aesthetic elaborations on the one hand and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes, and amorphous social forces"(Said 1989, 592). The conclusion to this study can only begin to trace such affiliations and attempt, in Said's words, to "recreate the bonds between texts and the world"(Said, 1989, 592). One magazine article and one newspaper story do not constitute an actual network; rather, they hint at the sort of cultural associations between the world and texts like Time of Our Darkness where men who share desires similar to those of Pete unwittingly challenge the concepts of gay "culture" and "community." Conversely, other affiliations suggest how the "moral" majority is using older-man/younger-man relationships against all gays.

The cover article for the September/October 1994 issue of 10 Percent was entitled "Nixing NAMBLA: Turning a critical eye on man-boy love." What the article

outlines is the issues that have been raised by the seventeen-year-old organization as it has clashed with other gay movements. Like Pete in Time of Our Darkness, members of NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Association) argue that "[i]t's not necessarily the adult who holds the power...[a] great deal of power is on the side of the boy"(Hartinger 66). But NAMBLA goes so far as to argue that "[b]y denying children the option of having sex with adults...society oppresses children"(Hartinger 66).

The intense controversy surrounding NAMBLA has forced gay movements across the continent into an ambivalent impasse; the responses are as diverse as the culture they are issued from. Some believe that "man-boy love is a central part of gay liberation, and it is a central feature of homosexuality in the West"(Hartinger 68). Others think that "[it's] a joke if NAMBLA think that they've been sold down the river. They were never on the boat in the first place"(Hartinger 68). And yet others believe that the "question of age-of-consent doesn't seem to...be a gay issue, and to buy into it is to buy into what...is a very inaccurate and damaging argument--that gay people are more prone to have sex with children than other people"(Hartinger 47).

Questions of identity have always been an issue for gay movements, but more recently they have become an intensified political problem. In June of 1994 the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) voted--by an 88-percent majority--to oust NAMBLA in order to keep its association with the United Nations. In conflict with this decision, Queer Literary theory--and particular Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theories of "homosociality"--have sought to reveal the social constructions of "acceptable" same-sex intimacy, and have tried to emphasize the continuum of desire. What haunts gay culture is

its aesthetic/erotic fascination with youth, beauty, and innocence. What is threatening about NAMBLA and "Greek Love" is not only the legal and moral complications it raises in the search for acceptance for gays, but also the manner in which "Greek Love" is in many ways a parody, or an extreme, of popular gay aesthetic values.

In September of 1993 a Canadian gay community faced persecution as a result of the "moral" majority's tendency to conflate and associate "perversions." It all began when a young man in London, Ontario "out fishing, discover[ed] a bag of videotapes sunk almost out of sight...his mother...manage[d] to get at least one of them to play on her VCR. She [saw] males having sex with each other--and she call[ed] the police"(Hannon D1). What ensued can only be called a witch-hunt that did not end until there had been "371 criminal charges against 45 men, most of them for crimes involving sex with 'children'"(Hannon D1).

The Globe and Mail published an article entitled "The kiddie-porn ring that wasn't" in an attempt to elucidate the ambiguity that the London police department used to their political and financial advantage. What the article makes clear is that soon after the police department began their investigation it was discovered that "there was no pornography ring"(Hannon D1), and it seems as though the investigation was only continued because "if there was anything that might establish Chief Fantino as a crusading, get-tough cop with a thumbs-up chance of snagging the job he really wanted--as Toronto police chief--it was this. Who could be opposed to jailing perverts who preyed on kids? And what Solicitor-General would refuse him the resources to do it?" (Hannon D5).

What was later discovered was that the tapes found "were never meant for commercial distribution...[and that a] good 85 percent of the more than 60 young men the police finally got their hands on were 14 or older--legally able, in most circumstances to have sex"(Hannon D5). Although none of these facts condones prostitution--particularly of boys under the age of eighteen--the article points out that "many in the community feel that there is a double standard operating--a police raid on a massage parlour that employed underage girls resulted in charges against the owner only, not against the men who used its services"(Hannon D5). It is this double-standard which reveals the "moral" majority's tendency to conflate and associate what it sees as "perversions." If gay movements insist on liberty for all, and if support is given to organisations like NAMBLA, they then have to ask themselves what they are saying about their own values and desires.

Hannon makes no mention here of whether there was a double standard with regard to the arrest of the prostitutes. Indeed, this occlusion seems to be characteristic of his construction of the younger men (as prostitutes) in the article:

> Do I think there was abuse here, in any of these situations? Yes, I do. And I think it was happening to most of those boys and young men in their families long before they took to the streets in desperation. That it also sometimes happened in the homes of the older men they met seems inevitable. Perhaps as inevitable as the kindness they sometimes found there too. Enough kindness, it seems, that the police had frequently to threaten in order to get them to testify...I know from experience that most young men who hustle are wise in the ways of the world. (Hannon D5)

Like Ellmann in his biography of Wilde and like the Reynolds' Newspaper article defending Oscar Wilde, Hannon constructs the male prostitutes as always already experienced, as never innocent. Ostensibly, his argument is that what occurred in London was "not the simple black and white picture painted by the London police--that of an organized ring of older men preying on innocent children"(Hannon D5); but, in his defense of the older men who had been charged, he returns to a useful construction of the younger men, by which he conceals and occludes soci-economic realities. "Kindness" in Hannon's article is an encrypted code word, signifying any number of economic agreements or concessions which would keep a young male prostitute from disclosing an older man's name. The younger men are to a degree scapegoated so that the older men can be absolved of their "crimes" of influence--the "apparent" power to corrupt is displaced.

The lack in this editorial stance is closely related to a lack in the texts of this study: the absence of an ethical stance in gay movements. What has been evidently more important is the freedom to explore one's desires--either actually or epistemologically--under the belief that a revolution could be actualized through the performance of the sexual body; that the passage to self-acceptance is through a refusal of sexual repression. What is invariably forgotten is that desire is not always equal or mutual, or that one's own liberation may cause the repression of another.

It has often been said that the gay community is one that eats its young. What we must collectively and individually ask ourselves is whether or not we can accept such a representation, for we are all implicated.

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