

Homoeroticism and Oscar Wilde's Homosexuality: Homoerotic Friendship in The Picture of Dorian Gray

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Abstract: Homoeroticism is a set of practices or institutions that encompass same-sex desires through acts but involve no sexual activities. The friendship between the three main characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is one example of works that contain homoeroticism. This work became scandal in its era by serving as proof of his gross indecency and homosexual acts charged by the Victorian law that still criminalized homosexual practices. This concept and identification of homoeroticism in literary works departed from the awareness of sexual identity amidst Western society starting from 17th century in which sexual acts and identities were known as different entities. It had brought Western society to cultural, social, and juridical construction that criminalized homosexual practices. To this end, the distinction between sexual identities relied upon more than just genital and sexual intercourses, including verbal and physical acts, appearance, language, and friendship which include in homoeroticism. Through analysis by employing Queer theory and Expressive Approach and considering the Victorian era social context and establishment of gay literature, this current study found that homoeroticism aspects in the novel are the embodiment of Oscar Wilde's homosexuality and homosexual association. The homoerotic forms such as physical acts, language, jealousy, bygone and worship, and failure in having a relationship with women are found in the novel. He expressed in such a vague way of homoerotic literary work rather than explicit homosexual relationships as for his notions of beauty and the oppression of the society and conviction of the law.

Keywords: Friendship, Homoeroticism, Expression, Perspective, Oppression

Introduction

Homosexuality has been a part of traditions in human history and culture since the ancient eras. It was commonly put into topics in arts and literature of ancient cultures such as Greek and Roman civilizations and they are named after "gay literature." Two ancient Greek mythological characters, Orpheus and Thamyris, are considered to be the first mortal men who are craved their own sex (Woods, 1999). Nevertheless, it was not until about 16th century to the Victorian era that gay literature obtained its initial foundation. Woods (1999) explains that youths in the era, who were usually interested in the same sex, started to read classical literature and make lists of historical and mythical figures who have similar sexual desire as they did. In consequence, several compliances of history and anthologies of gay literature, such as Marlowe's *Edward II*, *The Fairies Queene* (1590, 1596), and *Don Leon* (1823-1836) were republished during this era. Fone (as cited in Woods, 1999) argued that this establishment of gay literature indicates the beginning of awareness of homosexuals or even a mark of growing homosexual pride among those youths. This is by the fact that the Victorian era is the milestone of the sexual discourse which started implementing the recognition of sexual identity in their social life.

Besides imposing the compilation of gay literature, the finding of sexual identity yielded the separation of homosexuality and heterosexuality in the pre-modern history. Here, the sexual interest to different sex and to same sex are distinguished and visible, causing marginalization and presumption of deviant or perversion for the latter. It affects Western social interaction, law, and culture that written law illegalizing homosexual was finally issued. Though the normative written law are available in some countries like United Kingdom, Victorian society did not actively enforce it (Adut, 2005). Homosexuality were still practiced but not as free as before the law was applied since the punishment of homosexuality was quite severe. Therefore, just a few homosexuals were dragged into trials and convicted for imprisonment.

Given the impact on the Western social and juridical life, the categories or identification for each sexual identity also broadened to more than solely sexual intercourses. Among the other categories, male friendship was the most significant and important one because of the vagueness and cultural shift it underwent. A friendship of males was considered to represent homosexuality when it contained the so-called homoeroticism. Homoeroticism refers to the term which describes "same-sex desire, some treatments of homosocial institutions and practices emphasize segregation by sex that lacks or disavows any sexual component" (Creekmur, 2021). It means, unlike homosexuality with sodomy and sexual interactions, homoerotic forms only appear as intimate relationships and are limited to the desire to the same sexes, which can involve verbal and physical interaction. This aspect has been also found in literature, especially the gay one. Even though homoeroticism has been found

in older literary works, the term of identification made it more noticeable as a specification in gay literature. Mark Lilly's *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century* (1993) is an example of literary criticism that examines homoeroticism in the given literary work timeline.

One of the most notorious and scandalous work of homoeroticism is Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. However, before we examine it further, we will discuss more what consideration to decide a work as gay literature. Basically, it is quite complicated to identify which literary text can be included in gay literature (Woods 1999; Barry, 2009). That gay authors will always produce gay texts is not a justifiable answer since many heterosexual authors write about homosexuality and vice versa. Zimmerman (as cited in Barry, 2009) gave three possible options by which literary texts may be judged as gay literature. They are the works of homosexuals, the works discussing homosexuality, and the works expressing homosexual vision. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde can be considered as gay literature in the terms of the first and the second options. Oscar Wilde himself was a homosexual (Lilly, 1993; Woods 1999; Reay, 2005; Adut, 2005; Siuli, 2015) and the novel contains homoeroticism.

The grounds to the statement declaring that Oscar Wilde was a homosexual are biographical records and historical texts on the scandal of his trials convicting him for homosexual practices and deployment of same-sex acts. For example, in his book, Lilly (1993) alludes a little about his very novel but specifically focus on Oscar Wilde's trials and scandal. The homoeroticism in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, similarly, is derived from the texts in the novel as well as the fact that this novel was used as proof against him in his trials (Harri, 1916; Bertram, 2020). Therefore, hypothetically, homoeroticism aspects found in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the conversion of Oscar Wilde's homosexuality. He expressed it in the form of homoeroticism rather than other homosexual taxonomies, besides his association with his homosexual friends and notorious homosexuality, in order to avoid scandals of his works which would drive him to trials and imprisonment for homosexuality.

Given the fact that most of the gay literature is in form of verses (Woods, 1999) and that this genre is relatively new since it is not until 1990 that this genre obtained its theory and started concerning in social and literary studies, the current study is intended to add a contribution and research in gay literature criticism and literary studies, especially on the society's identification of sexual identity and homosexuality. It concerns the significance of the homoeroticism in *the Picture of Dorian Gray* to the relations between the work and the author's, Oscar Wilde, life in terms of his homosexuality. With an eye to the limitations, the current paper adopts the queer theory and expressive approach and aims at describing the homoeroticism aspects in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, discovering and conveying the factors influencing him to create homoeroticism in the novel, and examining how Oscar Wilde express homosexuality in the novel and the impacts to himself.

Theoretical Framework

Expressive Approach

According to Abrams (1953), externally, three approaches can be used to study a literary work, namely the mimetic approach or by the universe, the pragmatic approach or by the audience, and the expressive approach or by the author and internally by its own work or called as the objective approach. In 1800 the expressive approach obtained its place in literary study displacing the mimetic and pragmatic ones (Abrams, 1953). This approach was initiated by Wordsworth in his *Lyrical Ballads* and marked the Romanticism literary movement in which authors' views, emotions, thoughts, imaginations, and expression underlie the literary works.

On the ground of Wordsworth's statements and John Stuart Mill's theory (1833), Abrams conceptualized the so-called expressive approach. This approach regards literary works from the viewpoint of the author, believing that a literary work is the expression of the author. He or she experiences a creative process driven by his or her feelings and yields the embodiment in form of plot, characters, characteristics, settings, themes, etc. of his thoughts, mind, and other expressions. Nevertheless, the expression of the author does not totally comprise the internal intention or interests but also the external factors from the environment or era in which the author lives. These external factors do not make the world the "real" objects or total imitation as in the mimetic approach, but rather a formulation derived from the facts poured into the literary work converted by the author's feelings and mind. Thus, simply concluded, the world or the universe also takes part in the writing of a literary work. The authors are exposed to the classes and environments that their views of the world are influenced by them. However, it does not mean that authors are strictly tied to a society's world view. Since this worldview becomes a "stimulus" Abrams (1953), authors have their own interpretation of it and express or act by this interpretation.

Since a literary work is defined so, this paper uses biography of the author as the data to analyse the work. Wellek and Austin (1953) argued that the biography of the author is considered to be related to the production of a literary work. Scholars can study the life of the author and look for significant events or stages that presumably have something to do with the work. Even so, using biography to analyze a literary work is

considered insufficient since it may be merely “the dream, the mask, or the anti-self of the author” (Wellek and Austin, 1953). The current study, henceforth, employs not only the biography of Oscar Wilde but also some statements from his letters, especially those regarding *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to reveal the connection between his life, intention, and the work. Moreover, as the external factors act as the stimuli which affect and allow an author to build their interpretation of it, it is important to consider the social structure construction where the author lived. This current study views that the author’s expressive process conveyed in the literary work was not only built by his own intention and interests but also partly affected by his environment and society. In this sense, the social background of Oscar Wilde is the homosexual-oppressive Victorian society and his homosexual friends and association.

Queer Theory

The concept of sexuality had undergone a tremendous shift in history as explained in Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* (1983) that differentiate procreational function and pleasure function which resulted in the recognition of sexual identities. The emergence of sexual identity awareness led Western sex discourse, which is predominated with masculine hegemony, to the term homosexual or deviant which is regarded as subordinates and heterosexual as the superior one (Connel, 2005). This hierarchical structure oppressed the sexual identity minorities and brought about a new regime for them which then introduced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as *the closet*. In her *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), she framed out the theory of the closet or the open secret which established a way of life based on binary rules such as privacy and disclosure, public and private, knowledge and ignorance, and many more (Abelove, Barale, & Halperin, 1993; Reay, 2009). Being in “the closet” or opening secret does not function as a means of opening the homosexual identity to anybody in any environment. It rather emphasizes the choices and needs of which people or environments are included in the closet.

This recognition of sexual identity also impacted the social and economical life of Western society. Reshke (1991) reviewed Sedgwick’s work and stated that this book acts as an establishment of a concept that all modern Western identities and social organizations work under the control of the sexual identity division of homosexual and heterosexual. The law, social structure, sexuality, and other aspects were affected by this concept and, accordingly, degraded homosexual identity. For example, prior to the identification of sexual identity discourse in which sexuality regarded merely as excessive acts of sex, homoeroticism in male aristocratic friendship was normalized but was proscribed to men once homosexual and heterosexual terms spread out (Reay, 2009). By this, sexual identities, principally the sexual orientation, then developed and widened to be recognized in many other dimensions as Sedgwick wrote in her book:

“It is a rather amazing fact that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another (dimensions that include preference for certain acts, certain zones or sensations, certain physical types, a certain frequency, certain symbolic investments, certain relations of age or power, a certain species, a certain number of participants, etc. etc. etc.), precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged and has remained, as the dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of “sexual orientation.” (Cited in Reschke, 1991, p.568)

Even though Sedgwick has given a unitary concept for the history of homosexuality and the deconstruction, she does not explicitly state what categories or activities or interests are regarded as the embodiment of sexual orientation. Nevertheless, Halperin’s taxonomy of homosexuality has provided the classification in the history of homosexuality. The genealogy of male homosexuality, accordingly, consists of the five categories of effeminacy, sodomy, friendship, inversion, and homosexuality itself (Halperin as cited in Reay, 2009). Thus, the homosexuality of men is represented through such categories or to be specific the society regards men who show such acts as homosexuals, regardless of whether they are sexually intrigued to men or not.

Findings and Discussion

Homosexuality in Victorian Era

The Victorian period is a period that has an important moment in the history of sexuality. This happened because in the Victorian period modern terms used to describe and talk about sexuality began to be implemented in discourse and social life. The Victorian era that occurred in the early nineteenth century was unlike the previous period, which was dominated by the belief that one’s sexuality and sexual identity are at the very core of identity, potential, social and political status, and freedom (Siuli, 2015). In the pre-Victorian period, about the early 17th century, sexual practices did not require secrecy. People in those days could freely express words related to sexuality without having to feel reluctant. These things could be done without much need for hiding.

Even people were very familiar with, in the Victorian context, forbidden things, such as intimate same-sex friendships. In the 17th century, the rules regarding the rude and the obscene were quite lax. However, in the Victorian period, the rules became much stricter and sexuality slowly began to be restricted (Foucault, 1978). Even, sexuality was a taboo topic to talk about in public.

As the concept of modern sexuality experienced a shift, from a situation where previously same-sex activities were limited to excessive sex, sexual acts, to a regime where sexual relations are linked to oneself, the concept of sexual identities emerged. The shift saw the division of sexuality into heterosexual and homosexual, a division that later became the basis of the modern sexual paradigm (Foucault as cited in Reay, 2009). The emergence of sexual identities resulted in homosexuals becoming marginalized people. The history of homosexuality had since undergone more complex changes, covering various categories that fell under the category of homosexuality. The difference between homosexual and heterosexual relationships was becoming increasingly clear.

Per this visibility that segregated homosexual and heterosexual identity David Halperin (2002) classified five relationship categories that fall into the characteristics of male homosexuality, namely effeminacy, sodomy, friendship, inversion, and homosexuality itself. It is almost the same as the pedigree of male homosexuality, the difference is that if men are efficient, masculinity then is in women. Sinfield (2002) expanded the category of "homosexuality" to include androgynous, transgender categories, and desires triggered by differences in power across class, race, and age. As for this, homosexuality is prohibited in the Victorian era. Such relationships in those days were considered a strange pleasure or desire. As Foucault (1978) said in his book, homosexuality is an act that is "contrary to nature" or not following the assigned condition outlined by nature. Homosexuality is also considered an extreme form of violation "against the law" and it constitutes a violation of genitalia. Homosexuality is also regarded as a violation of mortal sins, besides extramarital relations, adultery, rape, spiritual or physical incest, and sodomy. According to Foucault (1978), what is taken into account in civil and religious law is a violation of the law in general.

So as to keep society away from the so-called infamy, the Victorian era civilization even issued a law against homosexuality practices. Those who were proved to have such a relationship or practice homosexuality in any form would undergo a sort of trial. Initially, the sodomites who were caught were sentenced to death. However, since 1861, the death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. In 1885 a law was established which stipulated that all male homosexual acts were illegal, namely The Labouchere Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885. The Labouchere Amendment reads as follows:

Any male person who in public or private commits or is a party to the commission of or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and being convicted thereof shall be liable to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years with or without hard labour. (Fize, 2019)

The *Labouchere* Amendment is a follow-up to the previous law and a stronger one. The law extends the penalty for any act of homosexuality between men, which is defined as "gross indecency". It also makes prosecuting homosexuals easier because it doesn't require proof of penetration. Lesbian activity at that time was rarely known, so it was ignored.

Nevertheless, Victorian society did not actively and strictly enforce the law (Adut, 2005). Homosexuality was still practiced in the era and even some homosexuals dared come up as openly gay. Only a few cases were brought to trials and most of them were "caught in flagrante delicto in public places", reported by witnesses, and political actors with "cover-up" charges (Adut, 2005). Radzinowicz (As cited in Adut 2005) stated that homosexual prosecutors did not punish comparably to their crimes based on 1856 statistics showing that only 28% of sodomy suspects were convicted compared to 77% of other offenses. Even so, homosexuals were still oppressed amongst this society since they were regarded as infamy and abominable. Once they were reported by those who hate them, as in Oscar Wilde's case, their chance to free from charges is near impossible.

The Sexual Life of Oscar Wilde

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wilde became the most iconic victim of English Victorian Puritan's law in the 19th century (Adut, 2005). He was born in an aristocratic family. His father, Sir William Robert Wills Wilde, was a famous eye and ear surgeon as well as an author while his mother Jane Francesca Agnes Wilde was a poetess (Harris, 1916). He was a great playwright, author, and poet in the Victorian era at the time when homosexuality was strictly prohibited. He was a homosexual and, hypothetically in this current paper, poured his homosexuality into some of his writings, especially his famous and controversial and only novel: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. From the first publication, despite being widely read within common people, he received many criticisms from educated, religious parties and attorneys accusing him of inserting and promoting

immoral themes and homoeroticism culture throughout the work (Bertram, 2020). Oscar Wilde, in consequence, ended up in prejudices and was involved in a scandal. This scandal, eventually, drove him into three trials and conviction for imprisonment.

As a matter of fact, Wilde's homosexuality and homosexual association were notorious in society. Adut (2005) states in his paper that as a person who was born from high-status family, Oscar Wilde's homosexuality was more noticeable. He describes how he looked in his social life:

"His effeminate public persona fit fully the Victorian stereotype of the homosexual. From the late 1870s to the mid-1880s, Wilde sported a flamboyant look with flowing locks, colossal flopping collars encircled by colorful scarves, velvet frock coats, and knee-length stockings. He was regularly caricatured by George du Maurier in *Punch*, the bastion of middle-class morality. Maurier mocked Wilde's preciosity, epicene poses, and blue china. The magazine's editorialists called him a "Mary-Ann." (p. 227)

Many people mocked him for his feminine personality but were confused when he married Constance Lloyd and fathered two children. Presumably, given the prevailing law which convicted homosexuals with quite severe punishment, Wilde wanted to keep his homosexuality undercover. However, not long after his marriage, he was back to his homosexual customs and association. For example, he was being even more indiscreet by wearing a French homosexual badge called green carnation *boutonniere*, lecturing Socratic love to young men in public restaurants, and partying with prostitutes and upper-class paramours in a hotel and rented houses (Adut, 2005). Lloyd was conscious about her husband's homosexuality after the second child birth. Then one day she discovered the fact that her husband was a homosexual after she came across Lord Alfred Douglas who was brought to their home.

As discussed above, even in the Victorian era homosexuality was illegalized, homosexuality was never really undercover and the law was never really enforced. Oscar Wilde relations and homosexual friends, in fact, are quite a few. Some of them were even openly gay. An example and one of his close friends was Robert Baldwin Ross. According to one of Wilde's biographers, Owen Dudley Edwards (Simkin, 2020) Ross was his first male lover after his wife was encountering menopause. In 1886, Ross met him for the first time and began to spend time together, and afterward, he became Wilde's devoted friend. Unfortunately, he soon was a bullying victim at King's College, Cambridge that which caused him to get pneumonia and kicked out of college. After that, he decided to reveal his sexuality to his parents. Ross started his homosexual relationship with Alfred Douglas and two boys aged 14 and 15 in 1893 (Simkin, 2020). When the boys confessed to their parents about what happened when they were all staying at Ross' house, they refused to bring them to the courts since both children would be thrown into prison regardless of their ages. It is one of the examples showing that Victorian society did not actually strongly enforce the law.

When Wilde acquainted with Ross was the initial of his scandal and misfortune. It was Ross who introduced Lord Alfred Douglas to him. He was a British poet and aristocrat who was 16 years younger than him and had an affair with him in 1891 (Simkin, 2020). They became close then and spend a lot of time together. Wilde even called Douglas "Bosie" as his pet name (Harris, 1916). Harris (1916) in his *Oscar Wilde, His Life and Confessions, Volume 1* recorded how this unfortunate fate befell Oscar Wilde. About three years after their first meeting, Douglas' father, the Marquess of Queensberry, found out about it. One of the reasons is that their letters containing love expressions were stolen and by which they were being blackmailed for exposure of the letters to the public and scandals grew rapidly (Harris, 1916). Hence, he wrote a letter to his son, which is then also read by Oscar Wilde, asking him to stay away from Wilde.

"... Secondly, I come to the more painful part of this letter—your intimacy with this man Wilde. It must either cease or I will disown you and stop all money supplies. I am not going to try and analyse this intimacy, and I make no charge; but to my mind to pose as a thing is as bad as to be it. With my own eyes I saw you both in the most loathsome and disgusting relationship as expressed by your manner and expression. Never in my experience have I ever seen such a sight as that in your horrible features. No wonder people are talking as they are. Also I now hear on good authority, but this may be false, that his wife is petitioning to divorce him for sodomy and other crimes. Is this true, or do you not know of it? If I thought the actual thing was true, and it became public property, I should be quite justified in shooting him at sight..." (Lord Queensberry's letter to Douglas) (Harris, 1916).

He also accused Wilde of committing sodomy and other crimes by badmouthing Wilde's wife to his son. Noticing that, Lord Alfred Douglas replied to the letter saying "What a funny little man you are! Alfred Douglas," (Harris, 1916) which caused his father's rage. Wilde was really angry that he asked Queensberry to apologize. However, Queensberry did not want to so he sued Queensberry on charges for criminal libel

supported by his lawyer and Lords Alfred Douglas. Up to this, Oscar Wilde had discussed bringing the matter into court and realized that some situations could turn against him in the court. He was optimistic that he would win the trial. So, he asked Frank Harris to be the editor of *The Fortnightly* and testify that Dorian Gray in his *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not an immoral depiction (Harris, 1916).

Out of Wilde's expectation, the trial turned against him. In the first trial on April 3, the attorney, Sir Edward Clarke, read out a letter sent by a playwright to him that could be implying homosexual desire and homoeroticism (Bertram, 2020). Some of his works were also brought to the court and recited there, such as the poem *The Priest and the Acolyte* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Both works were regarded by most of the judge and counsel and especially Lord Queensberry Lawyer's, Carson, as embedding corrupting influences and homosexual relationships (Harris, 1916). He said "Mr. Wilde says they are beautiful,... I call an abominable piece of disgusting immorality." (Harris, 1916).

Nevertheless, the attorney was not in favor of Carson's testify, considering that Oscar Wilde was a poet and author and the works were only for the sake of beauty. Afterward, Wilde brought about the Queensberry's harassments he had received and challenged the truth about the accusation (Bertram, 2020). Since the defense's arguments were weak, as they are just literary works, he could not prove any facts there. Nevertheless, Carson kept pushing him, asking about his conduct to a sixteen-year-old teen named Walter Grainger (Harris, 1916; Bertram, 2020). The trial, to this point, went bad for Wilde. In the second trial, Lord Queensberry unexpectedly justified the libel accused to him and called upon names of some people for testifying to prove Wilde's case (Harris, 1916; Bertram, 2020). Wilde eventually dropped his case and as the results, Queensberry was proved as "not guilty" but Wilde's accusation of sodomy and gross indecency was put onto the new trial after all witnesses' testify results were sent to the judges and councils (Harris, 1916; Bertram, 2020).

Wilde's criminal trial for homosexuality began on April the 27th 1895 (Harris, 1916). The accusation as many as 25 charges of gross indecencies and conspiracy befell Wilde altogether with Alfred Taylor, the very one who was accused of having a conspiracy to persuade young men about homosexuality (Harris 1916; Bertram, 2020). Wilde insisted that he be not guilty despite the proofs and witnesses. In the third trial, on May 20, Wilde was back in court and on the very day, most of the charges proved that Oscar Wilde and Alfred Taylor were guilty. They were convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years of hard labor and imprisonment (Harris, 1916; Bertram, 2020). Afterward, he was divorced from his wife. Constance and their children moved to Switzerland and changed their name to Holland to stay away from the scandal her former husband had been accused of (Bertram, 2020). After a year of his punishment, he was given remission that allowed him to read and write. So, he started writing a letter for Bosie or Lord Alfred Douglas, which then be known as *De Profundis* or "from the depths", which expressed his disappointment to him as for letting him suffer alone.

The Homoerotic Relationship in The Picture of Dorian Gray

In the Theoretical Background, we have seen that close friend relationship between males was regarded as normal during the premodern era, even as a necessity of networking to the aristocratic males. By the time went by, as Mario DiGangi emphasized, the modern ideological construction of sexuality had made the homosexual traits more visible in friendships that homoeroticism was contrasted from normal friendship and sexual desire from social desire (Reay, 2009). Homoeroticism was identified by the acts and expressions of the males during their contacts and activities in daily life, including physical and verbal acts as well as from the language they employ. Under the setting of the modern conception of social identity and homosexuality does Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* take place. The three aristocratic male characters in the novel express some homoerotic forms which are derived from the explicit dialog and description of the narrator. The intimate friendship forms of those characters, Basil Hallward, Dorian Gray, and Lord Henry Wotton, are scattered and developed by five homoerotic expression forms: physical acts, language, jealousy, bygone and worship, and failure in having relationships with women.

The first two forms of homoeroticism found in the novel are physical acts and verbal acts or language. Reay (2009) conceptualize that some forms of homoeroticism accepted as culture in friendship were open physical affection and homoerotic language but without involving effeminacy or sexual intercourses (Reay, 2009). First, the physical acts done by the characters in the novel are mostly expressed by holding each other's hands.

"As they entered the studio, Dorian Gray put his hand upon lord henry's arm" (p. 38).

"... and sitting down by Dorian Gray, took both his hands in his own and held them tightly" (p. 140).

However, besides the literal physical acts, the physical appearance of the main character, Dorian Gray, and sometimes the other characters, becomes the object of description to the other characters as a means of amazement and desire.

"Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair" (p. 27).

"If you wish the best work I have ever done to be hidden from the world, I am satisfied. I have always you to look at" (p. 163).

"Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me" (p. 16).

As for the wonderful, good-looking face, the other two characters are so keen on Dorian Gray, and even looking at him is a compliment for them. The character Basil Hallward, even, is very interested in his physical appearance that it could change his psychological condition. Not to speak of, another physical description that affects a character is also found in Dorian Gray's interest in Lord Henry Wotton.

"He could not help liking the tall, graceful young man who was standing by him. His romantic, olive-coloured face and worn expression interested him" (p. 34).

Second, the language between those three friends is another identification for the intimacy of their relationship. The language is stirred by the affection, care, and pity for other characters and an intimate addressing language like "dear".

"My dear boy, I must see you. Let me in at once. I can't bear your shutting yourself up like this" (p. 139).

"No one has ever understood me as you have" (p. 150).

"I do want to preach to you. I want you to lead such a life as will make the world respect you. I want you to have a clean name and a fair record. I want you to get rid of the dreadful people you associate with" (p. 217).

Those language and verbal acts stress the intimacy between the characters. It indicates that they want each other's good deeds and fates. This also makes them feel comfortable with others and feel "understood" and loved.

The third homoerotic expression in the novel is jealousy. The painter, Basil Hallward, is the only character that experiences such expression. He undergoes jealousy and envy when he finds out that both his friends, Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton, grow closer and closer and finally ignore him.

"Don't go to the theatre to-night Dorian," said Hallward. "Stop and dine with me." ... As the door closed behind them, the painter flung himself down on a sofa, and a look of pain came into his face" (p. 46-47).

"The painter was silent and preoccupied. There was a gloom over him. He could not bear this marriage... A strange sense of loss came over him. He felt that Dorian Gray would never again be to him all that he had been in the past" (p. 115).

"... I don't quite forgive you for not having let me know of your engagement. You let Harry know" (p. 109).

The jealousy marks the feeling of a lost possession of someone. In this case, Basil Hallward is jealous of Lord Henry Wotton and Sybil Vane, the betrothal of Dorian Gray. The feeling of affection and possession cultivate in Basil Hallward's self when their relationship "was" so close. However, he feels that he loses Dorian Gray because he changes as for the relationship between him and the other two characters.

The fourth homoerotic form in the novel is the bygone or exceeding worship and adoration. This one expression is the most visible and dominant one since it directly addresses the beauty of Dorian Gray as the main topic of the novel. Also, the adoration and worship of friends, especially the same-sex friends, depicted by the characters are considered too much and indicating homosexual tendencies.

"When I like people immensely, I never tell their names to any one. It is like surrendering a part of them. I have grown to love secrecy" (p. 11).

"Dorian Gray's good looks – we shall all suffer for what the gods have given us, suffer terribly" (p. 11).

"Every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me" (p. 19).

"Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you... I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you... for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them,

no less than the peril of keeping them.... Weeks and weeks went on, and I grew more and more absorbed in you..." (p. 163-164).

The mad worship and adoration expression are dominantly uttered by the painter, Basil Hallward. In spite of in the name of beauty and art is Basil Hallward's utterances lying on, they grow to widen into the levels of caring, affecting, and possessing Dorian Gray. It indicates that Basil Hallward is crazy about him. He even confesses his devotion and his deep love to Dorian Gray.

The last related aspect in the novel is the failed relationship with women. This novel brings a skeptical view regarding women and the relationship between men and women in the marriage. Even though this aspect does not indicate any or includes in homoeroticism, nonetheless, it supports and reinforces the dominating homoeroticism between the characters. The views of women are directly uttered by the characters, mainly Lord Henry Wotton in his theories. Similarly, some events in the novel bring within them the aspect of their failure in building relationships with women.

"Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed" (p. 69).

"I don't think I am likely to marry, Harry. I am too much in love. That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practice, as I do everything that you say" (p. 69-70).

"My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals" (p. 70).

All three characters have failed to engage in relationships with women or do not even have any relationship with them. Dorian Gray never marries Sybil Vane because she commits suicide the night when she feels broken down caused by Dorian Gray's anger. His other relationship with other women does not really occur as to Lord Henry Wotton's skeptical view towards women and his evil deeds. For example, Lady Agatha loves Dorian Gray but he does not give any responses. On the other hand, Lord Henry Wotton himself divorced from his wife and she marries another man. Lastly, Basil Hallward never gets married or is told to have any close or affectionate relationship with women.

The Significance to Author's Homosexual Life

When the homoerotic relationship in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is related to the other aspects outside the work namely Oscar Wilde's sexual life and the Victorian sexual construction, the function of the novel as the expression of the author will be drawn. Wilde lived in an era where the ideological concept of sexuality started emerging and the homoerotic friendship which was a culture in Western society slowly shifted from normality to deviant relation. Such homosexuality awareness impacted the societal and economical life including the trial courts and law in which homosexuality is illegalized though the homoerotic friendship culture was not totally diminished from the society. Reay (2009) explains that homosexuality awareness and court cases make it harder to negotiate between friends and homosexuality. As a homosexual, Wilde did not really open "his closet". His homosexual life was discreet and disguised that he married a woman, Constance Lloyd, and had two children even though he was going more indiscreet in the end.

In nature, Wilde adored beauty and wit ideas and thoughts. He often expressed his adoration to his male friends and lovers through letters until he obtained blackmails. He declared this when he was tried in criminal courts for his gross indecency.

"Oscar declared that he aimed neither at good nor evil, but tried to make a beautiful thing. When questioned as to the immorality in thought in the article in "The Chameleon", he retorted "that there is no such thing as morality or immorality in thought"(Harris, 1916).

The peculiarity is that it is rather vague whether those are intended for private or public context, such as those letters for Lord Alfred Douglas and *De Profundis* (Harris, 1916; Watkin 2010). On the contrary, Victorian society regarded him and his writings as abominable and corrupting since they considered homosexuality and homoerotic immoral conduct, additionally with its murders and adultery. Nevertheless, in Wilde's perspective, those are fine since they are the representation of beauty.

Those entities, his perspective, homosexual activities and friends, and social construction affected him to express his homosexuality through homoeroticism friendship depiction in his novel. Sexual intercourses are not explicitly involved in homoeroticism since he did realize that homosexuality was illegal in the era the novel is written. Instead, he uses friendship as a means of undermining sexual connotation implicitly to the readers (Reay, 2009; Lilly, 1993). Also, he wrote a letter about the three characters in the novel stating that:

"Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks of me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages perhaps" (Letters 352 as cited in Watkin, 2010).

He confessed that the characters in the novel are the embodiment of himself. Harris (1916) witnessed that when Wilde met Lord Alfred Douglas, he "was drawn by the lad's personal beauty, and enormously affected besides by Lord Alfred Douglas' name and position". His feeling resembles the ones of Basil Hallward towards Dorian Gray in the novel and corresponds to what he had stated in the letter.

"There are people in the world, I regret to say, who cannot understand the deep affection that an artist can feel for a friend with a beautiful personality" (Harris, 1916).

"The 'love' that dare not speak its name in this century is such a great affection of an older for a younger man as...I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful; it is fine; it is the noblest form of affection....That it should be so the world does not understand. It mocks at it and sometimes puts one into the pillory for it" (Harris, 1916).

Derived from the statement and Harris (1916) witnesses, supposedly, he thought and saw that when he interacted with other men or friends, he has accustomed to show the similar "acts" and "language" inferring homosexuality as the characters in the novel do, not to mention that he had homosexual friends and build relationships with them. Besides that, he regarded those expressions as normality and beauty of his feelings and thoughts. It accords to his sexual predilections that had been notorious and common knowledge in the society of London (Adut, 2005).

Besides expressing his homosexuality, Oscar Wilde also implies his view towards women and relation to them which mostly stands in negativity. Even, in the earlier passage of the story, there was a statement saying that *"Somehow, I had never loved a woman"* (Reay, 2009). This erased declaration of one character mentioned homoerotic aspects in the novel and the homosexual construction in the Victorian era proves that Oscar Wilde did not want to explicitly infer homosexuality or confront heterosexuality. Therefore, this novel was popularly published and read amongst Victorian society.

The reason behind this society's acceptance is similar to Lily's (1993) statements in criticizing *The Love Poetry of the First World War* that the homoerotic relationship is "multilayered" and "variably" refers to the gay relationship or others in readers interpretation. It, in consequence, did not actually become a scandal in society. Lily states that:

"Most likely the poems frequently operate on a number of different levels, with the heterosexual reader able to read this 'love' simply as grief for the loss of a friend. This enables the poems to be printed and very widely circulated at the time without scandal. Very likely the poems operate in this multilayered way for the writers too, since by no means all the poets were self-acknowledged gays. Hence, 'conventions of expression sometimes make brotherly affection, physical tenderness and sexual desire all sound the same'" (p. 66)

Even so, it is not until his relation with Sir Alfred Douglas was brought to court the novel became a scandal. The society, whose sexual identity construction awareness existed, eventually, apparently recognized and was aware of the homoerotic aspects inside the novel. The novel in the end was used against him in the court though proven to be weak. It was considered as a device corrupting the personality of the lads or males with whom he possibly has a homosexual relationship with (Adut, 2005).

Conclusion

The awareness of sexual identity encouraged the establishment of gay literature by the publication of many compilations in classical Greek and Roman Gay verses by homosexual scholars. It also transformed Western society to constitute oppressive law and society against homosexuals and its related taxonomy such as homoeroticism. It was once a normalized culture amongst males but then became immoral and illegal as the discourses acquired its popularity. Even though homosexuality practices did not totally disappear during the Victorian era, it forced homosexuals to undercover their sexual preference for avoiding trials and imprisonment. Oscar Wilde, who was a homosexual, was one of the great authors and playwrights in the Victorian era known for his plays and short stories. His homosexual life was quite spread and well-known within the society of London. Some of his friends are openly gay such as Robbie Ross. Even so, Oscar Wilde married a woman and had two children as a means of a guise for the society as for the conviction for homosexual acts were quite severe at that time. Yet, he went dressing the way he exhibited his homosexuality and associate with their homosexual friends and discuss same-sex relationships with young men.

Accordingly, factors affecting him to write homoeroticism in his novel are his inability to openly express or show up his homosexuality, his exposure to homosexual friends and association, and his view that such forms

of literature are beautiful. He poured homosexual “aspects” in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* vaguely and implicitly rather than explicit and vulgar ways. The relation between three characters in the novel, Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward, and Lord Henry Wotton serves homosexuality in several manners such as physical and verbal acts, intimate language, jealousy, affection and care, worship and adoration, and in addition the exception of woman love. Homoeroticism marks homosexual connotation in the novel which is the embodiment of Oscar Wilde’s oppressed homosexuality and his converted view of male’s friendship and the beauty of it. Other than that, he also added a skeptical view of women and marriage with them and removed an explicit homosexual expression in the novel. Those manners at a certain level do not bear meaning for homosexuality but in another one it does. Thus, this novel was widely published and read without any scandal hanging around while at the same time it was regarded as a moral decadence by the Church and used against him in his trials for homoeroticism.

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