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## Resonances: An Examination of Republication Through Four Case Studies

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

Republication, as in the iterated publication of a work with or without textual changes, produces new physical copies and keeps a work in circulation. This protects the work from destruction but also affects how we receive it, because publication is always a socializing act. Despite its consequences for works and their reception, republication has not yet been theorized in textual studies. My dissertation addresses this research gap by developing a syncretic textual studies framework and employing the term *resonance* to discuss the relationships—between versions, contexts, and ideas—that develop out of republication. For this, I explore republication at its extremes with four case studies of works first published between 1890 and 2009–2016 that underwent major changes in a later republication. The first chapter examines Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (magazine to novel) in relation to its reception history. Using a mixed-methods analysis of reviews of the 1890 and 1891 publications, I demonstrate trends in the reception of both versions and a relationship between these trends and textual revisions. The second chapter argues that in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (novel to novel), the much later moment of republication is a kind of nostalgic return that revises and reframes the work’s arguments about nostalgia and faith. My third chapter, on Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* (periodical/conference to collection), shows how periodical/conference publications place Lorde’s essays into larger contexts and conversations that the monograph republication erodes and replaces with a unified presentation of Lorde as a theorist. Finally, my fourth chapter discusses the complexities of republication for digital-born works with Andrew Hussie’s *Homestuck* (webcomic to porting/print). Bringing in adaptation theory, I show the blurring of adaptation and republication and how republication’s questions of transformation and survival are

heightened by the threat of technological obsolescence. This dissertation enriches our understanding of republication's consequences for four specific works. It also theorizes republication as a vital object of study that affects not just the versions of works we read but the histories that develop alongside them, creating a foundation for further studies of the phenomenon.

## Keywords

Textual studies, book history, republication, reception, adaptation, digital obsolescence, porting, Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, Andrew Hussie, *Homestuck*

## Summary for Lay Audience

Republication—that is, publication of a work that has already been published at least once before, even if there are no differences in the text—is often necessary for a work to “survive.” A work that is not republished is at risk of being destroyed or forgotten. But what does republication *do*? This dissertation uses the term “resonance” to describe the way that relationships between versions, contexts, and ideas can change through republication, such as how a particular cover design may increase a work’s resonances with a specific genre of fiction. To explore changes in resonances, it examines four dramatic case studies covering a variety of periods and kinds of republication: Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890 and 1891), Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945 and 1960), Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* (1977–1984 and 1984), and Andrew Hussie’s *Homestuck* (2009–2016 and 2018–present). For *Dorian Gray* (magazine to book), I do a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the themes in reviews for the 1890 publications. I consider these reviews in relation to the revisions and bibliographic codes of the 1891 publications and compare them to an analysis of those publications’ reviews. For *Brideshead Revisited* (book to book), I argue that republication allows Waugh a nostalgic return to revise how he frames the story’s themes. I look at *Sister Outsider* (periodical/conference to collection) in terms of the conversations that Lorde’s essays were part of when they were first published and how resonances with those conversations are reduced in the collection in favour of a unified presentation of Lorde’s ideas as a theorist. Finally, for *Homestuck* (digital to print/digital port), I show how republication and adaptation overlap and how the threat of digital obsolescence heightens the questions of survival and transformation that republication always brings. Republication is vital to how we receive and continue to receive texts. This

dissertation uses case studies to set the groundwork for understanding what this inevitable stage in a work's life does to our understanding of a work and its history.

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## Introduction

A philosophical doctrine is in the beginning a seemingly true description of the universe; as the years pass it becomes a mere chapter—if not a paragraph or a noun—in the history of philosophy. In literature, this ultimate decay is even more notorious. “*Don Quixote*,” Menard once told me, “was above all an agreeable book; now it is an occasion for patriotic toasts, grammatical arrogance and obscene deluxe editions.” (Borges 53)

### Introduction: Reading Republication

If we can say that works leave an impression in the world—if we say that works have a weight, a curvature in space and time, a *presence*—then *The Picture of Dorian Gray* might be such a book. Bosie was brought to Oscar Wilde by it; Wilde was maligned in trial from passages of it; it was, one reviewer claimed, “a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” (qtd. in Mason, *Art and Morality* 55). What the reviewer describes for this story is a physical, sensory reality: not one of paper, cloth, and binding, but a toxic, emanating essence.

Except, of course, that the *Dorian Grays* mentioned above were not always the same *Dorian*. The reviewer who called it toxic was referring to the printing in the UK version of *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, published in 1890. This is the print run that Bosie read “fourteen times running” before being handed the 1891 deluxe Ward, Lock, & Co. book version, *Dorian Gray*’s second printing, on meeting Wilde in person (Ellman 324). At the famous trial, Queensberry’s attorney Edward Carson became a veritable textual scholar in

comparing the magazine and book publications and describing the significantly longer second publication as “purged” because of its supposed increased discretion in matters of sexuality (Holland 82, 86). They were all *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but not perhaps the very same picture. Edward Carson, after all, seemed convinced that whatever “mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” might remain in the later edition, it was the first that was most powerfully pungent. They had a different *scent*, a different impression. Their presence in the world was different. The book publication (which was really two publications) had a different resonance.

In this dissertation, I ask the question that arises from such cases as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: What does publishing a work again at different times and places, with different bibliographic and/or linguistic codes, *do*?

In my introduction, I establish republication as a process in the life cycle as a work that affects relationships between versions of a work, their social contexts, and different interpretive possibilities. To discuss these relationships, I use the reading and interpreting practices of several textual studies approaches to create a syncretic framework fitted to my object of study. I develop the term “resonance” out of this framework as a tool to discuss the relationships created and changed through republication. Then, in the body of the dissertation, I use four case studies, from the late nineteenth to early twenty-first century, to show various kinds of relationships produced and how they are formed. These case studies allow us to develop a fuller and more nuanced picture of what republication does and lay down the groundwork for further explorations.

## i. Theoretical Background

The study of different versions of literary works has generally been a concern of the field of textual studies. However, textual studies does not often examine different versions of works for the sake of it; rather, the primary goal of much theory in the field is to develop an appropriate critical edition of a work. That is, most theory in textual studies concerns itself with the practice of using the different available versions of a work to create a new edition that is appropriate for the theoretical aims of the specific school in question. In the Anglo-American tradition, W.W. Greg's "The Rationale of Copy-Text," G. Thomas Tanselle's *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*, Jerome J. McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, and John Bryant's *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* all debate editorial practice. In the European tradition, the German *Editionswissenschaft* school built on Karl Lachmann's stemmatics for editorial practice before moving more towards the "historical-critical edition" as its end goal (Van Hulle, "Textual Scholarship" 22). The French-born genetic criticism (*critique génétique*), which often defines itself against rather than as part of textual criticism (Ferrer), is a rarity in the field for its interest in the creative process itself, defined by Daniel Ferrer as "the science of written invention" ("*la science de l'invention écrite*") (qtd. in Van Hulle, "Textual Scholarship" 23).

My aim is not to create a textual edition; however, textual criticism developed to create scholarly editions is relevant to my research because all such theories are also theories of reading and interpreting works in variation. To create a critical edition, a scholar must read the documents that comprise the versions of the work, as well as whatever



surrounding material may assist that reading in accordance with the specific theory employed, and then use that reading to interpret the work in support of making the choices among textual variants necessary to produce an edition.

The idea of a textual critic's "reading and interpreting framework" is not dissimilar to what Peter Shillingsburg described as the "orientation" of a school of textual criticism in *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age* (the list of which he later revised with Dirk Van Hulle in "Orientations to Text, Revisited"). For Van Hulle and Shillingsburg, orientation "identifies a perspective that reveals the relative importance of [various textual] elements for a given purpose" (27), "guides what we do with textual materials," and "determines what constitutes relevant materials to consider" (28). Thus, orientation can be understood as a critical approach that guides what is read and how this material is interpreted.

First, it is prudent to define some key terminology. Despite the variety of schools, textual scholars are generally consistent in their use of *work*, *text*, *version*, *edition*, and *document*. While these terms are theorized in different ways by different scholars,<sup>1</sup> the terms have fairly consistently differentiated meanings, as laid out by Peter Shillingsburg:

- A *work* is "the imagined whole implied by differing forms of a text that we conceive as representing a single literary creation" (43).
- A *version* is a "specific form of the work," generally specific to a moment in time. (44).

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<sup>1</sup> Note, for example, that the use of an "ideal" work or version does not fully align with the aims of documentary-oriented textual criticism, so in this conception the only version that exists is that present in the text (Shillingsburg 47n7).

- A *text* is “the actual order of words and punctuation as contained in any one physical form,” but not the physical form itself (46); this form is represented by
- The *document*, which is the “physical vessel ... that contains (or incarnates) the *text*” (Shillingsburg 174).

Thus, *Hamlet* the work is a general, non-material concept, while the ordered words and punctuation in the First Quarto, the Second Quarto, and the First Folio are three specific *texts*, each of which constitutes a *version*. Note, however, that a printing from the First Quarto with some typographic variants would be considered a different *text* but the same *version*. Meanwhile, each individual copy of the First Quarto (the same version) is a distinct *document*, even where the text is identical. As noted, this sort of terminology is used with consistency in most cases, but nuances vary between different theorists and the different orientations (Shillingsburg 47n6) outlined below.

The various orientations of textual scholarship, as Van Hulle and Shillingsburg define them, are *causal (agents)*, *material*, *temporal*, *genetic (inventive)*, and *performance* (27). Of these, the causal and genetic orientations, as informed by the material orientation, are most relevant to my research.

The *causal* orientation is focused on “agents of textual change” (31). Van Hulle and Shillingsburg further break this down into orientations toward *authorial* or *social* agents of change (32).<sup>2</sup> An authorial orientation, specifically toward the question of “authorial intention,” is a key concept of debate in the Anglo-American school of textual criticism

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<sup>2</sup> John Bryant distinguishes between these as the “intentionalist” (authorial) or “materialist” (social) schools (*Fluid Text* 20).

(Van Hulle, “Textual Scholarship” 20–1), and the question of “final authorial intention” was developed by Tanselle in “The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention” in response to Greg. The editorial school of Tanselle concerns itself with producing the most appropriate text in relation to the author’s intentions at a specific moment in time—a question of textual integrity—so it focuses on reading material relevant to authorial intentions (the documents containing various texts of the work, any letters to the publisher that may comment on misprints of typographic errors, information about the manner of textual production that would show where error may be introduced into the work, etc.) and interpreting the most likely intended text.

Of course, knowing what an author intended a text to mean is likely impossible, as even statements of intended meaning may change over time, be influenced by social context, or be articulated poorly. For this reason, textual scholars may restrict themselves to the question of what authors intended to put down, which can be more readily (although perhaps never perfectly, as A.E. Housman would seem to suggest in calling textual criticism both art and science [2]) approached through analysis of available evidence (Van Hulle and Shillingsburg 32). This approach cannot enable scholars to totally avoid interpretation of intended meaning: at times, there may be no documentary evidence to determine which of two or more possible wordings is intended by the author, and so scholars must weigh the meaning of each variation against the other in the context of the larger work to determine which is most likely to be intentional. Thus, the authorial orientation reads the text as produced by authors who are active agents in textual production but also reads authors as agents whose intended texts are subject to “impurities” of chance, carelessness, or external influence, and it interprets intention in

both a restricted (intended text) and broad (intended meaning) sense as necessary to each individual condition.

The other causal orientation takes the sources of impurity—chance, carelessness, and external influence—into account as subjects of study in themselves. This is the social orientation, developed most notably in the Anglo-American tradition by Jerome McGann in his *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*. Citing James Thorpe's earlier observation that "final authorial intentions" are problematized by the collaborative nature of many texts, McGann argues that a literary work only becomes so when engaged with by an audience (44) and asserts that the final authority in a text is the structure of agreements between various individuals involved in the publication process of literary works (54). In this approach, literature is viewed as a "socialized object" (Van Hulle and Shillingsburg 33), opening textual criticism to study of all the collaborative elements that go into book production, including production labour and material, laws around production practices and censorship, social customs, and technology (33). The social orientation thus asks us to consider other angles of causality; it reads the works as a product of social conditions and requires interpretation of the relationship between the socializing agents and the literary documents produced.

McGann's interest in the whole of the socialized work, and thus the different actors that contribute to the production of any document, leads him to distinguish in his *The Textual Condition* between *lexical* and *bibliographic* sources of information, which Van Hulle and Shillingsburg define as the two sides of the *material* orientation in textual studies. This orientation studies the relevant documents themselves; rather than seeking to determine what would be an authoritative version of *Hamlet*, a materially oriented

scholar reads the First Quarto, the Second Quarto, and the First Folio as material documents and analyzes them in relation to their qualities as such.<sup>3</sup> In the purely lexical approach, a scholar only concerns themselves with the words on the page and, for example, the possibility of error therein (misprint, a typesetter's error, etc.), but the bibliographic approach analyzes the visual and tactile aspects of a document: its physical, material reality (Van Hulle and Shillingsburg 30). McGann argues that these are also sources of information and that transcription (for visual information) and facsimile (for tactile information) inevitably will fail to retain some of the relevant information from the source document (*Textual* 56). Any act of scholarly editing cannot fully reproduce the information available in a primary document. Thus, for McGann, part of the historicizing of a work requires attention to a document's bibliographic qualities, including its layout, frontispieces, font choices, illustrations, and sizes and thickness of paper. The material orientation, and particularly the bibliographic approach, demands a historicizing awareness of the difference between direct and indirect access to a primary document. It reads the words, visual elements, and physical components of a document as information that can be interpreted.

As noted above, the *genetic* orientation focuses on the creative process of writing itself. As such, it does not have the ends of a specific kind of critical edition, although genetic editions do exist; rather, it aims to produce knowledge of how works are created. Thus, rather than conceptualizing a work as being best represented by a specific instantiation,

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<sup>3</sup> This can, of course, be in service of other orientations, such as analysing the Quartos and Folio to determine which is the most authoritative version. In that case, however, the primary orientation would be authorial, while a material orientation is used to help inform the analysis, according to Van Hulle and Shillingsburg's analysis.

genetic criticism focuses on “the actions of invention as implied by the chronological succession of documents and the transformations within and between them” (Van Hulle and Shillingsburg 36). The creative process is divided into three phases: *exogenesis* (external inspirations of creativity, such that exogenesis is a study of intertextuality as inspiration), *endogenesis* (writing and re-writing prior to publication), and *epigenesis* (influences on creativity from after the work transitions from private to public). These phases, however, are intertwined rather than strictly linear.

The study of works as changing over time is not strictly the provenance of those who consider themselves genetic critics. James Thorpe observed works of art that exist in multiple versions in his *Principles of Textual Criticism* (42), and John Bryant proposes a conception of the work as always being “fluid”<sup>4</sup>; these are, in a sense, genetic orientations without being genetic criticism. A genetic orientation views the work as being a process that is testified to by the variations (typically, in genetic criticism, *réécritures*, rewritings) in each version of a work as well as other forms of evidence (letters, writing in margins, records of the libraries of writers). Thus, as a reading practice, genetic criticism is particularly focused on the components that go into creating a work (the intentions of agents, laws, production processes, etc.) and the versions contained in various documents that testify to a work, but not as discrete elements. Rather, it is interested in them as all being in (complex) relation to each other and themselves. Thus, in Daniel Ferrer and Marlena G. Corcoran’s conception, genetic study is of a river that runs both upstream and

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<sup>4</sup> Note, however, that Van Hulle argues that the basis on which Bryant distinguishes his theory from genetic criticism is faulty. Van Hulle argues that, while Bryant believes genetic criticism is too narrow because it only considers the individual artist’s drafting pre-publication and does not consider post-publication social influences, genetic criticism does in fact have a place for this through epigenetics. See Van Hulle, “Textual Enactment.”

downstream; as Van Hulle and Shillingsburg put it, “many creative histories have more resemblance to a complex fluvial system arising from many tributaries and branching into a delta of many outlets” (38). The genetic orientation reads the complicated motion of the “river” (or fluvial system) to generate interpretations of the creative process.

I take a syncretic approach to these orientations, which is not unusual in current textual scholarship. As Van Hulle observes, “Twenty-first-century textual scholarship appears to be more inclined to look for convergences, instead of focusing on theoretical and methodological differences. ... To a large extent, this convergence is due to the digital turn ... [as] textual scholars make use of a more pluralistic approach to texts in order to tackle new problems” (“Textual Scholarship” 25). Digital technology’s space for multiple approaches to be displayed through one widely accessible site or digital archive on a continuum enables less rigidity of theory. Rather, multiple theoretical approaches can operate together to provide broader perspectives or produce understandings not available to any one method, and the “fitness” of each method to different kinds of evidence is now an asset. A genetic orientation may be more appropriate for an author whose manuscript drafts are extant and available, while a social orientation may be more appropriate for a work that heavily contended with censorship law. A syncretic approach should be fitted to the appropriate object of study, with the reasons behind each component defined and justified.

As such, before we can create this approach, the object of study itself must be defined.

## i.i A Definition of Republication

As a discrete concept, *republication* has not been theorized or defined within textual studies. However, the terminology of textual studies above, with its distinction between work, version, text, and document, provides theoretical guidance for defining the space in which republication exists. Because “republication” here is a process rather than an object, what I am defining is not a kind of document but a relationship between the linguistic and bibliographic codes of different texts of different versions of a work contained in documents that belong to particular moments in time.

Further, the kinds of republication I discuss here cover a specific period—the late nineteenth century to early twenty-first century in the Anglo-American world—that contains different technologies of publication but not (yet) fundamentally different cultural practices of publication, allowing for a dialogue between the specific instances highlighted. The concept of “republication” in a medieval or even Renaissance context would be fundamentally different due to the highly different practices around publication. This limitation in period is necessary both in terms of creating a reasonable scope and to avoid an imperialistic attitude that would demand that all times and places submit to the conceptual framework relevant to my research. Whether or not the findings of this study apply to these periods is a question for further study.

My conception of republication is informed by the language of bibliography and, of course, publishing. In bibliography, to publish a work is “[t]o issue printed or otherwise reproduced textual or graphic material for sale or public distribution” (Williams and Abbott 163). Thus, republication can be understood as the reiteration of this process.



However, the language used in bibliography—that of editions, issues, and reprints—does not speak directly to the concept here discussed, as their focus is on the specific taxonomy. In bibliography, an *edition* is “all copies of a book printed from substantially the same setting of type or from plates made from that type or type image” (151). Thus, an *impression* is “[a]ll copies of a book produced by one pressrun, or printing” (157), and a *reprint* is merely “[a] printing of something previously printed ... from the same typesetting or a new one” (164). This taxonomy is extremely useful for discussing the specific publication practices that produce material relationships that can be described through stemmatology. However, like a cladogram of the *Canis* genus, taxonomy organizes our conception of descent but does not give detailed information about other kinds of relationships between the species in question.

For this, the practices of publishers are most helpful. As William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott note, publishers are looser in their definition of an *edition*; in the publication world, *edition* is often used to “distinguish among copies identifiable by publishing format (such as paperback and hardback), change of publisher, textual revision, or some other feature, even if all the copies belong to the same edition in a bibliographical sense” (151). The same text and even the same plates may be used for what publishers would call a new edition (but which would, bibliographically, be the same edition), as these editions may be marketed to different groups with different bibliographic codes (cover design, quality of paper, etc.). However, to simply refer to republication as an issuing of a variant edition does not account for the iterative component indicated by *republication*.

Thus, for the sake of this dissertation, the versions under consideration as “publication” and “republication” meet the following criteria:

1. The versions of a work to be compared must have been published, which is to say, released to a public.
2. Each version must be of the same work, with continuity between the different textual versions.
3. A republication requires difference in the form of a new iteration of a publication event. Other differences are relevant to republication but not necessary; all that matters is that it is published *again*.
  - a. Simultaneous publications of different versions are not republications, even when they are separate publication events, because they are not iterative.

The first restriction, to include only versions of the work released to the public, bars us from examining versions of the text that have never been shared; for examples, while the versions of Emily Dickinson’s poetry that were published in magazines would count as publications, those that were kept in her attic and shared with no one do not. Drafts kept by the author and manuscripts and typescripts sent to publishers are of interest because they may help inform understanding of the development of a work, but they are all concretely pre- or inter-publication, not released for public consumption. There is an obvious fuzziness inherent here, as coterie versions of work are released to a particularly small group, perhaps one small enough that these may be individuals consulted for feedback on drafts. This fuzziness is an inevitability of much of textual studies, and we can consider it a benefit rather than a detriment if we are cognizant rather than in denial

of it. Studies of such fuzzy cases, when they come, will allow us to further develop our understanding of what republication is and does.

The second restriction, that each version must be a development of the same work, defines the basis of the comparison between versions. The 1891 *Picture of Dorian Gray* is a republication, as it was literally drafted based on the earlier 1890 Lippincott's edition (Frankel, Textual Introduction 43). While T.H. White's *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, published in 1958 as part of *The Once and Future King*, differs dramatically from the 1939 *Witch in the Wood* at less than half its length and various other revisions, the later iteration is clearly developed out of the text of the earlier (Sprague 10); thus, if a scholar were to argue that each is a version of the same work, it would qualify as a republication. Stories or poems published elsewhere and then gathered in a collection also constitute republications; while these cases have a less simple history than a singular work published and then republished, the relation between the various earlier texts and the later published collected text is clearly that of a published work being published again.

The third requirement, that of an iteration in publication event, allows us to see development over time. By publication event, I mean the sum of activities (the physical production process, cultural and legal components such as licensing, release to the public, etc.) that go into the publishing of a work. A new publication event can also involve a difference in the literal texts of a work, the publication format (serial to novel, various magazines to a collection), the binding or covers, etc., but these are not necessary: only a new publication event is. Note here that, because of this, a republication can fail to fulfill Bryant's definition of a version, where "*macroscopic revision* creating substantial rearrangements or substitutions of text may suggest a version, whereas *microscopic*

revision or the fine-tuning of a text cannot” (89). Bryant asserts that “versions are defined not only by the degree of revision (or difference, or distance) but also by the *direction* of the revisions. The comparison of sequential versions will always reveal a *strategic* pattern of revision evincing some *reconception of the function of the work itself*” (89–90, emphasis in original). However, for our purposes, difference between publications may be microscopic and even do little to change the conception of the work—there may only be the difference of a new publication event, with all other elements constant. All that matters is that there is a new publication that is therefore a republication.

Different versions of a work published simultaneously for the same audience are not republications because they are the same publication event. For example, the red and the blue two-colour editions of *House of Leaves* published in 2000 have differences in terms of colouring, both in the text and on the cover, but they share an ISBN and were released simultaneously. While they are separate editions, one does not act as a republication of another; they were released to the same audience at the same time, and the differences are part of the metatextual experience of the novel itself. They are, in a sense, two halves of the same work and part of the same publication event. Similarly, when the same text is repackaged for a different market at the same time (such as a deluxe edition, with a trade edition released simultaneously to the mass market), one is a different version of another, but it is not a republication. They are, rather, separate but simultaneous publications—concurrent publication. Naturally, this asks how much time is necessary for “re”-publication to occur, and just as naturally, that is impossible to answer. A newspaper published at 5AM, then corrected and republished at 5PM the same day, would constitute a republication, but a novel released in paperback and hardback forms, with paperback

hitting the shelves on Monday and hardback on Tuesday, may or may not constitute a republication. The distinction is in the reception event.<sup>5</sup>

Together, these parameters define “publication” and “republication” as a set of two or more versions of a work that have been released to the public in iterations. As a result, republication can occur indefinitely, as any publication after the first would be constitutive of a republication, as many times as it happens. The relationships that develop through this republication process—between publication and republication, between “the work” and the reception, and so on—are the subject of this study. Materials that are not directly in this relationship, while potentially of interest, are not its direct subject.

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<sup>5</sup> While attempting to clarify and refine this definition of republication, I did what I believe most academics should do, particularly when troubling themselves with a very specialized question: I asked people completely outside the field. In this case, three members of my family (a professor of sociology, a manager, and a computer scientist) gathered for a meal. Their answers to the question “What is a republication?” were illuminating.

While for the most part, this non-representative group agreed to my terms, the professor of sociology insisted that merely changing the bibliographic codes was irrelevant: it was the text that mattered. There had to be at least a new preface or introduction, if not changes to the text of the work itself. The manager asked about a poem that was turned to a song, and I had to direct her to adaptation and performance studies. The computer scientist, after querying whether book publishing had “errata” in the same way trading card games do (and, on finding out we did, asking how they were distributed pre-Internet), noted that, when a bug is patched for a video game, this is considered a version release, not a republication. Then he noted that if a new quest in a game is released to the public as an update, it is merely a version release, but if it is released as a separate download, it is considered DLC (Downloadable Content). After saying this, he thoughtfully added that the same content could also be released as a separate game, if the developer so chooses. What mattered was how the developer presented the material, not the material itself.

It was a sharp reminder that non-specialists are often much better at getting out of the weeds than we are. I am defining republication for my own use. But what I am attempting to define in theoretical terms is something defined in practice by the social apparatus of book publication: a book is a republication when people say it is.

But why republication? For this, there are two reasons, one of which is entirely practical, and one which aims to put focus on an area of textual criticism that is rarely given primary focus. Both practical and exploratory reasons speak to theoretical concerns often not addressed in the field.

## i.ii Research Gaps and Accessibility in Textual Studies

Although republication is addressed in some form in most orientations in textual studies, it is highly undertheorized as a noteworthy relational structure in the life of a work.

Among the causal orientations, the authorial orientation may consider various kinds of publication that occur within an author's lifetime, but only in relation to securing and understanding the author's intentions. The social orientation, meanwhile, is much more interested in the social elements surrounding production and so may take an interest in publications as reception events for the work, but republication is rarely an independent event to focus on. Genetic criticism is the most interested in the relation between the parts, but while genetic criticism is not *limited* to pre-publication creative processes, it has generally tended to reify the moment at which a work is considered by the author to be ready for public attention (*bon à tirer*). It is the *avant-texte*, what comes before the text, that most preoccupies genetic critics, with Pierre-Marc de Biasi noting,

[Post-publication] modifications (or "variants") ... do not have exactly the same status as the transformations to be observed in the genetic documents from the original work. The mutations of the *avant-texte* took place in a private writing domain where everything was possible at any time.... By contrast, postpublication modifications are made in a public sphere where the book's reality cannot be

ignored: they successfully affect equally definitive textual versions of the “same” work ... without its being in general possible to recognize the logic of a process comparable to the pre-textual one between them.... This [the “last edition of the author’s lifetime”] definitive image of the work marks the farthest reach of the field of investigation proper to genetic studies. (40–41)

This is not to say that the genetic orientation has ignored post-publication revision. But it has often considered it merely a part, and often the least relevant one, of the study of written invention. The term *epigenesis* for the post-publication influences on the genetic development of a work was itself coined by Van Hulle in a paper on Beckett’s compositional practices only in 2011 (Van Hulle, “Modern Manuscripts”), which is relatively recent given the age of genetic criticism as a field.

Moreover, genetic criticism focuses not on the different kinds of relationships that develop out of republication but on the creative process and revision generally, as it may manifest at times through republication. Its interest is the creative process, and to section off that process to only publication and onward would not be appropriate in its study. Likewise, Bryant’s fluid-text theory is, again, interested in the creative process and the flow of works across time rather than the specifically narrow domain of republication. My narrowness does not suit their subject.

Rather than the process of creativity in general, I argue that there are relations that develop specifically after publication that are worth consideration, relations we can study by narrowing our focus on republication. An examination of republication will not cover all types of publication or all aspects in the developmental process of a work, nor is it

intended to. In textual studies, as in science, it is very good to have a Grand Unified Theory, but stopping to discuss the specifics of individual elements allows us to develop more detailed, nuanced understandings that may be glossed over in general theories. My intention by focusing on republication is to provide just such detail and nuance as might illuminate some elements of this under-discussed element of a work's history.

But there is also an accessibility question behind my decision. Practically speaking, published material is generally more accessible than non-published material. This dissertation, then, is responding to the question of *accessibility* that is, in some ways, the goal of much textual research, but that has not been heavily focused on in terms of impediments *to* textual research. Textual critics often call for the broader uses of their field in literary criticism, but it remains relatively marginal, as Matt Cohen observes in his paper on how bibliography would benefit from engagement with Indigenous studies (181). One reason that textual studies remain marginal, I suggest, is that as a field of study, it requires material that is often difficult to access. Primary documents often only exist in a limited number of specific locations; drafts and marginalia, which often have only one or at most two copies, are even more scarce. As a result, there are barriers of access in terms of location (relative to the document[s] in question), finance (the ability to pay for travel or to have institutions who will pay for you), mobility (the ability *to* travel), and institutions (whether one will be given access to any given document).

One of the great projects of bibliography and textual studies has been to overcome these barriers of access. The Morgan Library now provides access to a digital facsimile of this *Dorian Gray* manuscript, enabling ready access to anyone with Internet of sufficient



quality.<sup>6</sup> A critical edition with a thorough textual apparatus allows scholars to reconstruct other versions of the text, and synoptic and variorum editions present multiple versions at once. Digital archives have increased the possibilities for accessibility dramatically, with such work as the Rossetti Archives and the Modernist Archives Publishing Project providing ready access to facsimile of a variety of significant documents. But these projects and editions, excellent as they are, are themselves limited by how resources and attention are directed. A researcher interested in less popular authors, particularly those from marginalized groups, may still find themselves unable to access material that no one has chosen (or been given the funding) to digitize. Even among popular authors, there is only so much time and money. Everything might be available on the Internet one day, but at present, only some things are.

In contrast, published versions of a work are generally more accessible to researchers than unpublished versions. Even where a first edition is difficult to access, a published work is likely to have reprints or virtual copies that can be referenced for the text. This can be combined with records or copies of the bibliographic codes of the books for a better sense of those elements not retained in reprintings. Thus, even with publications where the physical documents are themselves not easy to access directly because of resources or circumstances,<sup>7</sup> sufficient research can provide a workable basis for study. In contrast, I am not aware of any circumstance where a published work is of enough scholarly interest that pre-publication manuscripts and drafts are digitized but published

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<sup>6</sup> Internet use raises other accessibility questions, as per concerns around the digital divide and the right to Internet access.

<sup>7</sup> For example, a pandemic that prohibits free travel and thus stops one from visiting any of the relevant archives.

versions are not available. To put it another way, if facsimiles of pre-publication documents are accessible, then the same is probably true of published documents, but ready access to published documents does not guarantee (and indeed rarely implies) accessibility of pre-publication documents. A narrowed focus on republication thus answers the call for more use of textual criticism in analysis in a way that is practical, in terms of accessibility, for a broader variety of scholars, opening opportunities in the field and responding to the under-addressed question of access in textual studies.

## ii. Reading Republication: Methods and Materials

If the question is what republication does, the answer is what comes out of the process of republication: what republication “creates.” And while republication certainly produces documents, it also, by default, produces relationships. There is no republication without prior publication; republication is defined by one publication having a relationship with a publication that came before, and so on *ad infinitum*. And attention to the relationships produced between versions of works also allows us to be attentive to how versions’ relationships with social contexts and interpretations may differ. As such, when we aim to read and interpret those relationships, it can be informative to read 1) what goes into the process of republication, 2) the process itself, 3) what direct evidence comes out of the process, and 4) the relationships that come out of the process. Note, of course, that all elements have overlap and connections.

- 1) *What goes into the process of republication:* Here, we draw primarily from the causal and genetic orientations. From the causal orientations, we assert that both authors and socialization agents have intentions toward the work. We cannot

know the intentions with certainty, but variations in a version can indicate the intention to change the linguistic or bibliographic codes of the work. From the genetic orientations, we assert through epigenesis that the development of a work continues after publication and that this development can be part of a response to a public and part of personal creative development. However, we cannot be certain what may drive one variation or another; we can only analyze the material at hand to attempt to understand what may have influenced the changes.

- 2) *The process of republication*: Here, bibliographic attention to the physical production processes involved can inform our understanding, as this knowledge explains the actions involved in the republication process, which vary from the initial concept and rights purchased for the republication, as necessary, to the revisions, printings, advertisements, and distribution.
- 3) *What direct evidence comes out of the process*: The material orientation brings us back to the fact that it is through documents as objects that we encounter works. What reproduction *physically* does is produce material documents. The documents that publications create have both linguistic and bibliographic codes. As this is the bottom line, so to speak, of what reproduction does, these codes are necessary to analysis. Unlike what goes into the process and the process itself, these documents are in themselves an answer to “What does republication do?” and are the fundamentals of available information. Without them, there is little that can be done to approach the direct object of study:
- 4) *The relationships that come out of the process*: All prior components are kinds of evidence that can inform interpretations. The relationships created *between*

*versions* and *between each version and its interpretations and contexts* must be interpreted and argued for: they must be read.

However, as Van Hulle and Shillingsburg remind us, there is a limit on our ability to determine “effects,” as the effect of a variation on one reader may not be the same as on others (32). As such, I introduce the term *resonance* into my analysis as a framing for discussing possible consequences of republication.

## ii.i Resonance

I introduce the term *resonance* because it denotes both a relationship, as resonance must occur between two or more objects, and emanation or radiation outward, as resonance is caused by the outward movement of soundwaves. In some ways this is, to me, rooted in a synaesthetic experience: invariably, when I think on them, the 1891 edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is burgundy, while the 1890 edition, most especially in its reversion to typescript, is a lilac. This concept is, however, much more than an aural analogue for a visual translation of a personal feeling. It is a development of an interpretive frame that is attentive to the variety of possible meanings created by every variation, such that minor differences that do not wholly change the note struck can still be understood to adjust it, to greater or lesser degrees.

Textual criticism requires that a work be read very closely, that individual sentences, phrases, words, and even punctuation variations be attended to and assessed. Thus, when interpreting these slight variations, close reading often appeals to me. However, when extending such readings out to larger social contexts, the trap of considering *effects* comes into play. If, for example, I assert the addition of notes to the first print publication

of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* had the effect of making the text more academic, then I presume that other readers interpreted the work as such. While this assertion does not require adherence with Eliot's intentions—indeed, if Eliot's later words can be considered testimony to earlier intentions, his intentions with the notes had to do with plagiarism and page count<sup>8</sup>—it is difficult to prove in the general, easy to disprove in the particular, and ultimately not very interesting. Yet what *is* true is that Eliot's notes are like those used by scholars in critical editions of works—they have resonance with them. This is true regardless of whether anyone received it that way. And because it is true *regardless* of whether it had an *effect* of seeming scholarly, we now have a space to ask what, if any, the relationship is between responses to the notes and this resonance of the notes, and if that has any relation to the earlier publication. This allows us to consider the scenario much more fully than merely seeking a yes or no response to “Is its effect the one I perceive?” We must always interpret the works we consider. By shifting my focus from intention or effect to resonance, I have no need to “postpone or avoid” (Van Hulle and Shillingsburg 32) the question of intention or reception. These questions will occur and must be approached with whatever resources are available. Rather, with resonance, I can interpret the relationship between intention and reception alongside other possible interpretations.

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<sup>8</sup> In a lecture given at the University of Minnesota in 1956, Eliot said of the notes, “I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism. Then, when it came to print *The Waste Land* as a little book—for the poem on its first appearance in *The Dial* and in *The Criterion* had no notes whatever—it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter” (533).

As a term, resonance differs from the Benjaminian aura because the aura demands distance and idealization, and it is not intended for reproducible works. Resonance, as notes in harmony, suits the idea of reproduction. Each iteration strikes new notes, and rather than distance being the necessary condition, what is measured is similarity and difference that might indicate nearness or farness. Yet *resonance* does not project the ideal of a unified work. Rather, it allows for the combination of resonances to, if you will, suggest a larger symphony of versions of a work, playing off each other, without suggesting any one iteration is more valuable than another. It only figures a relationship between different versions that might be approached on a broader or more narrow scope, as suits the study.

In its definition, resonance bears most similarity to the river of genetic criticism or the fluidity of Bryant's fluid text, but it does not necessarily describe a continuity nor discrete forms. Thus, with *resonance*, I attempt to further articulate and reorient what Bryant in his fluid-text theory refers to as the *revision code* (55). Bryant, examining the fact of revision in Herman Melville's versions of *Typee*, asserts that

The *fact* of any change necessarily implies Melville's attempt to alter his relation to his audience, to transform not just himself but his audience. And it is this *shift* in intention and the *direction* of that shift that have both a personal artistic meaning for Melville as well as a larger cultural meaning for us. These are the dimensions of any revision code (57).

While the creative process is not the primary focus of my concern, the "dimensions" that Bryant articulates in a revision code—a *shift* that has a *direction*—are. Yet movement in

a direction does not make the final link of contact. Thus, I expand from a shift in movement in a direction to a *relationship* created by the shift in movement in a direction—the relationship of resonating.

Resonance, unlike other means of describing textual variation, is relational, just as republication is. An object resonates *with* something at a frequency. A republication requires a publication that comes before it, but it cannot erase that prior publication. The object produced is out there, present in the world, and has made a greater or lesser impact in it. Thus, what is described here is not merely revision: revision may overwrite and erase what has come before, but republication can only act backwards to perhaps reorient or reinforce what has come before. It cannot remove the past. To apply the term to literary publications, resonance places all iterations of a work in relation to each other and with their contexts. Two publications might resonate with each other on themes of violence but be dissonant on evolutionary themes. One publication may have more terminology that resonates with the contemporary arguments of a coterie audience, while a different publication resonates more strongly with the concerns of a mass public. Based on circulation or popularity, the new note struck might play more loudly than what has come before, or it may play in harmony to reinforce it, but republication will always be an act of *layering* with what already exists.

The idea in resonance of sound-as-movement functions here as a theoretical apparatus to understand variations between works as imparting meaning at different scales. Each time a work is republished, the new publication in some way adds to or adjusts what comes before. This happens to a greater degree in republications that demonstrate large revisions than with those that produce the same text, but even when the same material is

produced—when Penguin releases, yet again, another mass market version of *Great Expectations*—these new copies reiterate and reinforce the note that has been struck by all the imprints before: this book is a classic, worth reading, worth keeping in circulation. The publication of *Orlando* in a set of uniform editions of Virginia Woolf’s works, after all, did not change its words, but it did help the novel claim status as a permanent work to be remembered (Willis 156). Republication added to and adjusted what *Orlando* meant by putting a new publication into a relationship with its past editions, the public that read it, and Woolf’s other works.

Resonance, then, is simply a description of the frequencies something might sound, and how those frequencies relate to other waves struck by other publications. Thus, by looking at works as existing in the form of resonances, I open the publications to be put into a conversation with each other. Further, I argue that the resonance of a publication in relation to a different iteration is inherently related to the resonance struck between any iteration and its social context. In other words, publication creates a relationship with all other iterations that is also a social relationship. Republication allows a work to produce a new yet similar resonance to its last publication: it develops a relationship between the new publication, its previous publications, and its audience, so that the work itself takes on an altered note in the public sphere.

### iii. Chapter Summaries

In my first chapter, I discuss a case of republication from magazine to book with the 1890 *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* and the 1891 Ward, Lock, & Co. book publications of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I contextualize these republications against



their reception histories, using quantitative analysis of the available body of reviews to demonstrate the key themes and subjects in magazine version's reviewers' responses and how these related to their moral judgements. I show how revisions between versions alter the resonances of the work in relation to these themes and compare changes to the resonances to the book's reviewers. I argue that while our main textual inheritance has been the 1891 version, our main mythological inheritance has been the narrative around *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that derived from responses that align with 1890 version.

In my second chapter, I examine a book-to-book republication in the 1945 and 1960 publications of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. I examine the role of nostalgia, a major theme of the novel, in relation to the distance between the moments of publication. Showing how revisions to the novel affect its framing of nostalgia and the discovery of faith, I argue that the new resonances in these themes express new relations to nostalgia that develop from republication itself.

In my third chapter, I examine republications from magazine articles and conference presentations that were then gathered into a collection of essays: Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984). Examining differences in bibliographic codes and revision, I show how resonances with surrounding conversations from the article and conference publications are reduced and resonances with the larger body of Lorde's work are increased. I argue for the importance of such publications of collections in creating an author function that steps outside of temporally bound conversations and into a more enduring publication record.

Finally, in my fourth chapter, I examine the complications that arise around publication when digital-born works are considered, using the print publication and digital porting of Andrew Hussie's *Homestuck*. Pairing republication with a theory of adaptation, I follow the metafictional narrative of *Homestuck* and examine how digital interfaces can be printed in manners that might be at times be described as changes to bibliographic codes and at others as adaptation by discussing the modes of engagement available digitally and in print. I examine the similarity between print republication and the process of digitally porting a work as older technology becomes obsolete. I also examine how digital serialization differs from print serialization and how some elements of serialization are remediated through author notes in the print version, as well as the unique opportunities for revision of already-published serial units. I discuss how intersections between republication and adaptation raise particularly pronounced questions around accessibility, survivability, and fidelity.

## A Final Note

Before we start, I reiterate here that the effect on resonances can be slight. In my dissertation, I cover instances of republication that are also instances of revision. These cases involve obvious differences that allow us to tease out what occurs in more dramatic cases of republication. But publishing a textually and even bibliographically identical new iteration is also republication; indeed, new, textually identical editions of a text are the most common form of republication. This too must have consequences for how we receive works simply because putting any iteration of a work into the public is a new socialization of the work: it is packaged and sold to specific audiences in specific ways and picked up and interpreted by audiences in potentially different ways than intended,

all of which affects how the work is framed in the larger culture. Jorge Luis Borges imagines that Pierre Menard's *Don Quixote* is identical to Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, yet it is different because of the circumstances of its creation:

The text of Cervantes and that of Menard are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More ambiguous, his detractors will say; but ambiguity is a richness.) It is a revelation to compare the *Don Quixote* of Menard with that of Cervantes. (Borges 52)

I theorize republication as an event that inevitably and always has consequences for a work's resonances because the circumstances of publication will always change. The dramatic cases covered in this dissertation are not the most common form that republication takes. Rather, the overtness of these cases provides a strong foundation on which to take these first steps.

## Chapter 1

### 1 Gene, Genre: Reception and Interpretive Resonances of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published in fourteen chapters in the UK and US version of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890, then again in 1891 as a twenty-chapter book published by Ward, Lock, & Co, has a storied textual history of published versions dramatically revised, very possibly in response to public reception. But to date, no scholarship has examined a large body of 1890 reviews for specific subjects and themes, considered revisions in this context, or attempted to determine if these revisions affected the 1891 reception of the book version. In this chapter I use a larger body of reviews than previously available to scholars to examine the changing resonances in the work and their consequences on republication.

First, I consider the reviews of the 1890 edition as a reception event. Gathering a large body of reviews for reference, I develop a mixed-methods study of the trends and causes of specific kinds of themes and judgements from reviewers of 1890 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. With this information as a guiding point, I consider the textual and material differences between 1890 and 1891 versions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and demonstrate how the revisions changed the story's resonances with specific themes raised by reviewers. I then use the same mixed-methods analysis on reviews of the 1891 version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to assess whether the shifted resonances had any consequences in the second publication. Finally, I add the context of *The Picture of*

*Dorian Gray*'s afterlife and briefly discuss how our scholarly inheritances have been shaped by these publication events.

## 1.1 The Editions of *Dorian Gray*

While the magazine publishers were apparently secretive about their circulation details, it seems that 5000 copies of the *Lippincott*'s edition were published in the UK, while the US circulation numbers were certainly far less than the 100 000 that Lippincott claimed in conversation with Ward, Lock, & Co. (Frankel, Textual Introduction 59). That said, the issue did appear to have wide circulation and certainly had a major reception in the press.

The 1891 book version was published in April/May with 1000 copies of a crown octavo at 6 shillings each<sup>9</sup> (Bristow, Introduction [2005] xxi). This publication was heavily revised, and Wilde likely developed the 1891 edition not from his own original typescript or manuscripts, as these were never returned to him, but from offprints of the *Lippincott*'s magazine version (Frankel, Textual Introduction 43).

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<sup>9</sup> There was, arguably, a third publication event: 250 quarto volumes advertised as 'Editions de Luxe,' numbered and signed, at a guinea each published towards the end of July (Lawler, *An Enquiry* 17). These used the same stereotype plates as the crown octavo volumes and appeared to have the same cover, and so they are the same "version" by most textual studies standards. But the distance in time indicates that, by our working definition, while they were released close together in time, the two novel versions were separate publication events aimed at different audiences. Yet an examination of the reviews suggests that the public treated the release of these versions as the same event: no distinction between them appeared to be made between them by commentators. It is possible that to publishers, these editions were two separate events, while to the public, they were one event. Because of the lack of differentiation in public response and the extreme similarity between versions, I will take the first, crown octavo versions as my point of comparison and reference differences in relation to the quarto version as relevant.

Bristow argues that the Ward, Lock, & Co. edition's further revisions were intended to answer the strong moral criticism of the original publication in the press (Introduction [2005] xlix), which is possible. What is certain is that these revisions had the practical purpose of selling copies. In a letter to Wilde, George Lock notes that Wilde had proposed that he would "add to the story so as to counteract any damage [that] may be done by it being always on sale at I/- [one shilling] as it first appeared in *Lippincott*" (Mason, *Bibliography* 105), and the addition of six chapters indicates a reasonable effort to develop a novel that is different enough from its magazine run to push sales.

Much argument has been made over which version is superior, with authorial autonomy (and therefore artistic integrity) often the key question of the discussion.<sup>10</sup> Among early critics, Leonard Ingleby in 1907 noted that additional chapters were added to the 1891 edition because writers must "submit to the inexorable demands of publishers who measure work not by its merit but by a footrule" (317)<sup>11</sup> and went on to say that the quality of the epigrams is "all the more notable when we remember that the story was

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<sup>10</sup> Even Nicholas Frankel's argument for his 2011 publication of the typescript gestures towards this argument by noting that Wilde had no opportunity to give his authority to changes introduced by James Stoddart (and other hands) prior to magazine publication (General Introduction 21) and that he lacked access to his original typescript and so had no option but to work from the *Lippincott*'s text, even setting aside social pressures produced by the publication event itself (Textual Introduction 42–3).

<sup>11</sup> This claim does not entirely accurately reflect Lock's letter on the added material. While Lock began the letter with "Perhaps you will pardon my making a suggestion it is for you to determine as to its value," he says it was *Wilde* who suggested the additional material to promote sales ("You wisely propose to add to the story..."). Lock's "suggestion" likely refers instead to his request that Wilde change the ending for more moralistic effects and increase Lord Henry's presence ("Could you not make Dorian live longer with the face of the picture transferred to himself, and depict the misery in which he ends his days by suicide or repents and becomes a better character. Lord Henry too goes off the scene very quickly. Could not he also have a little longer and you could make an excellent contrast between the deaths of the two men"). See Mason, *Bibliography* 105. Ingleby's misreading is not unique; Guy and Small also claim that the additional material was Lock's suggestion rather than Wilde's (*Profession* 59).

written in a hurry, when the author was hard pressed for money, is more or less a piece of hack work, and that whole pages were written in at the behest of the publisher” (317).

Arguably Ingleby’s critiques could apply to the 1890 version as well, but we can see the clear link between Ingleby’s comment on publishers demanding extra words for the 1891 edition and this comment that publisher demands will produce hack work and undermine artistic creativity.

In contrast, Donald Lawler considers the 1891 version the “more subtle, complex, and artistic” text (“A Note on the Texts” xii) and puts it first in his two-text Norton Critical Edition. In his analysis of differences in *An Enquiry Into Oscar Wilde’s Revisions of The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he asserts that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* evolved through revisions that increasingly sublimated its moral. For Lawler, it is an increasing suppression of morality in the work that expresses the development of Wilde’s artistic intention.

Yet Nicholas Frankel sees the very opposite effect. Examining a series of changes towards the end of the novel, Frankel asserts that ambiguity in the magazine version regarding Dorian’s feelings as he stabs his picture made some reviewers question whether or not Wilde endorsed Dorian’s lifestyle; he argues that Wilde’s revisions “eliminat[e] hints of remorse on Dorian’s part” and so increase “the reader’s dissociation with [Dorian], eliminating lingering shreds of sympathy that the reader might still have,” creating a “straightforward, morally conventional reading” (General Introduction 60–61n23). Frankel views the 1891 Dorian as “a less sympathetic and complex figure” and frames the revisions that accomplished this as an attempt to silence the critics. (30).

Where Lawler sees a *decrease* of moral didacticism as an expression of Wilde’s artistic

vision and intention, Frankel detects the violation of Wilde's artistic integrity through social pressure that encouraged an *increase* in a simplistic morality.

I would like to bring a new lens to this question of moral interpretation that does not engage with the question of artistic integrity.<sup>12</sup> Rather, I would like to engage with the question of the texts' shifting resonances with discourses raised by reviewers during the first publication's reception.

## 1.2 *Dorian's* First Reception

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* had a contentious reception in the contemporary press. Many in the British press denounced it; reviewers were wary of the subject matter it suggested and questioned the style. The idea of an outraged Victorian public, scandalized by Wilde's work—"the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass (Wilde, *Picture* 3 [Norton (1890)])—became part of the "general mythology" (Guy and Small, *Textual Condition* 34) that "shaped reader expectations" (Gillespie, *The Picture* 24) of the novel long after initial reception. But while reception of the novel is discussed in most introductions to the work or summaries of Wilde's life, as with all mythology and legend, there is space for error and misinterpretation.

One part of the work's legend involves its supposed removal from bookstalls. When noting the hostile reaction of the British press, scholars will often observe that W. H. Smith & Son—which had a monopoly on station bookstalls in Britain (Robbins 91)—

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<sup>12</sup> My discussion of the reception history may lend itself to discussions of artistic integrity, but my interest is not on the integrity of the work but the tracing of specific conceptual resonances through editions and the historical record.



refused to stock the July issue of *Lippincott* due to the novel's bad reputation in the press (Guy and Small, *Profession* 56; Bristow, "Biographies" 19; Raby 165). Yet Satoru Fukamachi has demonstrated that we have no direct evidence that W.H. Smith & Son took this action and good reason to believe that they never did. For example, there is no contemporary reference to the removal as actually having happened, either in newspapers at the time or at Wilde's first trial where the magazine and novel's public receptions were under discussion. The letter itself only refers to an "intimation" that the magazine should be removed, not a confirmation that it was (3). While the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, there is enough absence to at least cast doubt on what has been taken as fact, especially supported by the absence of comments from newspapers like *The Scots Observer* (6 September 1890) and *The Whirlwind* (27 September 1890) that were eager to comment on the accusations of plagiarism and how the American paper *The Newsdealer* bemoaned that good literary works were being seized while publishers of "filth" like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* remain free (September 1890). The idea of the magazine's removal from bookstalls, while it fits the legend of *Dorian* as widely controversial and condemned, is less certainty than a questionable possibility.

Differences in British and American reception of the magazine edition are also often noted by scholars. Scholars will comment that the magazine was received poorly in Britain, while either omitting reference to American reception or noting it as less hostile or even overwhelmingly positive (Bristow, Introduction [2005] xii; Gillespie, *Branding* 78; Gillespie, *The Picture* 21). Yet Thomas Vranken finds multiple American reviews that were alert to and critical of the homosexual undertones of the novel. He argues that the idea that Americans were positive towards the magazine publication is a result of

Stuart Mason's *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality: A Defence of The Picture of Dorian Gray*—once the most accessible source of reviews on the novel—only giving a sample of two American reviews, both defending the novel, and both published in *Lippincott's*.

These complications in the “mythology” of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* remind us of two important things about reception history: first, that the past can only be *constructed*, never *reconstructed*, just as when we are attempting to create textual editions (Bryant, *Fluid* 37); and second, that mythology not fully grounded in fact can still be vital for our understanding of a work in its social resonances, for it shapes what Michael Patrick Gillespie calls the “brand” through which a work might be interpreted (*Branding*). With that in mind, let us turn to the reviews.

### 1.2.1 Review Breakdown

Scholars discussing the reception of the novel have generally framed the conversation in terms of negative and positive reviews, the debate around morality, and/or reviewers' attention to the potentially illicit sexual themes of the work.<sup>13</sup> No scholarship to date has attempted to examine a large body of contemporary reviews and comments on the work in terms of the kinds of positive and negative judgements made, the themes and subjects of discussion, and how these themes and subjects of discussion are located. This gives us a better overview of how the novel was assessed, in relation to what ideas the assessments occurred, and how these ideas may have been discussed.

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<sup>13</sup> For scholarship on the tone and tenor of the reception of *Dorian Gray*, see for example Frankel, General Introduction; Bristow, Introduction [2008]; Gillespie, *Branding*; Vranken; Fukamachi.

To assemble a body of reviews for assessment, I first referenced Stuart Mason's *Art and Morality*, which reprints multiple articles on the debate and has, as noted above, been a major touchstone for Wilde scholars since its publication more than a century ago. Second, I searched through Gale's online database of *British Library Newspapers* and *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers*, the *British Newspaper Archives*, *America's Historical Newspapers*, and the *HathiTrust Digital Library* for references to "Dorian Gray" between the years of 1890 and 1891. I checked Mason's transcription of reviews against those I found in the online archives and transcribed all reviews or other comments relevant to reception history. Cases where one newspaper had copied from another were omitted, as were the parodies in *Punch* where Dorian Gray was a character. While I was able to find all the *Daily Chronicle* reviews cited in Mason, I could not find several of the American reviews cited by Vranken. My collection of reviews and comments is therefore not complete, but it is larger than any known body of reviews available at the time of this writing.

Afterward, I organized reviews by country of origin and object of comment (the magazine or the novel). I assessed each review on two axes of judgement: 1) whether the review described the novel as well written, badly written, of mixed writing, or gave no comment, and 2) whether the novel was described as moral, immoral, of mixed morals, or no comment. This required some level of inference (e.g., while calling the book "sickly" and "poisonous" to readers is not an explicit condemnation of morality, "immoral" seems most likely). Full reviews can be found under Appendi for comparison.

Second, I coded each review or comment with tags based on recurring subjects of discussion. Some subjects were divided into two categories based on whether the subject

was ascribed to characters/events in the novel or to the novel generally/the author. Thus, there is a tag *criminality (character/event)* and a tag *criminality (novel/author)* to describe the difference between, for example, discussing Dorian committing murder and discussing whether Wilde should be prosecuted for the novel. I have included a table for British and American reviews based on the above coding of data (see Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1. British reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine edition.**

Name	Moral Judgement	Artistic Judgement	Subjects/Themes
Pall Mall Gazette 20.06	Mixed	Mixed	French, Romance, dialogue/epigrams, gender/sexual transgression (character/event), affect: revulsion, silver fork, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), unnaturalness/ativism (character/event), unnaturalness/ativism (novel/author)
The Globe 24.06	None	Mixed	Romance, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), silver fork, affect: tediousness
Lancashire 27.06	None	Negative	dialogue/epigrams, public debate
Newcastle 30.06	None	None	public debate
Watford Observer 28.06	Immoral	Negative	French, criminality (character/event), criminality (novel/author), gender/sexual transgression (character/event), religious themes (character/event), affect: revulsion, romance
Liverpool Mercury 02.07	None	Mixed	aestheticism, prose, affect: interest
Sheffield Daily Telegraph 04.07	Immoral	Negative	gender/sexual transgression (character/event), prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
Gloucester 05.07	None	None	public debate
Pall Mall Gazette 05.07	Mixed	None	Romance
Western Daily Press 05.07	Moral	Mixed	aesthetic objects (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
The Speaker 05.07	Moral	Mixed	Romance, dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), affect: tediousness, affect: interest
Weekly Dispatch (London) 6.07	None	Negative	prose, affect: revulsion
Weekly Dispatch 6.07	Immoral	Negative	religious themes (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
Islington Gazette 7.07	Immoral	None	Romance, criminality (character/event), religious themes (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
York Herald 7.07	None	None	public debate

<b>Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser 8.07</b>	Moral	Mixed	aestheticism, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, silver fork
<b>Eastern Morning News 9.07</b>	Mixed	Negative	dialogue/epigrams, prose, affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
<b>The Banbury Advertiser 10.07</b>	Immoral	None	Romance, affect: revulsion
<b>The Bath Chronicle 10.07</b>	Immoral	Negative	unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), affect: revulsion
<b>The Carlisle Journal 11.07</b>	Moral	Mixed	Romance, aestheticism, dialogue/epigrams, public debate, religious themes (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), affect: tediousness, affect: interest
<b>Supplement to the Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle 12.07</b>	None	Positive	aestheticism, public debate, unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author)
<b>The Graphic 12.07</b>	None	Mixed	gender/sexual transgression (character/event), prose
<b>Lancaster Gazette 12.07</b>	None	Positive	prose, affect: interest
<b>Light 12.07</b>	Moral	None	Romance, aestheticism, criminality (character/event), gender/sexual transgression (character/event), religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), affect: interest
<b>Aberdeen Press and Journal 14.07</b>	Immoral	Mixed	aesthetic objects (character/event), aestheticism, dialogue/epigrams, gender/sexual transgression (character/event), affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
<b>Northampton Mercury 18.07</b>	None	Positive	aestheticism, dialogue/epigrams, prose, affect: interest
<b>The South Wales Times and Star of Gwent 18.07</b>	None	Positive	public debate
<b>Punch 19.07</b>	Immoral	Negative	French, Romance, aesthetic objects (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), silver fork, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
<b>Eastern Daily Press 22.07</b>	Immoral	Mixed	Romance, dialogue/epigrams, prose, affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
<b>Glasgow Evening Post 05.08</b>	None	Mixed	aestheticism, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, religious themes (character/event), affect: revulsion
<b>Truth 21.08</b>	None	Negative	public debate
<b>The Whirlwind 27.09</b>	Immoral	Negative	French, Romance, plagiarism
<b>St. James's Gazette 24.06</b>	Immoral	Negative	French, criminality (character/event), criminality (novel/author), gender/sexual transgression (character/event), religious themes (character/event), affect: revulsion, silver fork, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), affect: tediousness, Romance
<b>St. James's Gazette 6.09</b>	None	Negative	French, plagiarism
<b>St. James's Gazette 24.09</b>	None	Negative	affect: revulsion
<b>The Daily Chronicle 30.06</b>	Immoral	Negative	French, criminality (character/event), gender/sexual transgression (character/event), gender/sexual transgression (novel/author), religious themes (character/event), affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author), affect: tediousness

Canterbury Journal and Farmers' Gazette 13.09	None	Mixed	Romance, prose, public debate, affect: tediousness
Scots Observer 05.07	Immoral	Positive	criminality (character/event), criminality (novel/author), prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author), affect: interest
Scots Observer 12.07	Immoral	Positive	affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
Scots Observer 19.07 (CW)	Moral	Negative	aesthetic objects (character/event), criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, public debate, unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), affect: tediousness
Scots Observer 09.08 (TEB)	Moral	Negative	gender/sexual transgression (novel/author), affect: revulsion, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), Romance
The Scots Observer 23.08 (WW)	None	Negative	public debate, affect: tediousness
The Scots Observer 6.09	Immoral	Negative	French, Romance, plagiarism, silver fork
St. James's Gazette 28.06	Immoral	Negative	Romance, criminality (novel/author), affect: revulsion, affect: tediousness, public debate

**Table 2. US reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version**

Name	Moral Judgement	Artistic Judgement	Subjects/Themes
Notes on New Remedies 07	None	Positive	aestheticism, prose, affect: interest
The Philadelphia Inquirer 30.07	None	Positive	Romance, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, public debate, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), affect: interest
Daily Inter Ocean 05.07	None	Positive	prose, affect: revulsion, unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author), affect: interest
Chicago Daily Tribune 06.07	Mixed	Mixed	Romance, aestheticism, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, gender/sexual transgression (character/event), prose, religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author)
Boston Daily Advertiser 09.07	None	Negative	Romance
The North American 16.07	Immoral	Mixed	Romance, aestheticism, criminality (novel/author), dialogue/epigrams, prose, public debate, unnaturalness/atavism (character/event), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author)
Yenowine's Illustrated News 24.08	None	Positive	aestheticism, dialogue/epigrams
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine 09 (AHW)	Moral	Positive	French, Romance, aesthetic objects (character/event), criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author)
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine 09 (JH)	Moral	Positive	French, Romance, aesthetic objects (character/event), aestheticism, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author), silver fork, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), affect: interest

The Newsdealer 09	Immoral	None	criminality (novel/author), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author)
Sunday School Times 13.09	None	Mixed	criminality (character/event), religious themes (character/event)
The Critic 04.10	None	Negative	aestheticism, plagiarism
Chicago Daily Tribune 05.10	None	Mixed	French, plagiarism, public debate, Romance
Dallas Morning News 15.02 (1891)	Immoral	Mixed	aestheticism, gender/sexual transgression (novel/author), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), affect: revulsion

Among the different subjects and themes, several key categories emerged:

1. Genre. In both Britain and the United States, the story was frequently compared to works by other authors or categorized under genre. The three genres that emerged were as follows:
  - a. *Romance*, as in fantastical, sensational, unrealistic fiction. Sometimes, the novel was specifically called a romance, but reviewers also made this genre assessment indirectly through references to Robert Louis Stevenson, specifically his *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and a few to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and other writers in the tradition of the sensational or unreal.
  - b. *Silver fork* fiction, primarily through references to Ouida or the “superfine” school; and
  - c. *French* fiction. At times, these were references to authors associated with the Decadent movement, like Huysmans, Gautier, and Bouret, but Balzac was also often named.
2. Aesthetic concerns, which were mostly comments on the *prose* or the *epigrams/dialogue*.
3. Controversy surrounding the publication, including reference to the *public debate* and discussion over *plagiarism* in the novel.

4. The language of degeneration, primarily focused on *unhealthiness/uncleanliness* and *unnaturalness/atavism*, but also including *criminality* and *gender/sexual transgression*.<sup>14</sup>
5. Adjacent to, but not wholly overlapping with, the language of degeneration, were discussion of *religion themes* in the novel, either that of Dorian's specific sins and New Paganism or of the possible spiritual effects of the novel.
6. Some element of reviewer affect was often discussed. This was generally *affect: revulsion*, *affect: tediousness*, or *affect: interest*.
7. Finally, aestheticism was addressed either in the general form of the *aestheticism* of Oscar Wilde himself or in referencing the descriptions of *aesthetic objects* in the novel.

**Table 3. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement.**

	BRITISH REVIEWERS	AMERICAN REVIEWERS	TOTAL
<b>IMMORAL</b>	16	3	19
<b>MIXED</b>	3	1	4
<b>MORAL</b>	7	2	9
<b>NONE</b>	18	8	26
<b>TOTAL</b>	44	14	58

The result in relation to the judgements speaks to a largely mixed reception for both editions of the novel in both the United States and Britain. Some praised its art and condemned its morality; others condemned its art and praised its morality; plenty

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<sup>14</sup> The references to French and romance literature both also have associations with degeneration; many of the French novelists named were known as Decadent authors, and most of the references to romance literature were specifically to Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a novel with a degeneration narrative. However, I distinguish the most direct references to degeneration theory from associational references, such as through genre, to avoid everything falling into the degeneration's often all-encompassing umbrella.



condemned or praised both. A few reviews were entirely negative or positive, but most negative reviews noted at least one strong point to the novel, while most positive reviews commented on some flaws. Of 44 distinct British reviews or comments on the magazine version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, seven deemed it moral (15.91%), 16 immoral (36.36%), three of mixed morality (calling the morality “skin deep” [*Pall Mall Gazette*, “Mr. Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray” 3]; calling it “mixed” [*Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 July]; and stating that while they believed Wilde in saying it had a moral aim they did not think it would have a “wholesome effect” on the ordinary reader [*Eastern Morning News*, 7 July]) (6.82%), and 18 offered no explicit moral judgement (40.9%). Of the 14 American reviews, two found it moral (14.29%), three found it immoral (21.43%), one found the moral mixed (7.14%), and eight abstained from any moral judgement (57.14%).<sup>15</sup> While the American reviewers appeared to be more likely to abstain from overt judgement than condemn, the numbers are closer than is generally suggested, especially in those who found it moral or mixed (see Table 3).

Next is the question of themes. The general subjects and themes in reviews rarely in and of themselves determined whether a reviewer considered *Dorian Gray* to be moral or immoral. But, as different themes, they suggest interpretive lenses: frameworks of genre or subject matter that guide a reading. As Nils Clausson argues,

*What* a text means is inseparable from *how* it is read, and since we must always read a text *as something*, genre often asserts itself as a set of instructions, implicit or explicit, on how to read a text. ... *Dorian Gray* has always provoked

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<sup>15</sup> Although this cannot be considered comprehensive. See again Vranken.

contradictory interpretations, but underlying the disagreements about the work's meaning there has persisted a more fundamental debate about what *kind* of novel it should be read *as*. This debate is discernable in the early reviews, though somewhat obscured by the hysteria over the novel's alleged immorality. (339–40)

Clausson observes that those who read the novel in the context of French Decadent literature condemned it, while those who read it in the genre of a parable or moral fable endorsed it. But as a larger overview of the subjects treated by reviews will show, the result of interpretive lenses used by reviewers was more complicated. Below, I break down the major overarching lens of degeneration theory and two genres related to degenerationist ideas: French Decadent literature and Gothic parables.

### 1.2.2 Degeneration Theory

Degeneration theory is rooted in an attempt to explain differences between varieties of species—particularly humans—as “degeneration” into inferior “races” as a result of the influence of environments (Stepan 97). By the *fin-de-siècle*, degeneration theory was a popular subject of discussion and debate and both a biological and social theory of decay (Karschay 11). Degeneration was thought of as both “to lose the properties of the genus, to decline to a lower type” and “to lose the generative force, the force that through the green fuse drives the flower” (Chamberlin and Gilman ix); Bénédict Augustin Morel, considered the founder of the theory, considered degeneration “a pathological deviation from an original type” (qtd in Karschay 12). At times, it was framed as the inevitable dark side of progress, the consequence of civilization, or rather “hypercivilization” (Nye 63), even as it was also associated in the primitive and uncivilized (Stepan 98). It was

associated with geniuses and artists as much as idiots, between which rested the “normal” people of society (Karschay 3). The result of particular climates (Stepan 103), or crowded and unsanitary conditions, particularly urban settings (Nye 65), degeneration created the criminal, the addict, the diseased (Nye 60), the mentally ill (Nye 66), the unnatural (Chamberlin and Gilman ix), “lower” (non-European) races (Stepan 112), and, often especially, the sexual and gender deviant (Gilman 72). It was the result of a “deficient biological makeup” that was also a contagious threat to the rest of the population (Karschay 2). Racial degeneration theory warned of the degeneration that supposedly came from crossing racial boundaries and allowing certain groups out of their “proper” places, and the degenerate were considered “‘races apart,’ interacting with and creating degenerate spaces near at home” (Stepan 98). Thus, degeneration was both created by “problems” with hygiene and climate and in itself a threat to public health, as degeneration caused by “morbid” conditions could then be spread to otherwise healthy citizens. It was also understood as heritable in a Lamarckian sense (Nye 50–1) and increased over generations from bad to worse (64), causing evolved people to degenerate back into the animal and primitive. Accordingly, sexual mixing between groups, especially ethnic groups but also classes, was a threat, as the mixing of races and classes was deemed “unnatural” and perpetuated degeneration in the stock (Stepan 105). In brief, degeneration theory was nebulous enough to wrap around everything non-normative and name it unhealthy, unclean, unnatural, and regressive.

Wilde had been connected to degeneration theory even during his lifetime. Max Nordau’s two-volume *Entartung* (1892–3), published in 1895 in English as *Degeneration*, made an attack on what Nordau viewed as degenerate art. This included the French Decadents like

Huysmans and Zola, but he saw the English Aesthetics as of the same school and singled out Wilde for his behaviour, dress, and literary criticism. Wilde himself would later petition for an early release from prison on the basis that his “sexual madness” was one of the “diseases to be cured” mentioned in the works of “Lombroso and Nordau” (qtd in Karschay 1). In terms of sexual and gender transgression, Irishness, artistic and intellectual ability, individuality, and, of course, criminality, Wilde was easily folded into degeneration theory’s conception of the unnatural, unhealthy, and unacceptable non-normative Other.

Literary scholars, too, have been attendant to the links between degeneration theory and Wilde, and specifically *Dorian Gray*.<sup>16</sup> However, while scholars working with the novel’s reception history have observed, for example, the “references to unhealthiness, insanity, uncleanness, and ‘medico-legal interest’ as coded imputations of homosexuality” from reviewers (Frankel, General Introduction 7) and that *Dorian Gray* was attacked with degenerationist language (Morris 527–528), no research has analyzed degenerationist language in the reviews nor how it operates in relation to judgements to the work. Doing so allows us to understand the objections to homosexuality and other “vices” in the context of broader social fears of contaminating degeneration.

**Table 4. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement and degeneration themes.**

<b>DEGENERATION (CHARACTER/EVENT)</b>	<b>DEGENERATION (NOVEL/AUTHOR)</b>	<b>AFFECT: REVULSION</b>
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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Clausson; Karschay; Mighall; Morris.

	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>
<b>IMMORAL</b>	9	1	10	11	3	14	9	1	10
<b>MIXED</b>	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	0	2
<b>MORAL</b>	7	2	9	1	0	1	1	0	1
<b>NONE</b>	3	3	6	1	1	2	3	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	20	7	27	15	5	20	15	2	17

In the 16 British and three American reviews or comments that deemed the novel immoral, the language of degeneration is near-ubiquitous (84.21% of reviews). It was also a common theme among the three British and one American review that assessed the novel as “mixed” in morality (75%), as they generally made it clear that they saw possible moral surfaces or intentions but felt that the execution produced an overall immoral book. Among British reviewers who deemed it immoral or of mixed morality, combined, 12 reviews brought up unhealthiness/uncleanness (63.15%), three brought up unnaturalness/atavism (15.79%), six brought up gender/sexual transgression (31.57%), and six brought up criminality (31.57%). Of the five British reviews deeming the novel immoral that addressed none of the above, two described an affect of revulsion (40%), which was also common among the reviews that condemned the novel in terms of degeneration (of the 16 American and British reviews that condemned the novel for degeneration, 14 [87.5%] expressed some form of revulsion). The other three reviews, which did not discuss either revulsion or degeneration but deemed the novel immoral, were primarily focused on questions of influence, either directly addressing the plagiarism debate or, in the case of *Pall Mall Gazette*’s 5 July review, comparing the novel to both Stevenson and Hawthorne and suggesting that Hawthorne’s moral in “Prophetic Pictures” is “less mixed” than that of *Dorian Gray*. Similarly, two of the three American reviews that called the novel immoral referenced unhealthiness/uncleanness (66.67%), two mentioned criminality (66.67%), one gender/sexual transgression

(33.33%), and one unnaturalness/atavism (33.33%), while the single mixed review (with the same concept of “mixed” as the British) mentioned all three discourses of degeneration. In total, four of four American reviewers who criticized the novel’s morality (deeming it immoral or mixed) discussed degeneration in some manner (though only one of these four expressed an affect of revulsion [25%]).

Moral condemnation, then, was common among reviewers that connected the novel to themes of degeneration. But these themes were also prevalent in reviewers who assessed the novel as moral. Nine British and American reviewers total considered the novel outright moral, and of these, every single one also brought up some form of degeneration. The only reviewers where the majority did not address degeneration were those who did not give any explicit moral judgement. Only seven of these 26 “neutral” reviewers (26.92%) mentioned any kind of degeneration, and only four (15.38%) mentioned revulsion.

What seems to mark the difference in moral judgement is where reviewers and commentators *located* the degeneracy: in the characters and events of the novel, or in the atmosphere of the novel and the tendencies of the author. In terms of numbers, of the 23 people who found the novel immoral or of mixed morality, 17 (73.91%) connected used degeneration language for the author or the novel, while of those nine who found it moral, only one (11.11%) connected degeneration to the novel or author, and only two (7.69%) of the 26 who gave no judgement made that link.

An examination of the language used by reviewers helps clarify the nature of comments on degeneracy. As the reviewer for *The Carlisle Journal* noted in its “July Magazines”

postings, “The verdict pronounced upon [the novel] seems to differ according to the estimate which the different critics have formed of the personality of the author” (6). There was no debate over whether or not Dorian himself was degenerate: the laudatory reviewer in *Light* who claimed that “the lesson taught by Mr. Oscar Wilde’s powerful story is of the highest spiritual import” (Nizida 332) *also* noted Dorian’s “animal” descent (331), his “madness” (332), and “the gaunt ugliness of crime” (332), just as the *Daily Chronicle* reviewer who deemed it immoral noted that in the novel, “[m]an is half angel and half ape” (qtd in Mason, *Art and Morality* 55) and cites “the loveliness that endeared youth of his odious type to the paralytic patricians of the Lower Empire” (56). They agreed: Dorian was atavistic and criminal. But the *Daily Chronicle* reviewer extended that sense of degeneration out into the book in reality, claiming that “the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” (55), while ‘Nizida’ claims that the atmosphere falls short of being poisonous to the reader:

The same subtle, spiritual effect of the *aura of evil* flows out from the book—especially at those moments when Dorian is contemplating the image of his soul’s corruption, not, in this instance, that the evil so powerfully felt poisons the mind as poor Dorian was poisoned for life by his French novel; but one gets a feeling of painful horror, and sickening disgust, it is not easy to shake off. (332).

While ‘Nizida’ deemed the novel safe, reviewers who condemned the novel described it as a contaminating object in itself with the same degenerationist language used to discuss Dorian. The reviewer in *The Pall Mall Gazette* claimed that Wilde “plunges us in a sickly atmosphere” and into “the hothouse of over civilization, amid exotic and perverted

forms” (“Mr Oscar Wilde’s ‘Dorian Gray’” 3); the reviewer in *The Eastern Morning News* noted that “[i]ts atmosphere and tone are generally disagreeable, and, though we are willing to believe (on Mr Oscar Wilde’s word) that it has a moral aim, it will not for the ordinary reader have a wholesome effect” (“The July Magazines (Second Notice)” 2), suggesting that intent could not erase a miasmatic quality of degeneration in it; the reviewer in *Punch* noted “There is indeed more of ‘poison’ than of ‘perfection’ in Dorian Gray” and rejects “the loathly ‘leperous distilment’ [that] taints and spoils” the piece (Baron de Book-Worms 25); the *St. James Gazette* reviewer criticized it as that “which delights in dirtiness and confesses its delight” (24 June 1890, 4). The reviewers who found the novel repulsive considered it a source of sickness, poison, and corruption itself, in a way that reviewers who judged the novel moral did not. While the latter seemed to view the degenerative content as contained by the pages, the former seemed to view it as an atmosphere that overflows its printed vessel—a source of potential contamination.<sup>17</sup>

Importantly, among those who assessed the novel as moral, there were in fact two different varieties: those who were genuinely praising it as moral and interesting and those who considered it moral but clearly disliked it as a work, often in terms of describing revulsion or tediousness in their reading experience. In the latter case, the discourse of degeneration re-emerged through the expression of disgust, which was implied to be provoked by the degenerate content. T.E. Brown in *The Scots Observer* claims that while the novel is moral, its subject is “cloacal” and that “weaker men,

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<sup>17</sup> However, the reviewer for the *St. James Gazette*, despite considering it immoral in degenerationist terms, did not consider it a potential source of contamination: “That the story is corrupt cannot be denied; but we added, and assuredly believe, that it is not dangerous, because, as we said, it is tedious and stupid” (“Notes” 26 June 1890, 4).



flabbier men, zoppier, soakier men” than Zola (Wilde, by implication) are not able to handle such unsanitary subject matter without absorbing it, suggesting that Wilde may be exposing *himself* to risks of degeneration due to being particularly susceptible to it (T.E. Brown is the only reviewer who used degeneration language for Wilde or the novel and still deemed the novel moral) (304). Charles Whibley in an earlier issue of the same journal describes the novel as having “lots of morality and no art” due to its tediousness and Wilde’s failure to refrain “from superfluous detail and exotic sentimentality” in writing about “an avowedly delicate topic” (227), bringing us back especially to implications of degeneration through a reference to the “exotic”—possibly “exotic” in the manner of the tropical heat that degenerationists believed triggered degeneration into sexual immorality, and of course likely degenerate simply for being not English.

This expression of revulsion aligns with that expressed by more negative reviews that lacked explicit moral condemnation: The *Glasgow Evening Post*, which considered the writing mixed, notes, “Vice, murders, and suicides are not pretty reading” (“The Lorgnette” 1). *The Weekly Dispatch (London)* felt that the “tenor and tone of the story are repulsive” (“Literature” 6); a reviewer in the *Daily Inter Ocean* noted that it is “a rather grewsome story [that has] much to interest and move the reader, as well as something to repel” (“Literary” 10). But in general, reviewers who did not directly give moral judgement often were not addressing degeneration or even the repulsed affect that degeneration might summon up, instead commenting on the public debate or the prose and dialogue. The question of degeneration was most central to those works that were specifically focused on the moral (or immoral) implications of the work.

To those interested in the moral debate, it was the medico-legal language of infection, filth, poison, atavism, and unnatural and foreign influences that took centre stage in their comments and reviews. This interpretative lens guided some to read not just the events and characters of the novel as degenerate but the novel itself, compelling revulsion in those who might consider themselves among the “healthy-minded men and honest women” (“Reviews and Magazines” 181) of Britain and the United States.

### 1.2.3 French novels: Decadents and Others

Art, too, can be a source of contagion in degeneration theory, as both Nordau and Wilde suggest in different ways. Indeed, Nordau singled out the Decadents as degenerates and Wilde’s Aesthetic school as its import to England. Yet, while reviewers’ rejection of French Decadent literature has been discussed in studies of the novel’s reception,<sup>18</sup> the question of Wilde’s aesthetic inheritances from French authors, even the French Decadents, was rarely key to reviewers’ interpretations. Associations with the Decadents may have guided some interpretations, but they were not the dominant subject by which readers judged the work moral or immoral.

**Table 5. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement and French literature reference.**

	FRENCH LITERATURE		
	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>IMMORAL</b>	6	0	6
<b>MIXED</b>	1	0	1
<b>MORAL</b>	1	2	3
<b>NONE</b>	1	1	2

<sup>18</sup> See Bristow, Introduction [2005].

<b>TOTAL</b>		9	3	12
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Certainly, the French influence was not totally ignored. Nine British and three American reviews brought up French novels or novelists (20.69% of all reviews). Indeed, many of the most hostile of reviewers brought up the subject, such as the *St. James's Gazette* reviewer (Samuel Henry Jeyes) noting in disapproval that Wilde “airs his cheap research among the garbage of the French Décadents like any drivelling pedant” (3) or the *Daily Chronicle* reviewer saying it was “a tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French Décadents” (qtd in Mason, *Art and Morality* 55). The *Watford Observer* was equally hostile in asserting that Wilde would be better off “if [he] had avoided the French decadents—for I note the influence on *Dorian Gray* of M.E. Bod, whose book [Wilde] once denounced in private as too introspective” (“En Passant” 4), and the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s reviewer asserted that it was “not the half-emancipated Puritanism of Mr. Stevenson but the aesthetic paganism of the French ‘Decadents’” that inspired the tale (“Mr. Oscar Wilde's ‘Dorian Gray’” 3). This latter is a rare case, as it asserted that it is indeed the interpretive frame of the Decadent genre, chosen over the genre of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, that helped guide this reviewer to moral condemnation of the novel. The other mentions of the Decadents, however, were more often made in passing, as if the connection was just another arrow in a quiver of the degenerationist accusations to be shot at the text. In total, only seven in total of all 23 reviews that considered the novel immoral or of mixed morality addressed French novels (30.43%), which is not vastly different from the three of nine reviews that considered the novel moral that *also* brought up French literature (33.33%).

Further, while Huysmans' *À rebours* is now a common point of reference in analysis of *Dorian Gray*, of the 12 total reviews that bring up French authors, only one of the five that mention Huysmans, that in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, uses Huysmans to interpret *Dorian Gray* ("Mr. Oscar Wilde's 'Dorian Gray'" 3). The others that bring up Huysmans—three British and one American authors—only do so in the context of Wilde's potential plagiarism of his work. The moral condemnation in these cases is not for association with a Decadent author who wrote about transgressive subjects, at least not explicitly: what is morally judged is the alleged plagiarism.

Moreover, the French authors mentioned were not necessarily addressed in negative terms. In the eight reviews that discussed French influence outside of the context of plagiarism, Theophile Gautier came up in three and was twice mentioned favorably as an author who could have done a better job than Wilde did with the subject matter. *Punch's* reviewer asserted that "without Gautier's power, [Wilde] has spoilt a promising conception by clumsy unideal treatment" (Baron de Book-Worms 25), and the *St James's Gazette* reviewer who scorned the "garbage" of the Decadents still said that "Théophile Gautier could have made [the situation] romantic, entrancing, beautiful" (Jeyes 3).<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Zola and Balzac<sup>20</sup> were brought up favourably as authors with similar subject matters but whom Wilde failed to live up to. T.E. Brown in the *Scots Observer* argued

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<sup>19</sup> The third Gautier reference was in Anne Wharton's *Lippincott's* review. The purpose of this reference was to note that Wilde's work was similar in style (409).

<sup>20</sup> In Balzac's case, some or all references are likely because of his use of fantastical elements (i.e., as "romances") in his works rather than any connection to Decadent literature. For example, *La Peau de chagrin* is cited by one reviewer (Hawthorne 412), and another listed Balzac beside "Faust" (Wharton 409), suggesting both are specifically referring to Balzac's work in the genre of the fantastical, rather than his subject matter.

that Zola was a writer who could handle Wilde's subject matter better because he was himself a "strong man," as Wilde was not, one who "can lie down with his peasants in the merest swill of Priapeian abomination, and rise like a giant" without his subject matter "soak[ing] into him"—implicitly, something Wilde cannot manage, being among the "weaker men, flabbier men, zoppier, soakier men" who should not attempt such things (304). And E.J. Edwards unfavourably compared Wilde to Balzac: "When Balzac wrote of hideous vices he analyzed and dissected them so that the horror of them was maintained and the awful power of the moralist's pen was made evident" (4), something he felt Wilde did not manage to do. As with the reference to Gautier, these reviewers felt that the subject matter itself was not impossible to treat, as comparison to other French authors indicated. Rather, that it was Wilde's treatment of it—and, in T.E. Brown's opinion, Wilde's degenerate character—that made the novel an issue.

In sum, French authors were brought up as a point of comparison that provided interpretation in two different ways: either to suggest a connection in subject matter (as with the implication of degeneration in the more vitriolic connections to the Decadents or in Wharton's comparisons to Gautier) or to suggest the name of an author who could do Wilde's story better than he had. Interpretations of Wilde through the lens of the French Decadents as a group was often done in condemnation, but only in the larger context of a broad attack on the grounds of degenerative influence. In contrast, those who negatively interpreted Wilde in comparison authors like Gautier, Zola, and Balzac seemed to have a positive perspective of those authors. While these comparisons were part of a degenerationist reading of the work, or of Wilde himself, few reviewers in general

framed the link to French authors as key to their moral judgements of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

#### 1.2.4 Romance: The Gothic and the Religious Parable

No reviewer explicitly called the novel a Gothic tale; when a genre label was used, they preferred “romance,” as contrasted with realism. But when citing comparative romances, a very specific *type* of romance was often the key reference point: the Gothic narrative, and most frequently the gothic degeneration fable of Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

**Table 6. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement, romance literature references, and religious themes.**

	ROMANCE			RELIGIOUS THEMES (CHARACTER/EVENT)			RELIGIOUS THEMES (NOVEL/AUTHOR)		
	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>All</i>
<b>IMMORAL</b>	9	1	10	6	0	6	0	0	0
<b>MIXED</b>	2	1	3	0	1	1	0	1	1
<b>MORAL</b>	4	2	6	3	2	5	2	2	4
<b>NONE</b>	2	3	5	2	0	2	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	17	7	24	11	3	14	2	4	6

17 British and nine American reviewers addressed, in some way, the genre of romance (41.38% of all reviews). Of these, six British and four American reviewers directly described *Dorian Gray* as a romance (41.67% of those tagged “Romance”). Nine British and five American reviewers directly connected it to Stevenson (48.33%), either in general or with specific reference to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; five British and three American reviewers linked it to Hawthorne (33.33%), one British and two American reviewers linked it to Poe (12.5%); two British and one American reviewer linked it to

Rider Haggard (12.5%), and *Punch*, in an outlier move, made the connection to Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

Interpreting Wilde's narrative through romance was not associated with any moral judgement, although, like the use of degeneration language, it was less common among those who abstained from moral judgement. Among the nine reviewers who judged the novel moral, six associated it with romance (66.67%), 13 of the 23 who judged it immoral or mixed (i.e., mostly immoral with some gesture towards morality) mentioned romance (56.52%), and only five of the 26 who gave no moral judgement mentioned romance (19.23%). As always, understanding how this interpretive frame influenced their moral judgement requires looking directly at the material.

Of course, the Gothic can be considered a threatening genre, and "romance" has at times been viewed as a potentially corrupting force (Botting 16–17). But *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a degenerationist *moral* story—a Gothic narrative of doubles and transgression that engages with the *fin-de-siècle* degeneration theme of humanity regressing to baser forms and reveals its evil.<sup>21</sup> Its moral would seem to be clear, and reviewers on *Dorian Gray* agreed, framing Stevenson's work as a "moral tale" ("Mr. Oscar Wilde's 'Dorian Gray' 3) or "parable" (Hawthorne 413): a didactic lesson in the dangers of degeneration.

Those who made the link to Stevenson and condemned *Dorian Gray* as immoral did so similarly to those who compared Wilde unfavourably to Balzac: they suggested that a better author would have made a better execution of the story. Thus, the editor of the *St.*

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed analysis on *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a Gothic degeneration narrative and parable in relation to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, see Clausson.

*James's Gazette* declared on 28 June 1890 that “the book seems to us a feeble and ineffective attempt at a kind of allegory which, in the hands of abler writers (writers like Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Anstey, for instance) can be made striking or amusing” (“Notes” 4). The same reviewer who claimed Gautier could do better also said that “Mr. Stevenson could have made it convincing, humorous, pathetic” (Jeyes 3). The *Pall Mall Gazette* reviewer said that what Wilde “borrowed from Mr. Stevenson is simply the idea of infusing a moral lesson into a fantastic tale” but that “[*Dorian Gray*’s] morality is only skin deep” (“Mr. Oscar Wilde’s ‘Dorian Gray’”). In all the above cases, the reviewers understood *Dorian Gray* by interpreting it through Stevenson’s Gothic parable, but they considered Wilde to have failed at his own parable.

Indeed, outside of the above reviewers, those with more mixed judgements raised the suggestion that the tale may have been intended as parable or moral tale but failed at it. E.J. Edwards asserted that “[i]t is possibly Mr. Wilde’s purpose to convey a moral in his story which would be of good effect in certain aristocratic circles in England, but if that was his purpose he has no art in executing it” (4). A reviewer in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* asserted that “[t]he moral of Mr. Wilde’s book is meant to be good; at least he deals out to sin its proverbial wages. But the tone is pernicious” (“Oscar Wilde’s Romance” 26). Less charitably, *The Scots Observer*’s reviewer claimed “it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity” (“Reviews and Magazines” 181), and the *Eastern Morning News*, as noted above, said they were willing to accept Wilde’s word that it had a moral aim but did not believe it would have a moral effect (“The July Magazines



(Second Notice)” 2). The mixed nature of the judgements was rooted in interpreting the story as a failed Gothic parable.

The assessment that Wilde had failed at a moral parable was not universal. All the reviewers most often noted in *Dorian Gray*'s reception history as giving a positive reception specifically praise the story in terms of a fantastical (“romantic”) conceit that creates a parable. Hawthorne wrote, “He and his portrait are one, and their union points the moral of the tale” (413), pointing specifically to the moral parable at play in the romantic conceit. Wharton, showing her preference for the Gothic parable over French literature as her interpretive lens, writes, “If Mr. Wilde’s romance resembles the productions of some of the writers of the French school in its reality and tone, it still more strongly resembles Mr. Stevenson’s most powerfully wrought fairy-tale, ‘Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,’ although the moral of the story is brought out even more plainly—as plainly, indeed, as in the drama of ‘Faust’” (409). This is notable as a reference to a parable of a sold soul, which is not explicit in the 1890 version of *Dorian* (see below). And *The Speaker*'s reviewer deemed the story “conspicuously right in morality” after providing this strongly religious-based interpretation of the narrative:

Enter to them the spirit of evil, in the shape of Lord Henry Wotton, an extremely fin de siècle gentleman, who, by a few inspiring words, supplies, or calls into life, the boy’s missing soul—and it is an evil one. Henceforward, the tale develops the growth of this evil soul, side by side with this mystery—that while vice and debauchery write no wrinkle on the boy’s face, but pass from it as a breath off a pane and leave it perennially innocent and lovely, every vile action scores its

mark upon the portrait, which keeps accurate record of a loathsome life. (“Profuse and Perfervid” 25)

The religious undertones of this reading of the fantastical basis parable are echoed in the review from *Light*, which marks the intersection of the religious and Gothic faces of the parable:

Mr. Oscar Wilde has created a new character in fiction, one likely to absorb public attention with a similar weird fascination to that produced by the renowned Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; and with a more lasting and beneficial moral effect than had Mr. Stevenson’s surprising creation. A deeply conceived psychological study, upon entirely new lines, enriched by the stored wealth of a mind which has spared no pains in the pursuit of sensuous beauty, and which has, to all appearance, revelled in deepest draughts from that sparkling and alluring fountain. But what a spiritual lesson has he drawn therefrom—a lesson graphically and powerfully set forth in the fascinating pages which present to us the life of Dorian Gray. (331)

To these reviewers, the moral parable enabled by the conceit of a magic picture was not, as other reviewers said, a failure compared to Stevenson, but a success, at times even a greater one than they felt Stevenson had had.

The religious or spiritual themes in these readings were located in the novel itself, not just in the events of the characters. An assorted fourteen reviewers identified religious themes, such as sin and Hellfire, amongst characters and events (24.14% of all reviewers), and only six (10.34%) found it in the novel or author. However, of those six, only one person who identified religious themes in the novel or author deemed the novel

of immoral or mixed morality, and in this case, it occurred for the very reason the review is mixed rather than outright moral condemnation, when the reviewer declared that “[t]he moral of Mr. Wilde’s book is meant to be good; at least he deals out to sin its proverbial wages” (“Oscar Wilde’s Romance” 26). One other who found religious themes in the novel/author gave no moral judgement, while the other four all deemed it moral. In other words, it was not an especially common assessment, but when it showed up it was very strongly associated with a positive moral judgement. This is the mirror of the treatment of degeneration. Those who saw degeneration in the characters did not necessarily deem the story moral or immoral, but those who located degeneration in the overall character novel or Wilde considered the story immoral. In a sense, they read the novel as being of the degenerative genre. In comparison, several reviewers located religious themes in the events of story, noting Dorian’s sins, but it was those who located religious themes in the overall character of the novel or Wilde who interpreted it as moral, following the frame of a moral parable.

Thus, although many readers identified a Gothic parable like that of Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, not all who recognized this interpretive lens asserted that it was the most appropriate one or that Wilde had been successful in executing it. Those who picked up on religious or spiritual resonances for the parable, however, praised the novel as moral in those terms.

### 1.3 Interpretive Frameworks Through Revision

We now have data and three lenses used by reviewers and an understanding of how they used these lenses in their assessment of the *Lippincott’s* version of *Dorian Gray*. Turning

now to the next steps in the publication process, we come to two questions: first, in what way did revisions to the novel change the work's relation to the above interpretive frames? And second, did those revisions lead to changes to reception for the 1891 book publications?

Many revisions increased the work's resonances with Gothic parables, specifically through the magnification of scientific degeneration and Christian framings of sinfulness. While the 1890 version of the text interprets Dorian as heir to both literary and biological ancestors, revisions for the 1891 publication decrease references to Dorian's literary predecessor while reinforcing and clarifying the degeneration innate in Dorian's bloodline. This lens of Dorian's inherently corrupt blood is supported by revisions that remove suggestions of compassion from Dorian's character early in the novel, indicating that he had little good in him from the start. In addition, revisions pose Dorian as explicitly selling his soul to the devil, clarifying the religious parable. These revisions make the republished novel more resonant with interpretations along the lines of a Gothic parable of biological and religious degeneration.

### 1.3.1 Textual Interpretations of Dorian: Literature and Science

In all versions, the narrative offers potential interpretations of Dorian as both heir to a (Decadent) literary type and the result of a (degenerate) biological type, often in conjunction. Dorian's most dominant interpreter, Lord Henry, always treats Dorian as both aesthetic and biological type. At the end of the novel, Lord Henry rejects Dorian's attempts to change by affixing him as "a perfect type" (Wilde, *Picture* 158 [1890]) and "the type of what the age is searching for" (159) without explicitly identifying whether he

means the term in a scientific or literary sense, opening Dorian up to either reading. Henry's interpretation of Dorian refuses to acknowledge Dorian's possible dissent from the idea, part of what Mary C. King refers to as Dorian being made to "serve the a-historical typological needs of his mentor-originators" (17)—in Lord Henry's interpretive lens, Dorian is a static object of interest that acts as a culmination of Lord Henry's ideologies.

Those ideologies are posed in both literary terms (along the lines of New Hedonism) and scientific ones. Lord Henry frames Dorian as part of the Hellenistic project: "I believe that if one man were to live his life out fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream,—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal,—to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal, it may be" (185–186 [Norton (1890)]). Here, Lord Henry positions Dorian as potential culmination of a Paterian narrative of self-development (see Clausson), a non-Christian religious transcendence that goes back to old forms of idealism rooted in the supposed literary religiosity of the Ancient Greeks. But Lord Henry also acts as an experimental scientist throughout the text, with Dorian his subject (Wainwright 34). Positing a link between the soul and the body, Lord Henry insists on "the experimental method" as "the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions," and of course, Dorian is for Lord Henry "a subject made to his hand" (Wilde, *Picture* 49 [1890]). Either lens of interpretation, that of literary culmination or scientific specimen, is made available through Lord Henry's readings.

As a result, Dorian picks up the methods of both literary and scientific study from this mentor-originator and interprets himself along these lines. During the exploration of the various activities and interests Dorian takes up in his pursuit of the New Hedonism, the narrative explores both Dorian's relation to his ancestors and his relation to a book Lord Henry gave him. Each version positions these two relations side by side, linking them with the phrase, "Yet one had ancestors in literature, as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament, many of them, and certainly with an influence of which one was more absolutely conscious" (*Picture* 289 [1890]). In this pairing of ancestral and literary types, the family tree that leads to Dorian comes together with the literary tree that seems to have foretold him, blending literary typology and biological descent in Dorian's self-interpretation. In all editions, Lord Henry's interpretations of Dorian and Dorian's interpretations of himself make both lenses available and pair them together.

However, one type of ancestor is effaced in the transition from the 1890 to 1891 editions, and with it, the emphasis on Dorian's literary-based typology of self. Dorian's literary ancestor is contained in "the yellow book that Lord Henry had sent him" (Wilde, *Picture* 274 [1891]). In all versions, he refers to it as "a kind of prefiguring type of himself" that "seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it" (276). He is its inheritor, the culmination of its prophecy of what could be. But in the revision for second publication, this connection is effaced at several points. Where the 1890 edition describes a chapter "in which hero describes the curious tapestries that he had had woven for him from Gustave Moreau's designs and on which were pictured the awful and beautiful forms of those whom Vice and Blood and Weariness had made monstrous or mad" (124 [1890]), by 1891, we instead have a passive sentence construction: "as in

some curious tapestries or cunningly-wrought enamels, were pictured [the images]” the (290 [1891]). Dorian’s prefiguring type, the hero of the novel, is erased from description, and with him the reference to Moreau, an inspiration for many French Decadents, including Huysmans, author of the novel *À rebours* that has often been suggested as inspiration for Dorian’s yellow book. The connection to literary ancestors, and specifically resonance with Decadent narratives, is weakened.

Nor is Moreau the only association to the Decadents removed. In the 1890 publication, the narration specifically characterizes the style of Dorian’s yellow book as being that “of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Décadents*” (103 [1890]). In 1891, the style is instead characteristic of the French school of “*Symbolistes*” (274 [1891]). Given that the name of the Symbolistes was coined to distinguish the artists of these school from the Decadents, the change here similarly weakens the connection between the character Dorian views as his literary predecessor and the French Decadent school of authors. Thus, while Dorian may read himself as typological heir to the fictional yellow book, the strength of his reading fades between editions. Dorian remains “poisoned by a book” (290 [1891]), yes, but what book? The book is now general, vague. The prominence of the interpretation decreases as a result of the revisions of the 1891 edition.

### 1.3.2 The Germ of Corruption

As the literary ancestor takes less prominence through the editions, the scientific idea of hereditary degeneration takes greater prominence. In the 1890 version, Dorian’s family history is almost totally restricted to his exploration of the gallery of family portraits. This supports a reading of Dorian as biological heir to a degenerate line, but it is limited.

However, a genetic interpretation is strengthened by the 1891 edition's expansion of Dorian's family history, which reinforces a link between heredity and the present object of Lord Henry's experiments.

While all editions introduce us first to Basil's vision of Dorian in Chapter I before presenting Dorian Gray himself in Chapter II, the 1891 edition then adds a Chapter III that begins with Lord Henry visiting his uncle, Lord Fermor, for further information about Dorian's family history. As such, Dorian becomes framed first by Basil's artistic representation of Dorian, and then immediately after he is reframed by his family history, which is implied to give Lord Henry a deeper, more essential insight into Dorian's nature. Lord Henry says that he has come to his uncle to learn who Dorian Gray is, then adds, "Or rather, I know who he is. He is the last Lord Kelso's grandson. His mother was a Devereux, Lady Margaret Devereux" (195 [1891]). Here, Lord Henry explicitly identifies who Dorian is with his family relations. Lord Fermor adds to this conception of "who Dorian is" by explaining his recent family history, including Margaret wildly running off with "a mere nobody, sir, a subaltern in a foot regiment, or something of that kind" (196), and the possibility that Kelso had then had the man murdered. Dorian thus becomes linked with a low-ranked father, a passionate and reckless mother, and a potential murderer of a grandfather. Lord Fermor finishes by classifying Dorian's family line: "[Margaret] was romantic, though. All the women of that family were. The men were a poor lot, but egad! the women were wonderful" (197). The women are romantic; the men are a poor lot. Dorian is posed as heir to the male and female qualities of his line as well as sexual mixing between different ranks. This emphasis on Dorian as a "son of Love and Death" (200) brings into greater prominence a scientific interpretation of Dorian as



descendent of a degenerate and degenerating family line. They become a means by which Lord Henry reads Dorian.

This genetic history in mind and the yellow book less prominent, the hereditary elements of his family sin become the more apparent mode of interpretation in Dorian's walk through the hall of family portraits. Thus, while references to "those whose blood flowed in [Dorian's] veins" (288 [1891]) and again the "blood" of the second Lord Beckenham's wife (289) do not change between editions, Lord Henry and Lord Fermor's interpretation of Dorian's bad blood puts more emphasis on these descriptions. In a moment of particular resonance with a degenerationist interpretation, Dorian asserts that "man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead" and questions if "some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own" (288 [1891]). These readings, constant in both editions, become stronger in the 1891 version because we know more about the family germ in Dorian. As Michael Wainwright argues, blood, body, and germ, not only as poison but as genome (41), are the means of transmission of Dorian's inclination towards sin—but that genomic transmission has much greater emphasis in revision, when the novel early on adds more details about Dorian's immediate family history.

Of course, Dorian still prefers himself as a literary heir. Heather Seagrott observes that while Dorian "hypothesizes biological, racially transmitted explanations for his decadence," in the end, "he asserts the importance of aesthetic influences in any account of his nature" (753). But Dorian's self-interpretation is much more sustainable in the

1890 version, without Lord Henry's earlier, aggressive interpretation of Dorian along those very racial and biological lines and with more emphasis placed on the hero of the yellow book. Now instead a scientific, genetic understanding of ancestry has pride of place in the narrative itself, and this interpretation is framed along Lombroso's line of thinking, where "the criminal is one whose *moral* life is irremediably polluted by the iniquities of his ancestors" (Morris 521, emphasis in original). Although the lines describing Dorian's journey through his family portraits remain mostly unchanged, their combination with the new addition increased resonance between the interpretation of Dorian and degeneration theory.

The role of heredity in Dorian's degeneration is further emphasized by another change between editions: while the 1890 edition gives Lord Sherard as Dorian's dead uncle, of whom he "had hateful memories" (Wilde, *Picture* 95 [1890]), the 1891 edition replaces this hateful uncle with Lord Kelso as his grandfather, who is characterized in detail as a result of Lord Henry's queries about Dorian's recent family history. The shift from uncle to grandfather changes the "hateful" relative of Dorian's from a parent's brother to a man in the direct line of descent that leads to Dorian Gray, someone whose blood is very much in his veins. Much seems a consequence of this bad germ that runs through the family line.

Finally, the 1891 edition adds to this depiction of degeneration through the inclusion of a chapter in an opium den, connecting Dorian to the degenerate disease of addiction and specifically to the aristocrat-turned-ostracized-opium-addict Adrian Singleton. Adrian is a mirror of his own degradation and a "half-caste" (238 [1891]), a product of blood-

degrading mixing, just as Dorian is. Together, these assorted revisions amplify the already-present theme of the genetic inheritance of degeneration.

### 1.3.3 Bad from the Start

Degeneration theory, while emphasizing hereditary flaws and framing “degenerates” as another “type” or “species” of human, also describes the dangers of environmentally caused degeneration. But while Dorian does not lack for environmental sources of degeneration in either version, revisions to his character reinforce the hereditary narrative of degeneration by suggesting that there was little good in Dorian from the start. Moments that highlight Dorian’s potential for humanity and compassion are excised, replaced with petulance and exasperation towards others.

In the 1890 edition, Dorian shows both a childish sweetness and compassion for his housekeeper:

“Well, Master Dorian,” she said, “what can I do for you? I beg your pardon, sir,”—here came a courtesy,—“I shouldn’t call you Master Dorian any more. But, Lord bless you, sir, I have known you since you were a baby, and many’s the trick you’ve played on poor old Leaf. Not that you were not always a good boy, sir; but boys will be boys, Master Dorian, and jam is a temptation to the young, isn’t it, sir?”

He laughed. “You must always call me Master Dorian, Leaf. I will be very angry with you if you don’t. And I assure you I am quite as fond of jam now as I used to

be. Only when I am asked out to tea I am never offered any. ... Thank you, Leaf. I hope your rheumatism is better; and mind you send me up jam for breakfast.”

Mrs. Leaf shook her head. “Them foreigners doesn’t understand jam, Master Dorian. They calls it ‘compot.’ But I’ll bring it to you myself some morning, if you lets me.”

“That will be very kind of you, Leaf,” he answered, looking at the key; and, having made him an elaborate courtesy, the old lady left the room, her face wreathed in smiles. (Wilde, *Picture* 94–95 [1890])

The exchange regarding jam is at once humanizing and infantilizing; it is both a marker of how extremely young Dorian is still, in that he still adores jam as Leaf specifically says a child would, and perhaps a charming quirk. Moreover, the way he jokes with Leaf indicates kindness and affection towards his housekeeper; the follow-up request for jam seems to please her, and the thoughtfulness regarding her rheumatism shows a regard for another’s wellbeing that Dorian fails at more and more throughout the course of the novel. The incident suggests that, however Dorian turns out, he at this point is capable of sincere, unselfish kindness to others—that he was not damned to vice and criminality from the start.

In 1891, however, the potentially charming childishness is replaced by petulance, and Dorian shows no concern for his housekeeper’s wellbeing:

“Here is the key. I’ll have it off the bunch in a moment. But you don’t think of living up there, sir, and you so comfortable here?”

“No, no,” he cried petulantly. “Thank you, Leaf. That will do.”

She lingered for a few moments, and was garrulous over some detail of the household. He sighed and told her to manage things as she thought best. She left the room, wreathed in smiles. (269 [1891])

While Dorian had, in the earlier edition, similarly rejected the idea of living up in the old schoolroom, he had then said, “No, Leaf, I don’t. I merely want to see the place, and perhaps store something in it,—that is all” (95 [1890]). There is no reference to petulance, and even the syntax is calmer, with consideration taken to explain his desires. Likewise, while Dorian seems fond of Leaf as she departs in 1890, in 1891, the text references her being “garrulous over some detail,” and Dorian sighs as if in exasperation. The (literally) sweet childishness of jam is traded out for petulance, and the concern for Leaf’s wellbeing is replaced with exasperation at her continued presence. Here, so early in his tale that only one sin mars his portrait, Dorian changes from being at times kind, if childish for his age, to outright unpleasant and selfish. The germ of evil has him from the start.

This is not to say that the alteration of Dorian from more to less compassion for others is unilateral. Among the 1891 extensions is a chapter wherein Dorian shows sympathy for a hunted hare; he finds that “something in the animal’s grace of movement that strangely charmed Dorian Gray” and so he calls out to his companion, “Don’t shoot it, Geoffrey. Let it live” (340 [1891]). He soon after opines about hunting that “The whole thing is hideous and cruel” (341), demonstrating an unusual amount of compassion and consideration for something outside of himself. Similarly, when Dorian comes across

Adrian Singleton, in whose ruin Dorian is implicated by Basil, he asks him, “You will write to me if you want anything, won’t you?” (329), another surprising gesture of consideration; Dorian even feels the encounter with Adrian “strangely moved him” (329). Although the earlier instance with Mrs. Leaf is removed, Dorian does gain additional moments of a kind of care for others.

However, these scenes are positioned late in the narrative. As such, they do not act as signs of Dorian’s having other traits prior to his fall, nor hints of his capacity for redemption, but rather as markers of Dorian’s hypocrisy. Dorian’s sympathy for the hare and horror at hunting both take place shortly after Dorian’s murder of Basil Hallward, whose body he quickly turns mentally into a “thing” (300 [1891]) and after whose death he sleeps “quite peacefully, lying on his right side, with one hand underneath his cheek” with the appearance of “a boy who had been tired out with play, or study” (302).

Contrasted against his callousness towards Basil’s body, the sympathy for the hare seems absurd. Moreover, Dorian’s protest about the hare is positioned not just immediately *before* James’s death but as the cause of it. Of course, it is mere accident, not cunning, on Dorian’s part, but it makes it more visceral a callousness when Dorian rushes to see the body and recognizes as the man who wanted revenge on him: “A cry of joy broke from his lips” (345). Couched between two human deaths, to both of which Dorian reacts selfishly, Dorian’s sympathy for the hare seems hypocritical and shallow against his lack of sympathy for human lives. And while Dorian’s offered kindness to Adrian may be redeeming, it, too, is contextualized by Dorian’s other sins: it is just after Basil’s death and just before James Vane enters the scene, so it is framed with reminders of how truly depraved and heartless Dorian is towards others and quickly segues into another

demonstration of Dorian's self-interest. Dorian brought Adrian to ruin; immediately after feeling moved by him, he thinks, "Yet, after all, what did it matter to him?" (329) and so pushes possible compassion away. The internal monologue turns quickly to self-pity as he considers, "One's days were too brief to take the burden of another's errors on one's shoulders" (329). Furthermore, located in an opium den, this kindness is surrounded by images and associations of degeneration. While the 1890 version of the scene with Leaf leaves open the interpretation that Dorian may have had some aspects of a good heart that fades through time, the 1891 version suggests a much more petulant man from the start, and his later moments of compassion merely emphasize that any gestures of goodness Dorian might make ultimately are crushed under egotism and self-interest.

#### 1.3.4 The Gentleman and his Soul

"Nay," cried the young Fisherman, "I may not be at peace, for all that thou hast made me to do I hate. Thee also I hate, and I bid thee tell me wherefore thou hast wrought with me in this wise."

And his Soul answered him, "When thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart, so I learned to do all these things and love them."

"What sayest thou?" murmured the young Fisherman.

"Thou knowest," answered his Soul, "thou knowest it well. Hast thou forgotten that thou gavest me no heart? I trow not. And so trouble not thyself nor me, but be at peace, for there is no pain that thou shalt not give away, nor any pleasure that thou shalt not receive." (*Wilde*, "Fisherman" 114–5)

There are other ancestors for Dorian Gray, and the one we turn to now is inter- rather than intratextual. “The Fisherman and his Soul,” a short story not published until 1891 in *A House of Pomegranates*, was composed during the summer of 1889 for (and rejected by) *Lippincott’s*, making its composition near to or simultaneous with that of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which began some time in 1889 between April and December (Lawler and Knott 390n2). Donald Lawler and Charles Knott note the links between *Dorian Gray* and “Fisherman,” particularly highlighting the relationship between the Fisherman’s Soul and Dorian’s picture. But “Fisherman” does not just offer parallels to *Dorian*: it suggests an alternate idea about the seat of moral behavior that could only be sustained in the version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that was composed at roughly the same time as “Fisherman” was.

The plot of “The Fisherman and his Soul,” in brief, is as follows: a young fisherman falls for a mermaid, but he cannot be with her because mermaids have no soul. The fisherman promptly seeks a means by which he might separate himself from his soul. A priest warns him that “[t]here is no thing more precious than a human soul, nor any earthly thing that can be weighed with it” (70), but, being young and in love with an attractive sea creature, the fisherman ignores him and eventually severs his soul from his body. The Fisherman’s Soul, now a separate entity, asks the Fisherman to give him his heart, but the Fisherman says he needs it to love the mermaid. The Soul then begs the Fisherman meet with him once a year at the shore, and so three times they meet, each time the Soul trying to tempt the Fisherman back onto land to join with him again. Twice, the Fisherman insists that love is better than what the Soul offers, but on the third meeting, the Soul suggests they go to see a dancing girl who is only a short distance away. The Fisherman agrees, and he



and his Soul are reunited. However, while travelling, the Soul compels the Fisherman to steal a cup, beat a child, and attempt to murder a kind merchant. The Fisherman questions why his Soul would make him do such awful things, and his Soul answers, “When thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart, so I learned to do all these things and love them” (114–5). The Fisherman’s Soul tries to re-enter the Fisherman’s heart, but it is too full of love for the mermaid for there to be any space, until the Fisherman sees that the mermaid is dead, and his heart breaks. The Soul enters the Fisherman as he drowns in the waves holding his mermaid.

Links between this tale and *Dorian Gray* are easy to make. A young man makes a deal; a soul is sent away from its body. Tragedy ensues. However, the moral division of Soul and Heart in “Fisherman” are worth more focus. The priest insists that there is nothing more precious than the human soul, and even the witch seems to consider it an evil thing to send a soul away, saying, “[T]hat is a terrible thing to do” (75). Yet losing his soul seems to have no ill effects for the Fisherman. Indeed, each time the Soul entreats him to come with him to travel, the Fisherman joyfully replies, “Love is better” (96, 108). What the Fisherman instead refuses to give up his heart, saying, “With what should I love my love if I gave thee my heart?” (85) Both Fisherman and Soul contend for the Fisherman’s heart, considering this the greatest prize. It is the heart that gives the Fisherman the capacity for love; it is the lack of a heart that allowed the Soul to learn to do evil; and when at last showing pity for his Soul, the Fisherman admits, “[I]n the days when with no heart thou didst go through the world thou must have much suffered” (121). The plot of “Fisherman,” thus, can be reframed as follows: a young man divides his Soul from his heart, and his heartless Soul learns to love evil. Strength of heart and the love within it

gives the Fisherman resistance to evil, and it is love, the final passages imply, that allows flowers to bloom in a flowerless field. The seat of love is what matters to morality and goodness; a Soul can learn to do evil, but only if it is heartless.

In *Dorian*, a young man makes a deal, and the soul is severed from the body, leading to moral ruin of a boy without a soul. Or does he? In the 1890 version, in the famous scene where Dorian bargains with some unknown force, he does not, in fact, name his sacrifice. Dorian only cries out, “If it was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this—for this—I would give everything!” (29 [1890]). “Everything” could be a great many things, but it is not specifically any one thing. It could very well be a soul. It could also very well be a heart.

In a letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on July 2, 1890, Wilde wrote in response to negative reviews calling the narrative immoral:

When I first conceived the idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth—an idea that is old in the history of literature, but to which I have given new form—I felt that, from an aesthetic point of view, it would be difficult to keep the moral in its proper secondary place; and even now I do not feel quite sure that I have been able to do so. (*Complete Letters* 435)

This indicates that, at least according to his claims here, Wilde intended a reading of Dorian’s soul offered up in a pact.<sup>22</sup> My point is not to argue that Wilde intended for a

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<sup>22</sup> Looked at broadly, Wilde’s newspaper comments on his novel and intended revisions are questionable at best. In the example quoted above, Wilde insists that the subordination of the moral was the goal of Wilde’s later revisions, which this chapter argues was not definitively the result, a perspective Frankel also takes (General Introduction 60–61n23).

heart and not a soul to be the bargain, as indeed, even in 1890, Dorian feels certain that his soul is linked to the painting, repeatedly contemplating the link: he puts his picture in his old school room to “hide his soul from the eyes of men” (98 [1890]), he sees “[h]is own soul ... looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgement” (96–7), and he grieves that he “can’t bear the idea of [his] soul being hideous” (74). That Dorian interprets his soul as involved in all editions is clear. What I am pointing to, rather, is the potential for ambiguity and its possibilities for less traditional morals. In the 1890 edition, there is an open space to take a less traditional interpretation of the exchange, where the heart takes primacy, but this is erased in the 1891 edition due to the development of emphasis on the Faustian pact, both in terms of reference to the soul and reference to the Devil.

While the deal for youth centres around the picture, descriptions of the picture itself experience very little change throughout revisions. “First in the dim twilight, and then in the bright dawn, he had seen the touch of cruelty in the warped lips” (71 [1890]) changes only one phrase to “the touch of cruelty round the warped lips” (249 [1891]); “He could see no change, unless that in the eyes there was a look of cunning, and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite” (161 [1890]) takes the alteration “save that in the eyes”

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For a further example of a comment worth approaching in wariness, in a reply to the *St. James’s Gazette*, Wilde claims, “Now, if I were criticising my book, which I have some thoughts of doing, I think I would consider it my duty to point out that it is far too crowded with sensational incident, and far too paradoxical in style, as far, at any rate, as the dialogue goes. I feel that from a standpoint of art there are true defects in the book” (“Mr. Oscar Wilde’s Defence” [28 June 1890] 5). But in his second publication, it is exactly “sensational incident” (in the form of the James Vane subplot) and “paradoxical ... dialogue” (in the form of several extra chapters of Lord Henry’s dialogue) that Wilde added.

Statements of authorial intention must be questioned at the best of times. In Wilde’s case, they must be thoroughly interrogated.

(355 [1891]). In addition, in 1891, Lord Henry has the new line that it is “the finest portrait of modern times” on first seeing it (188). All other descriptions of the picture remain constant between the editions.<sup>23</sup> The portrait as a centrepiece of the deal remains relatively constant; it is the additional context of references to Dorian’s soul that alter the deal’s resonances.

For the sake of this recontextualization, allow me to give an alternate interpretation of the pact to show a reading that can be sustained *only* in the 1890 edition. A young man offers anything in exchange for eternal youth; his soul is bound to a painting of him to suffer as a scapegoat for the burden of his sins and time itself. That, however, is not the price, just as the Soul was not the Fisherman’s price, although it was separated from the Fisherman’s body. After all, the portrait belongs to Dorian, so any soul within it also still belongs to him; it does not make sense that *it* is what he traded away. In that case, what does the young man lose in the bargain? It is his heart, the seat of love. So is it that when he first sees the portrait, “He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart” (29 [1890]), as if in premonition of the loss to come. He unknowingly acknowledges his own missing piece when he declares, “When you see Sibyl Vane you will feel that the man who could wrong her would be a beast without a heart” (54–5), and then proceeds to prove his heartlessness by doing exactly that. After her death, he wonders why he can’t feel the pain of it as much as he wants to and uncertainly asks, “I don’t think I am heartless. Do you?” (77), and while Lord Henry calls him too foolish to be heartless, Basil later declares that Dorian talks “as if [he] had no heart, no pity in [him]” (85).

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<sup>23</sup> Although note that the use of “unless” indicates some uncertainty whether hypocrisy really is in the portrait’s face, while “save” makes it absolute that the portrait was showing him his hypocrisy.

When he at last stabs his painting, transferring the damage back to himself and ending his life, it is “with a knife in his heart” (164) that he is found, demonstrating with bloody literalness the violence he had done to his own capacity for love. His soul returns to him with all its ugliness, but his heart is never restored.

There is nothing in the 1890 text itself that contradicts such a reading. Dorian never suggests that he has traded away his soul; while he refers to the painting as being “the face of [his] soul” (135 [1890]), he also seems to believe his soul is still inside him when he questions, “Was there some subtle affinity between the chemical atoms, that shaped themselves into form and color on the canvas, and the soul that was within him?” (72) In a framework such as this, suggested readily by Dorian’s own analysis and the transformation of the picture, the painting is mirror, not container, of his soul. As a pact for youth, such a reading presents a more unconventional exchange than that idea “old in the history of literature” of a traded-away soul. It therefore offers a less standard moral parable. The negative consequences of trading away one’s immortal soul is clear as a religious parable, as it forsakes the immortal gift granted by God—and it is, after all, that “only God who sees the soul” (134), at least until the soul is shoved into oil paints and canvas. But a heart sacrificed is something else, as seen with the Fisherman; the mermaids and other things lack souls and so will know “no heaven nor hell, and in neither shall they praise God’s name” (“Fisherman” 71), but they certainly can love.<sup>24</sup> A

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<sup>24</sup> The exact consequences of such a reading for Dorian’s behaviour are not the purpose of this dissertation. One might argue that “heartlessness” in this sense is an inability to truly love anyone, reducing all feeling for others to something shallower; this need not contradict the ambiguity of Dorian’s decision to spare Hetty Merton in the 1890 edition, as the ability to love, which “Fisherman” sees as the root of moral action, could be argued as not required for a potentially shallower desire to simply not do harm. Suffice to say, nuance in Dorian’s character is

boy without a heart and with a soul on display is a more ambiguous religious parable than a boy who sold his soul to the Devil for youth.

By the 1891 edition, there is little ambiguity. Here, Dorian's deal for youth is an explicit surrender of his soul to what is repeatedly indicated to be the Devil. That first element, the loss of his soul, is the most striking, positioned in the second chapter and given end-of-paragraph prominence. While the earlier edition's pronouncement that there is "nothing in the whole world" (29 [1890]) Dorian wouldn't trade for eternal youth is open-ended, in the revised edition, the addition of Dorian's offer of his soul means that his suggested prices build up through that classic fairy tale rule of three: first he offers "everything," a dramatic announcement that weighs everything *not* youth as less valuable than youth itself; then, "nothing in the whole world" he wouldn't give narrows the price to one object, turning ubiquity into something more narrow, if still not narrow enough to be put on a price tag; until, finally, Dorian makes that final offer, "I would give my soul for that!" (189 [1891]). The addition of this line turns a wild and open-ended wish into a contract. There is a set price for a set purchase.

This exchange both serves to suggest the value of the human soul—first marking it equivalent to everything in the world, then marking it as the most valuable of all the things Dorian could offer, an almost explicit inversion of priest's insistence that "[t]here is nothing more precious than a human soul, nor any earthly thing that can be weighed with it" (Wilde, "Fisherman" 70)—and to make the offer of his soul much more like an actual pact, with its specific terms and conditions. *If* he is to always be young, *then* he

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as sustainable for a heartless interpretation as for a soulless one in the 1890 edition, as the psychology presented is the same and only the root cause is altered.

will sacrifice his soul. The spiritual cost, and thus the moral failure, of Dorian's offer becomes absolute with the addition of Dorian's offer of his soul, because it restructures an ambiguous wish into a soul weighed up in a bargain. By offering up his soul, Dorian commits a triple blasphemy: he quantifies the soul as having a specific value, he engages with it as a commodity, and then he surrenders "the noblest part of man ... given to us by God that we should nobly use it" (Wilde, "Fisherman," 70). That single added line clarifies the parable of the narrative by amplifying Dorian's wish from a childish prayer mysteriously made real to a sin three times over made real by demonic forces.

And there is little ambiguity in additions provided for the 1891 publication that something demonic is at play. While the scene itself does not contain a devil figure—at least not explicitly, whatever interpretation of Lord Henry one might take—the devil's name occurs in conjunction with Dorian's state in a way that it never does in 1890. In the first publication, the only time the devil himself comes up is in relation to Dorian: Basil says the portrait has "the eyes of a devil" (135 [1890]), and Alan insists he wants no part in whatever "devil's work" Dorian is up to (147). These are general terms that merely emphasize how dangerously degenerate he has become. In 1891, these lines are not removed, but two more references to the devil are added, and these ones indicate that while Dorian's picture may have eyes of *a* devil, there is a much larger demonic force at play. In the opium dens, shortly after Basil's murder, a woman, one whom Dorian corrupted such that she seems to have fallen to prostitution, calls him "the devil's bargain" (329 [1891]), and later she reiterates the link, telling James Vane the rumour that Dorian "has sold himself to the devil for a pretty face" (332). Whereas in the previous edition the Faustian elements were sublimated to the overall romance of the

deal, this revision makes it very clear that the pact is with the Devil himself and no other. Satan may not show up smiling with a dotted line for Dorian to sign, but Dorian's wish cannot be confused as anything but a deal with the Devil to gain eternal youth in exchange for his immortal soul. Here, Dorian's parable resonates much more strongly than before with the story of Faust that Wharton linked to *Dorian Gray*.

The spiritual element of a religious parable is also reinforced in added passages describing the soul. In Lord Henry and Dorian's final discussion, as Dorian plays piano and Lord Henry contemplates the passage of time, additional dialogue is inserted regarding Basil's murder and the general nature of the soul. Here, when they discuss the painting, Dorian makes a link that harkens back to "Fisherman": he declares the painting reminded him of those lines from *Hamlet*: "Like the painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart" (qtd. in *Dorian Gray* 350 [1891]). Yet this link between Dorian's soul and his heartlessness, add nuance though it might, is overshadowed by Lord Henry's abrupt question, paraphrasing something he heard in the park: "[W]hat does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose—how does the quotation run?—his own soul'?" (350) The somewhat uncharacteristic question from Lord Henry has him offer his own answer, that "art had a soul, but that man had not" (350). It is a striking, obvious irony that Lord Henry has no idea how right he is, just as he has no idea how wrong he is that "[i]t is not in [Dorian] to commit a murder" (349). Art has a soul; the man in front of Lord Henry has not; and this ignorant reminder from Lord Henry of the exchange involved in Dorian's pact is reinforced by Dorian's mournful answer, new to this addition: "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it" (350).



Dorian's blasphemous selling of his soul leads to the almost pious conclusion that not only is the soul real, but it is something that can be corrupted or lost.

This reinforcing of the overtly religious moral parable combines well with the revised emphasis on biological degeneration. Indeed, as Andrew Morris puts it, "[T]he Lombrosian criminal marks the *scientific reinvention of sin*" (522, emphasis in original). As a result of the heightening of the importance of the so-called Devil's bargain that Dorian makes, the latter passages of the book add more weight to the idea of the soul in an explicitly scientific frame. References to the soul are present in all editions at the end of the tale; Dorian refers to the painting as "an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul" (162 [1890]), and when fretting about whether or not he is capable of good, it is, as he says, not the question of what wrongs he may have done to Basil and Hetty but "living death of his own soul" that troubles him (161). Additional passages in 1891, however, intensify this obsession with his soul's state in connection to disease and degeneration. After Basil's murder, Dorian's trip to the opium den is driven by an obsession with Lord Henry's earlier epigram regarding curing "the soul by means of the senses" (324), and Dorian obsessively wonders, "His soul, certainly, was sick to death. Was it true that the senses could cure it?" (324) as he pursues some means. The language of disease pervades these anxieties, as Dorian takes up Lord Henry's medicalized "cure" and extends the metaphor as he complains that "[m]emory, like a horrible malady, was eating his soul away" (327). The state of Dorian's soul, heightened in importance through the emphasis on the Faustian pact, becomes entangled with degeneration, as if to suggest that Dorian's soul was primed for disease by his corrupt and sickly heritage.

As the revisions make Dorian's crimes against God more explicit, they simultaneously make the religious moral more explicit with it. This corresponds to an addition to his suicide scene of his decision to "kill this monstrous soul-life" (357). Not only is Dorian, at his suicide, *not* repentant, he is actively seeking to destroy his soul and the conscience it offers; it is explicitly the sin of suicide, not an act of redemption. In combining hereditary, scientifically based degeneration with more explicit religious themes, the later edition is more welcoming of interpretations through the lens of degenerationist, science-oriented Gothic and religious parables. All these changes in resonance also then add space between the newer edition and the earlier, extremely scandalous edition: they reduce the resonance of one with the other.

## 1.4 Second Life

At this point, we find a curious potential for reversal play out. While more reviewers abstained from discussing morality than the common myths suggest, plenty engaged with the question of morality. They often did so in relation to themes of degeneration theory and Gothic, religious parables. Many of the revisions to the novel increased the novel's resonances with degeneration and Gothic or religious parables, making readings through these lenses easier to accomplish.

And yet Wilde wished for the novel to be understood as aesthetic, not didactic, even as his revisions would seem to create more didacticism than morality. But this might be a successful artistic gesture if the very increase in morality, through increased resonances with the frames that influenced moral judgement, allowed the question of morality to

become less prominent among reviewers. This would then open the door for more aesthetic debate.

Successfully? Perhaps, perhaps not. But that emphasis on the aesthetic plays out further if we return to two elements of the 1891 publication that a magazine publication could not have: cover and preface.

#### 1.4.1 Printing Aestheticism

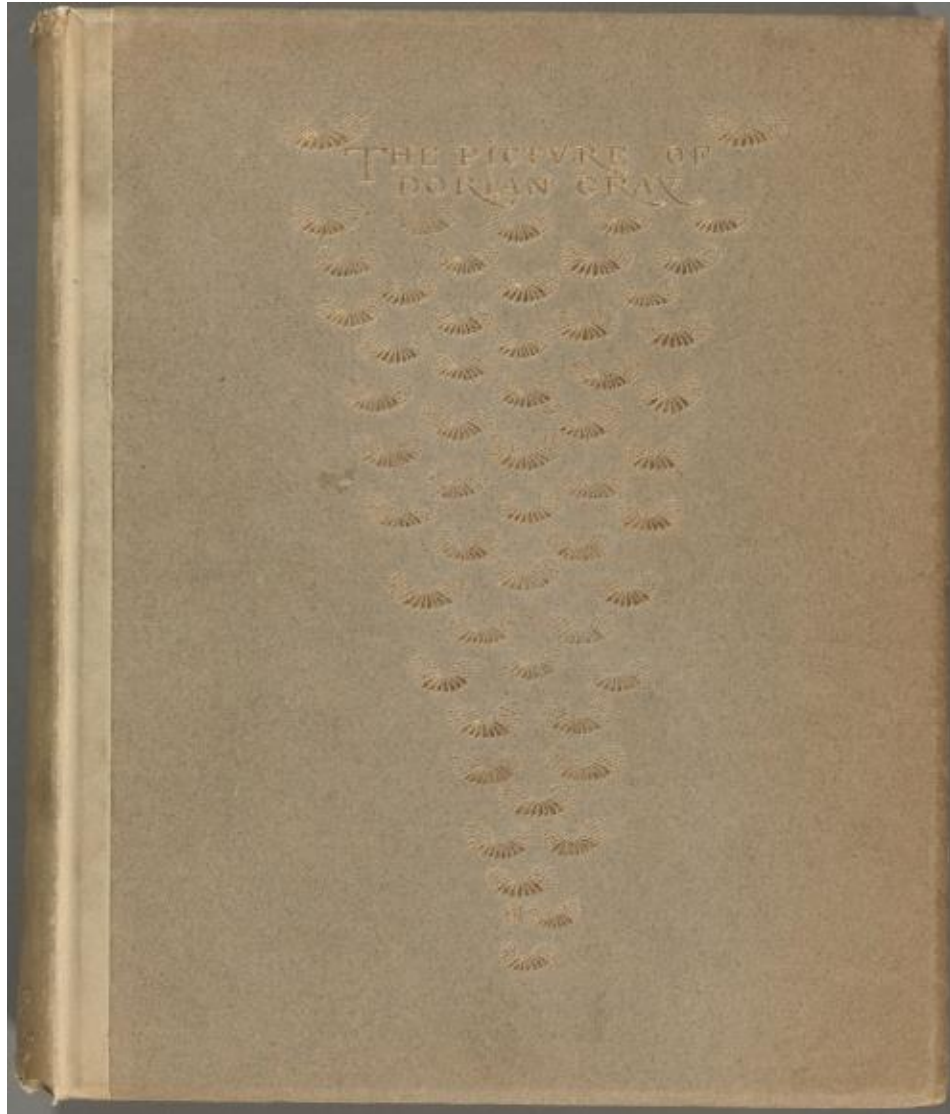
The cover of the magazine is pragmatic; it is designed by the magazine editor and put forward to that purpose. The margins accommodate the economic needs of magazine publications and fit the standards of the newspaper itself. There is no preface; the story stands for itself. Unfortunately, how it stood for itself often provoked the ire of readers who judged the moral degenerate and repulsive. It resonated with anxieties over degeneration and immorality, overshadowing aesthetic elements.

Moreover, the novel was contextualized by the publications that came with it, both in America and overseas. As Elizabeth Lorang highlights, the roughly seventy pages of material other than Wilde's novel in the July 1890 edition of *Lippincott's* puts the novel in context of a magazine that discusses many themes that might guide the reading of the text. While American and British versions of the magazine differed in some articles and advertisements, they had others in common, such as Edward Heron-Allen's piece on cheiromancy. This article, Lorang asserts, resonated with the themes in *Dorian* of physiognomy and the body as reflecting a person's character (25–27). In addition, the British issue also contained *A Dead Man's Diary*, which had a more explicitly moral damnation and redemption for a sinner not unlike Dorian; against this, Lorang argues,

Dorian's own death may seem to fall short as punishment (28–30). It was, Lorang says, being a periodical publication that garnered *Dorian Gray* the over 200 reviews it earned and so a great deal of attention (33), but this publication mode also wrested control of the work's framing from Wilde, both in terms of the aesthetics of typesetting and cover and in terms of the materials that framed the work in the magazine. It is control he certainly took back for the book publication.

The cover of the book (Figure 1) is made purely for aesthetic focus. While there were two versions of the novel, both had similar binding, with Mason noting only “less elaborate gilt tooling” on the less-expensive 6/- copy version (Mason, *Art and Morality* 153). The title pages and covers were both designed by Charles Ricketts and had gilt sides and lettering (153); the back was parchment vellum (12). Wilde described the cover as “grey pastel-paper with a white back and tiny marigolds” (Frankel, General Introduction 8). Frankel observes that these pages are designed in a style that entirely rejects the font styles of mechanical typeface (qtd. in Bristow Introduction [2005] xxvi), and for the quarto version, Brett Beasley notes that the cover and titling frame the work as a non-representative object of aesthetic beauty: the “deluxe cover design, more substantial size, and increased length, along with the stylistically printed aphoristic preface, all combined to place the novel above the ‘vulgar’ world of mass readership” (12). For the quartos (which may or may not have served as a third publication event), the phrase ‘Editions de Luxe,’ the numbering, and the size marketed them as distinct and particularly valuable. But the title page and cover design for both marks each of these versions as unique from the mechanical typeface in the magazine edition. Both of these versions were marketed as

distinct from the magazine publication and superior to them, with the quarto versions the height of aesthetic beauty.



**Figure 1. “Cover of the First Book Edition of The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde.” HEW 12.10.15, Houghton Library, Harvard University.**

Just as the book replaced the magazine’s visual and physical framing of the story with a more aesthetic-focused design, the Preface replaced the magazine’s surrounding materials with an essay of Wilde’s own crafting. It, of course, emphasizes the aesthetic of the moral

in its aphorisms. Further, it dislocates the novel from the public debate in the press. Many of these aphorisms originally appeared in newspapers as responses to criticisms of his work; they were reactions to public outcry, defences or dismissals, and were therefore part of an ongoing conversation (Beasley 10). They were also first published in *The Fortnightly Review* as “A Preface to Dorian Gray.” Beasley argues that, by removing them from the newspaper controversies they were first born into and putting them together as a separate argument within the novel, with no reference to any earlier productions of those sentences, Wilde

obscures the fact that the novel had ever appeared in the popular press or been the subject of a debate. The aphoristic quality of the statements in the preface further removes them from the context of the controversy. They are self-sealing and often paradoxical ... present[ing] themselves as authoritative truisms that invite no response. (10)

Thus, the scandalous context and all its controversial resonances are, it would seem, overwritten through the refiguring of Wilde’s retorts into what is packaged as an elegant manifesto. The two novel editions, then, refuse resonances with the moral debate in favour of an aesthetic framing, both through design and surrounding textual material.

#### 1.4.2 *Dorian’s Second Reception*

But did these changes turn public attention away from morality and towards aesthetics?

Scholars have paid much less attention to the book versions’ receptions<sup>25</sup> than the

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<sup>25</sup> As noted above, the two book versions were essentially taken in one moment of reception, with no distinction between them in the press.

magazines'. Bristow's comment that "the scant reviews of the 1891 version were unfavourable" (Introduction [2008] xxvii) is a rare exception to the general disinterest in this later moment of reception. And indeed, the publication(s) of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a novel received significantly less attention in the press compared to its first. My search was only able to find ten British reviews and one American review. In fact, "The Preface to *Dorian Gray*," published earlier in *The Fortnightly Review*, received almost as much attention in the British press as the novel publication did, with eight newspapers commenting on the work (see Appendix A).

The especially small sample size available here complicates assessing public response to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. With only one American review, it is impossible to compare British and American responses; as such, the two were combined for analysis. Further, no publication that commented on the first version of the book commented on the second (although several publications that commented on the magazine version *did* comment on the *Fortnightly Review* publication of the Preface). Likely, none were in a mood to change their minds. Indeed, the lack of overall comments, combined with the low sales of the book version,<sup>26</sup> may suggest that the revised publication likely did not impact public sentiment, as it seems probable that few read the new version.

Further, it is important to note the change in the kind of review. While the earlier 1890 comments on the novel ranged from only a sentence or two long to long essays on *Dorian Gray*, all reviews of the 1891 publications, except that which Pater gave *The Bookman*, were one or two paragraphs long. This can affect the number of subjects addressed, as a

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<sup>26</sup> Five years after publication, Ward, Lock, & Co. still had stock from the original run of 1000 octavo-sized books (Guy and Small, *Profession* 57).

sentence-long review can likely only address only one or two themes compared to a review of a paragraph or two, while an essay can address many more themes than a shorter review can. As well, the first round of reviews included letters in longer debates in newspapers. These covered the same topics as reviews but varied in form. There were no such newspaper debates on publication of the 1891 novel version. In sum, there is a possibility that differences in the number of times a theme is addressed may partly be a matter of review form and not just differences in the work to which the reviews respond.

**Table 7. British reviews and comments on the 1891 book publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.**

Name	Moral Judgement	Artistic Judgement	Tags
<b>The Glasgow Herald 30.04</b>	None	Good	The Preface, aesthetic objects (novel/author), dialogue/epigrams, public debate
<b>The Manchester Guardian 05.05</b>	Moral	Mixed	French, Romance, The Preface, affect: interest, affect: tediousness, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, public debate, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
<b>Freeman's Journal 16.05</b>	Moral	Mixed	Romance, affect: interest, affect: tediousness, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
<b>The Daily Telegraph 15.06</b>	Moral	Good	French, The Preface, affect: interest, affect: revulsion, dialogue/epigrams, prose, religious themes (novel/author)
<b>The Scotsman 04.05</b>	None	Bad	Romance, The Preface, aestheticism, criminality (character/event), prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event)
<b>The Bookseller 06.05</b>	Immoral	Good	Romance, The Preface, dialogue/epigrams, prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), aestheticism
<b>The Theatre 01.06</b>	None	Mixed	Romance, affect: interest, affect: revulsion, dialogue/epigrams, prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (character/event), unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), unnaturalness/atavism (novel/author), aesthetic objects (novel/author)
<b>The Athenaeum 27.06</b>	Immoral	Mixed	French, affect: interest, affect: revulsion, affect: tediousness, dialogue/epigrams, gender/sexual transgression (novel/author), prose, unhealthiness/uncleanness (novel/author), Romance
<b>The Saturday Review 17.10</b>	None	Mixed	French, Romance, The Preface, aesthetic objects (character/event), affect: interest, affect: tediousness, prose, religious themes (character/event)
<b>The Bookman 11</b>	Good	Good	French, Romance, affect: interest, criminality (character/event), dialogue/epigrams, religious themes (character/event), religious themes (novel/author), unnaturalness/atavism(character/event)



**Table 8. US reviews and comments on the 1891 book publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.**

Name	Moral Judgement	Aesthetic Judgement	Tags
Columbus Enquirer-Sun 02.08	None	None	aesthetic object (novel/author), public debate, the preface

That said, the themes and subjects discussed in reviews were, except two, all the same. Reviewers still were interested in genre and especially tended to link the novel to French literature and romances such as Stevenson’s work (although this time, no one brought up silver fork fiction); they still critiqued or praised the prose and epigrams/dialogue; they still brought up the controversy; they certainly discussed degeneration and religious themes; and they gave comments on the affect they felt from the novel. The two new themes that emerged were discussions of the Preface and that of the novel as an aesthetic object itself, and it is not a surprise that these are new—the magazine version had no Preface, and neither did it have much of a cover. Still, we can see some changes in trends if we look at the percentages of assessments and subjects of interests.

**Table 9. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement**

	TOTAL
IMMORAL	2
MIXED	0
MORAL	4
NONE	5
TOTAL	11

Reviewers with negative or mixed moral judgements were less common among the later reviewers, with those who viewed it as moral or made no comment taking the gains. Only two of 11 reviewers viewed it as immoral (18.18%, compared to the magazine version’s 32.57% among all reviews), none viewed it as mixed (0% compared to 6.9%), four

viewed it as moral (36.36% compared to 15.52%), and five gave no moral assessment (45.45% vs 44.83%). But, as noted, the sample size makes it difficult to assess whether this reflects any conclusive difference in public opinion. We can only say that those who reviewed this version of the novel, few as they were, were less likely to condemn the novel on moral grounds and more likely to praise it than those who had reviewed the earlier version.

**Table 10. Reviews and comments on the 1891 book version by moral judgement and degeneration themes.**

	DEGENERATION (CHARACTER/EVENT)	DEGENERATION (NOVEL/AUTHOR)	AFFECT: REVULSION
<b>IMMORAL</b>	1	2	1
<b>MIXED</b>	0	0	0
<b>MORAL</b>	3	0	1
<b>NONE</b>	2	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	6	3	3

For the 1890 version, 26 of 58 reviewers mentioned degeneration in some form (44.83%); now, seven of 11 do (63.63%). The smaller sample size makes a more granular analysis potentially less representative than would be ideal. However, we can see that the association between judgement of immorality and association of degeneration with the novel/author holds: if they judged the novel immoral, they also likely called it or the author degenerate (100% of 1891 reviews vs 73.68% [14 of 19] for the 1890 reviews). No positive reviews used degeneration language to discuss the novel or author (0% vs 11.11% [1 of 9] in the earlier version), and only one of six (16.67% vs 7.69% [2 of 26]) made that link. This brings down the overall percent of uses of degeneration language for Wilde or the novel, but not by very much (27.27% vs 34.48% [20 of 58]).

Revulsion was mentioned once among each of the categories (immoral: 50% [one in two]; mixed: no data; moral: 25% [one in four]; none: 20% [one in five]) for an overall rate of appearing in 27.27% (three in 11). Only the expression of revulsion among those who found the book version immoral stayed constant compared to the expressions among reviewers of the magazine version (immoral: 52.63% [10 in 19]; mixed: 50% [two in four]; moral: 11.11% [one in nine]; none: 15.38% [four in 26]). The overall rate of expressed revulsion remained very close to constant (29.31% [17 in 58] for the earlier version).

The language used to discuss degeneration was similar. *The Athenaeum* called the book “unmanly, sickening, vicious (though not exactly what is called ‘improper’), and tedious” (“Novels of the Week” 824); the “hothouse” metaphor of unnatural, sickly growth occurs twice, with *The Bookseller* noting that “[t]he whole story from beginning to end breathes an unwholesome hothouse atmosphere” (499) and *The Theatre* saying, “Reading it, we move in a heavy atmosphere of warm incense and slumbering artificial light. We thread our way through a mob of courtier epigrams, all bowing, all murmuring to the white lily of beauty, all forced to premature growth in the hothouse of a somewhat sickly fancy” (“Reviews” 295). It is still the metaphor of a sickening degenerate atmosphere that dominates the more negative reviews, suggesting a constancy of the kind of negative interpretation received. However, this interpretation occurs at a lower rate.

**Table 11. Reviews and comments on the 1891 book version by moral judgement and French literature mention.**

**FRENCH  
LITERATURE**

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<b>IMMORAL</b>	1
<b>MIXED</b>	0
<b>MORAL</b>	3
<b>NONE</b>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	5

French literature appears in discussions at a higher rate than previously, at 45.45% (vs 20.69%). But where before there was some variety in names and references, this time, the main point of reference for three reviews—one judging it moral, one judging it immoral, one judging it without moral—is Balzac’s *La Peau de chagrin*. The discussions themselves suggest that the major concern is less with the disreputable subject matter of French literature than of the motif of a mostly realistic tale with a romantic element in the form of fantasy: *The Manchester Guardian*’s reviewer notes that “[i]f Balzac’s ‘Peau de Chagrin’ had never been written, if Dr. Jekyll [sic] and Mr. Hyde had never appeared, this ‘Picture of Dorian Gray’ would never have seen the light” (“Books of the Week” 9); *The Athenaeum*’s reviewer guesses, “The idea of the book may have been suggested by Balzac’s ‘Peau de Chagrin,’ and it is none the worse for that” (“Novels of the Week” 824); and, most explicitly, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*’s reviewer said, “The story is one of the essentially fantastic order, which Crébillon *films* and the boudoir novelists of his age may be said to have invented, in which the evolution of a modern and realistic plot is disturbed by the introduction of a single wholly incredible incident. This is a kind of story more frequent in French literature than in English, and the very type of it is Balzac’s *Peau de Chagrin*” (“Novels” 450). These reviewers, then, are not making a connection to Decadent literature; rather, these links are much more in line with the connection of the parable as fantasy-in-realism of *La Peau de chagrin* (see also footnote 20 on this possibility in the 1890 reviews).

The only explicit connection made with the Decadent movement is with Paul Bourget, courtesy of *The Daily Telegraph*: “In some respects the workmanship is a little like that of M. Paul Bourget, though the analytical power is not so great nor perhaps the psychology so thorough as in the best work of the French writer” (“Literature of the Day” 2). But *The Daily Telegraph*’s review was without negative judgement, and the reviewer even suggested that they would have found the story moral if Wilde had not made it clear that no moral should be found.

Thus, while French literature is mentioned at a much higher rate in the small sample, it is primarily for genre rather than any Decadent subject matter. None of these reviewers appear concerned with the taint of Decadent literature, in contrast to the few but vocal magazine-version reviewers who, for example, disapproved *Dorian Gray* being “spawned from the leprous literature of the French Décadents” (qtd in Mason, *Art and Morality* 55).

**Table 12. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement, romance literature mentions, and religious themes.**

	ROMANCE	RELIGIOUS THEMES (CHARACTER/EVENT)	RELIGIOUS THEMES (NOVEL/AUTHOR)
IMMORAL	2	0	0
MIXED	0	0	0
MORAL	2	1	2
NONE	4	2	0
TOTAL	8	3	2

In contrast, romance was much more broadly referenced in reviews of the book than in reviews of the magazine version (72.72% vs 41.38%). That said, where before, almost half who referenced *Dorian Gray*’s fantastical character in some way directly called it a romance, here

none do. The points of comparison are, unsurprisingly, fewer here: three bring up Stevenson or *Jekyll and Hyde* (37.5% of all tagged “Romance” vs the earlier 48.33%), none brought up Hawthorne (vs 33.33% earlier), and only Pater mentioned Poe (keeping Poe references at a constant 12.5%). As noted above, three cited Balzac’s *La Peau de chagrin*<sup>27</sup> (37.5%; only one directly cited *La Peau de chagrin* in 1890, and even counting all five references to Balzac, that amounts to only 20.83% of all romance references). Overall, this indicates that these reviewers read the work through the lens of a romance at a much higher rate than the earlier reviewers, and that while *Jekyll and Hyde* remained an important reference point, *La Peau de chagrin* became a much more relevant one. They still turned to the moral parable for their reference point, but here one less Gothic in character.

Association with religious themes was also up, although less dramatically. Four reviewers found religious themes either in characters/events or the novel/author (36.36% vs 24.14%), and two found those in the novel or author (18.18% vs 10.34%). Those who read religious themes still did so in the form of a religious parable, with *The Daily Telegraph*’s reviewer archly noting, “If Mr. Wilde had not himself assured us in his preface that no artist desires to prove anything, a virtuous reader might have found in the fate of the hero a tremendous and most un-Pagan moral as to the easiest route to the everlasting bonfire” (“Literature of the Day” 2). In another example, a reviewer for the *Manchester Guardian* connects the allegorical nature of the story to its moral conclusion while simultaneously criticizing the parable:

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<sup>27</sup> It is also possible that Pater was thinking of Balzac and similar fiction when he said, “Mr. Wilde’s work may fairly claim to go with that of Edgar Poe, and with some good French work of the same kind, done, probably, in more or less conscious imitation of it” (60).

The odd thing is that while he declares in his preface that art and beauty are real and morals are fiction, he has produced an allegory to show us that beauty is vain and its worship fatal, that self-indulgence and selfishness, which must be cruelty, will destroy a man in the end. If Balzac's "Peau de Chagrin" had never been written, if Dr. Jekyll [sic] and Mr. Hyde had never appeared, this "Picture of Dorian Gray" would never have seen the light. But the fault is that no symbol is suggested by the peculiar form of Mr. Wilde's magic, while beneath each of the other stories lies a tremendous truth. ("Books of the Week" 9)

Even as it is the "allegory" that shows us the moral conclusions, it is also the execution of the romance element as symbol that the reviewer criticizes. But overall, extensive discussion of morality was less common. Although reviewers still made the links to Gothic and other fantastical parables, they were no longer heavily debating whether it was moral in these terms. The heat seems to have died down.

**Table 13. Reviews and comments on the 1890 magazine version by moral judgement, reference to the Preface, and reference to the novel as an aesthetic object.**

	THE PREFACE	AESTHETIC OBJECT (NOVEL/AUTHOR)
<b>IMMORAL</b>	1	0
<b>MIXED</b>	0	0
<b>MORAL</b>	3	0
<b>NONE</b>	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	2

Finally, we address the two new themes, unique to reviews of the novel version. Because the prior reception did not allow us to examine reviewers' comments on these subjects (for lack of

appearance), both require somewhat more detailed examinations here than the topics covered above.

As noted above, both book design and Preface framed the story as a purely aesthetic rather than moral subject. And, among the two reviewers who commented on the aesthetic appearance of the novel (18.18%), this may have been successful: neither made any comment on the moral of the tale, for good or for ill. Those who commented on the Preface (63.63%) were more mixed. One of two reviewers who found the novel immoral referenced the preface (50%), three of four who found it moral cited it (75%), and three of five who abstained from moral judgement mentioned it (60%). Indeed, many reviewers responded directly to the Preface when deciding to deliver or withhold moral judgement. For example, the reviewer for *The Manchester Guardian* writes,

Mr. Oscar Wilde must be laughing in his sleeve when he puts that amazing preface of paradoxes to his enlarged edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Ward and Lock, pp. 334)—“There is no such thing as a moral book,” “The elect are those to whom beautiful things mean only beauty,” and so forth. The fact is that he has written a highly moral book, and, being surely himself one of the elect, he proves to us that beauty is not merely worthless but a snare. (“Books of the Week” 9)

*The Daily Telegraph*'s reviewer similarly implies a moral reading after noting the preface, saying, “If Mr. Wilde had not himself assured us in his preface that no artist desires to prove anything, a virtuous reader might have found in the fate of the hero a tremendous and most un-Pagan moral as to the easiest route to the everlasting bonfire” (“Literature of the Day” 2). And while *The Daily Telegraph*'s reviewer slips in its moral judgement by the backhand, the reviewer for *The Saturday Review* decides to truly oblige Wilde's instructions in the Preface, writing,



In his kaleidoscopic preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a preface made up of little fragments of coloured paradox which you may rattle into any shape you please, Mr. Wilde seems to claim for his tale consideration as a work of art, and to deprecate every other critical attitude. We are sure that he will not wish us to go beneath the surface of his book, or look upon its author in any light but that of one who desires to be, as he says, “the creator of beautiful things.” We will, accordingly, waive our right to ask whether certain subjects make a suitable theme for fiction, or whether the luscious fabrication of “a New Hedonism” is condoned by the fume of sulphur in the last chapter. (“Novels” 450)

But the reviewer for *The Glasgow Herald* takes it further, going so far as to not even address the moral question in favour of pure aesthetics: “In its present substantive form the book, with its unique and piquant binding and lettering, its characteristic title-page, and yet more characteristic preface, is a delight to eye and hand” (“Literature” 9). Here, even the reading of the Preface is translated into part of the aesthetic pleasure of “delight to eye and hand.” Their final suggestion to readers on the novel, that “[t]here may be some benighted mortal who has not yet read “Dorian Gray.” If after seeing the present edition of the story he refuses to buy it, he must indeed be a Philistine beyond hope” (9) is entirely in the frame of art and the visual appreciation of the work, not its content.

One of the two reviewers to condemn the novel as immoral brings up the Preface (50%); in this case, the reviewer does *not* directly respond to the command not to judge the morality of the book but does quote the relevant passage: “In a singular preface the author delivers himself of certain characteristic aphorisms: ‘The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or

badly written. That is all. All art is quite useless,' he finally exclaims as the last pronouncement of the school of Mawdle [sic] and Botticelli Brown." (*The Bookseller* 449). While the snipe about *Punch's* caricatures of the Aesthetic movement responds to the overall tone of the aphorisms, the specific allegation that art is outside of morality is not addressed. Instead, the judgement simply comes down: the book is immoral.

These reviews suggest that, while the Preface and design of the book did not wholly compel reviewers to judge the book on only aesthetic grounds, some did respond to them in determining whether to judge the book on moral grounds or aesthetic ones. Other reviewers considered the novel obvious enough in moral that they mocked the command not to judge it by morality; when they did so, they, too, turned their focus more to the aesthetic qualities of the work. The moral debate was not absent, but compared to the earlier reception, it seemed that for the book version, it took second place to the discussion of aesthetics.

## 1.5 Conclusion

So, what did republication do? Initially, it seems, very little. While revisions changed the resonances of the novel with key themes that had affected the initial reception, and while reviewers of the second published version very possibly responded to these with higher rates of positive moral judgements and aesthetic discussions, these reviews were few, likely because sales of this version were also few. At Wilde's trials, while lawyers obsessed over the differences between editions, those differences only served to emphasize the resonances with degeneration and immoral contagion that put Wilde in the crosshairs of the law. Revision changed resonances, but republication did not spread the revised version widely.

But republication did something later, after yet another republication event: that of Robbie Ross's *Collected Edition* in 1908. This republication, which used the 1891 text, was the basis for later publications of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Jackson 366). The 1891 text's resultant omnipresence was to the point that the magazine version "was practically inaccessible outside used book rooms until Wilfred Edener used it as the basis of a critical edition of the novel in 1964" (Lawler, "First Manuscript" 126). Even now, with the 1890 text available, it is the 1891 text that dominates modern critical tradition—the version most likely to appear in classrooms, the version most likely to be used in discussions of the work, even the version most likely to be adapted for film or television or even radio drama (one only has to check for James Vane's presence to determine that the majority of adaptations of the work are relying on the later text). This is the text that is republished into new forms, often with terrible covers.

Yet our understanding of the novel's reception is primarily rooted in our mythology about the reviews for the version we do not read. And as this chapter shows, those reviews were responding to the 1890 version's resonances with themes and subjects that were adjusted in revision. Thus, we come to another curious consequence of republication: Ross's later republication allowed the changed resonances of the 1891 versions to endure and perpetuate at a greater rate than their 1890 counterpart, such that they were carried into further republications—the more populous and successful breed of the species. But the mythology that developed out of the first publication's reception has been so powerful and influential that it has persisted all the while, enmeshing even the revised version in the narrative it presents. Rather than publication of a revised version

putting distance between the versions, the eventual consequence of republication was that the text of one fused with the history of the latter into an amalgam of word and myth.

Wilde's preface to the 1891 edition insists that "[i]t is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors" (*Picture* 168 [1891]). Ferrer asserts that it is the reception of the text, not the artist's declaration of it as text, that produces the *avant-texte* (230). Even Pater's moment of "quickened, multiplied consciousness" (291) comes in the moment the spectator receives the art. And a text, like a type and a species and a beautiful young man, can be received over and over, striking a note that is different, but similar. By studying variations in resonance, we observe a shift in the forces that shape the structure and meaning as they come. Revision is not conducted in a vacuum; if anything, it is conducted in an orchestra, with each changed note offering differing associations for the revised work. It is a change in odour, or resonance, an impression remade in the world, returning but different, moving further from its first publication and, in doing so, coming closer to other contexts, frameworks, and fields. Through republication, there is a remaking. But at least for *Dorian*, that effort to produce new resonances cannot escape the music played on its first production.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Republication as Nostalgic Return: *Brideshead*

#### *Revisited* Republished

When an author is given the opportunity to revise before a republication, they can revisit the past and decide how they want to re-present their work to the public, perhaps based on earlier reception and experiences since publication. The past work can be a place of consolation for reputation lost or a moment of opportunity to reflect on progress; it can be seen as a great triumph, or its imperfections can sting. Authors, like anyone, are liable to change, and so are their opinions on the works they create—this is the very reason why pinning down “final authorial intention” has troubled editors for so long. Republication can therefore offer authors the opportunity to write those changed opinions into the world through a tangible republication from a new perspective. The opportunity is not only to take a retrospective look and rewrite but to enter that revised conception into the public record.

The question of author intentionality lingers on the edge of any discussion of revision and republication (see Introduction), but there are times when textual scholars have explicit reports on the motivations and reasoning behind an author’s decision to revise and republish a work. Thus, in the case of Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*, we have the evidence of letters written at first publication, responses to reviewers, and the Preface for the 1960 edition explaining his reasoning behind the changes he made to this work.

*Brideshead Revisited* offers an opportunity to consider how authorial changes in perspective can be reflected in the revised literary and philosophical resonances of a narrative that are then allowed to, in theory, replace an earlier publication. In *Brideshead Revisited*, this is primarily expressed in revisions that affect the relationship of the self to the past in a journey towards renewal of faith. The post-War nostalgia of the 1945 edition is refashioned to change the fundamental mood of the piece to something more suited to the post-post-War, 1960 point of view. Republication thus becomes Waugh's chance to rewrite the past again.

## 2.1 Summary and Publication History

Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, first published in 1945 (but also 1944; see below), is a first-person narrative, beginning in its prologue with Captain Charles Ryder of the British Army "loveless, childless, divorced, homeless" in 1944. Ryder arrives with his soldiers at a country estate converted into barracks, only to realize that it is the familiar Brideshead Castle. This realization, concluding the prologue, triggers the sequence of memories that constitute the main thirteen chapters of the story. They detail his relationship with the Marchmain family, landed aristocratic Catholics, from the 1920s to the outbreak of war. His relationship begins at Oxford with the second son of the family, Lord Sebastian Flyte, in the form of an idyllic sort of second childhood—the Arcadia of the section's title, "Et in Arcadia Ego"—and follows Charles's first encounters with Brideshead Castle, his developing connection to but inability to fully grasp the Marchmain family and their religion, and his discovery of his love of art. This idyll comes crashing down as Sebastian suffers from alcoholism and eventually flees his

family, part of a series of departures as the family collapses and scatters. The novel then jumps over the “ten dead years” wherein Charles marries, becomes a successful painter, and has a child<sup>28</sup> and resumes with a trip on a cruise where Charles encounters Julia, the eldest Marchmain daughter. He begins an affair with her, for which his relationship with Sebastian was the “forerunner.” As the Second World War approaches, Julia and Charles divorce their spouses and plan to marry, and with Lord Marchmain returning home to die, they are offered the chance to inherit Brideshead Castle over the firstborn son, Brideshead (known as Bridey). But when Lord Marchmain refreshes his Catholic faith on his deathbed, Julia finds that she, too, has been drawn back to her faith, and she refuses to go against Catholic doctrine and wed Charles as a divorcee. In the epilogue, the narrative returns to 1944 where, on seeing the chapel of Brideshead Castle open and receiving worship (after being closed during the main story), Charles is described as seeming “unusually cheerful” by his second in command.

Narratively, the structure is more complex than a summary suggests. David Brailow argues that the novel structurally reflects a reminiscence, and so it at times seems to visit first one memory, then fold backwards to an earlier one, before moving forward again (2). One striking example of this is the first chapter’s opening memory of Charles’s first visit to Brideshead, which, after an introductory scene of the approach to Brideshead, transitions backwards to Charles’s coming up to Oxford and first meetings with Sebastian, before finally returning to the visit. These movements are, as Brailow says, “structured to parallel the workings of a memory” (2), if a reasonably organized one.

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<sup>28</sup> The second child, Charlotte, is strongly implied not to be Charles’s biological offspring.

*Brideshead Revisited*'s publication history is also more complex than a brief overview might suggest. In terms of merely published editions, not attending to manuscript or proof copies, and ignoring reprints that use the same text<sup>29</sup> the novel has existed more or less publicly in no less than nine forms, each of which has some textual variation:

1. An author's edition (1944, though dated 1945), given privately to friends (Davis, "Clarifying" 306n2).
2. A serial publication in *Town and Country*, published in four parts, once a month from November 1944 to February 1945 (306n2).
3. A first edition with Chapman and Hall (1945) for the UK (306n2).
4. A revised edition (1945) with Chapman and Hall, also for the UK (306n2).
5. A third Chapman and Hall edition in the same year (1945) (Davis, *Writer* 178n13).
6. The Little, Brown and Company edition (1945, also imprinted 1946) for the United States (Davis, "Clarifying" 306n2).
7. The first uniform edition (1949) (306n2).
8. The 1951 Penguin edition (Davis, "Serial" 35).
9. The second uniform edition (1960), which received the most extensive revision, including a new preface and division of chapters. (Davis, "Clarifying" 306n2).

Setting every single one against the others, especially with the reprints, is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. As such, for my major points of reference, I have chosen to primarily consider the relationship between the 1945 Little, Brown and Company edition

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<sup>29</sup> While, as noted in the Introduction, republications with the same text are relevant generally, they are not covered in this chapter.



[LBC] and the second uniform edition [1960]. The former was chosen because it was among the most popular at the time and is the basis of the later republications still broadly circulated in the United States;<sup>30</sup> the latter was chosen because it saw the most extensive revision before publication, and, as a uniform edition, has further cultural significance as a republication event. Published as part of a set that by its very nature signified Waugh's literary success, the 1960 uniform edition was a publication for Waugh's legacy, in that it was a standardized presentation of Waugh's work over his entire lifetime, available to be consumed and potentially archived by the reader public the same way they may collect uniform editions of Dickens or Mark Twain ("Uniform Edition"). Essentially, "to put a living novelist's works into a standard edition is to make a claim for the permanence and importance of the writer's work, to establish a canon, to suggest the classic" (Willis 156). Thus, in terms of publication events that do something, we can consider both as having particularly loud resonances that might be juxtaposed against one another.

Further, these are generally the editions around which reception has clustered. Most reviews to the earliest versions came within the 1945–6 period and were working from either one of the Chapman and Hall editions or the Little, Brown and Company edition

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<sup>30</sup> Some variations between the 1945 Little, Brown and Company edition and the 1960 uniform edition appear to be differences in the line of transmission. For example, the Chapman and Hall 1945 edition describes Sebastian as "entrancing, with that epicene beauty" (29), while the Little, Brown and Company edition (1945) describes him as "magically beautiful, with that epicene quality" (31) (Davis, "Notes" 4–5). The former variation is the one used in the uniform edition. Republication as a shifting of resonance allows for these to be chosen as points of comparison because any difference, whether textual, paratextual, or contextual, provides for a shift. It may even be fair to say, given the immense popularity of *Brideshead* in America and Waugh's noted displeasure with this fact (Davis, *Past Redeemed*, 9), that the 1960 edition *particularly* works as a resonance shift in relation to the widely circulating American edition; this 1945 version is what American reprints still tend to be based on today (Koziol 85n6).

(Stannard 34–8). Reviewers who returned to the work in 1960 did so with the retrospective view that Waugh had established himself as “one of the masters of contemporary fiction” (37). This gives us, as Davis puts it, two stages in the tradition of evaluating the novel (*Past Redeemed* 11). Selected for the Book-of-the-Month Club, the American edition (published January 1946) was a major, popular success (14). Initial critics generally praised the maturation of Waugh’s writing and were even positive about its Catholic themes, but Edmund Wilson criticized the American edition on the grounds of snobbery and Catholic exclusiveness and highlighted linguistic indulgences and obsession with high culture. These critical threads—particularly the accusations of snobbishness and the lack of persuasiveness of the Catholic theme—have been enduring (Stannard 36–7). They have defined the views that came after, such that, although the novel initially received mostly high praise, critical opinion turned in early 1946 towards the “negative criticisms [that] have dominated discussion for more than four decades” (Davis, *Past Redeemed* 12). Waugh responded to many of these comments in *Life* in April 1946, rejecting criticism of his style, his use of religion as a theme, and his snobbery (Stannard 248–53) and continuing to assert a belief that *Brideshead Revisited* was his best work (252). Later, when debate over the novel broke out between Donnat O’Donnell and T.J. Barrington in *Bell* from December 1946 to March 1947, Waugh once more replied, this time to correct the comment on his personal attributes, which is that he did, in fact, convert to Catholicism in good faith and that while he was perhaps a snob, he was critical not only of the lower class Hooper but of the *nouveau riche* Rex Mottram and old aristocratic Lady Celia Ryder, so his snobbishness may be considered far-reaching (270–1).

In the 1945 publications, Waugh offered his readers warnings that were meant to shape reading, or rather to deter certain kinds of readings. The first, printed in all editions, was the Author's Note: "I am not I; thou art not he or she; they are not they": an injunction against a biographical reading. The Chapman and Hall edition also carried a second warning regarding the major intention of the book, calling it "an attempt to trace the workings of the Divine purpose in a pagan world," which Waugh believed would be "uncongenial alike to those who look back on that pagan world with unalloyed affection, and to those who see it as transitory, insignificant, and, already, hopefully passed"—but he added that it may appeal both to "those who have the leisure to read a book word by word for the interest of the writer's use of language" and to those "who look to the future with black foreboding and need more solid comfort than rosy memories" (qtd in Davis, *Past Redeemed* 13).

But by 1960, Waugh appeared to have had a change of heart about some of his earlier comments. While his warning Author's Note remains in the 1960 edition, in the newly added Preface, he no longer seems to believe that this is his best work or even one of which he should be proud. Certainly, he still declares that he had "no apology" for the theme of "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters" (9). However, Waugh felt his writing indulged in gluttony "for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful" (9) and called this "gluttony" a response to the deprivations of the Second World War. This is a stark contrast to his earlier comments that one of the novel's key points of interest was its language. For this edition, while he determined to make "many small additions and some substantial cuts," he said

that he left the prose mostly intact on the basis that revision would destroy “an essential part of the book” (9). Ultimately, Waugh describes the work as “a souvenir of the Second War rather than of the ‘twenties or of the ‘thirties, with which it ostensibly deals” (10). Evidently, distance in time and circumstances had changed his opinion, and he revised accordingly, though not extensively.

The reviewers that followed seemed to feel that these cuts did little to treat the essential issues of the work. David Pryce-Jones asserted that “[it] is unlikely that many a student’s thesis will be written comparing the new text of ‘Brideshead Revisited’ with the old”<sup>31</sup> as “the alterations are few and unimportant, toning down hyperbole, concealing some architectural references about Brideshead and spoiling a few jokes” (272). Waugh’s snobbery remains an issue for Pryce-Jones, but the review was contextualized more broadly by Waugh’s recent writing. This assessment of Waugh’s work generally appears to be in relation to the uniform editions themselves, as Pryce-Jones makes note of Waugh joining the “uneasy company of Shaw, Wells and D.H. Lawrence” in having “ten of [his] books published simultaneously by Penguins [*sic*]” (276). John Coleman also takes an overview of Waugh’s writing in his review and finds the changes do nothing to stop *Brideshead Revisited* from being “a basically sapless piece of work” (278). Likewise, while Frank Kermode comments on a few of the changes to the text, these seem to do little in his eyes to correct the intertwining of Catholicism and snobbishness brought up by earlier reviewers (279–87). The general response to the 1960 republication seems to have been to ultimately find *Brideshead Revisited* essentially unchanged and to put the work in the context of Waugh’s other output, just as the uniform editions do by their

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<sup>31</sup> Not many, no.

format and structure—comparisons that were likely a consequence of *Brideshead* being republished as part of such a series.

These latter reviews, considering Waugh's earlier works through the lens of his later works, considered *Brideshead* itself a backwards look at an illustrious past and hope for its restoration. Looking at the novel fifteen years after its first publication, they suggested that *Brideshead* is essentially a novel of retrospective nostalgia. What they seemed to overlook by glossing over Waugh's revisions, however, is that in revisiting the novel for republication, Waugh constructed a *new* conception of nostalgia through revisions to the construction of the novel's narrator, its protagonist, and one of its most important secondary characters.

## 2.2 Revisiting: Memory and the Nostalgic Subject

The term *nostalgia* originates in reference to a "disease" among soldiers that was often considered fatal: it was "the state of moral decay arising from a forced separation, when an individual is torn from the social and geographic environment of his childhood and youth," describing the pain a soldier felt "from not being in his native country, or from fear that he will never return" (Fuentenebro and Valiente 405). As a medical term, then, it did not describe only an obsession with returning home but also the "melancholy" response to loss of home. While medicalization has faded from our use of *nostalgia* in the present day, its connection to loss, and specifically a loss that is not or is feared to be not recoverable, has continued; it is a melancholic form of grief where the mourner cannot let go of what is no longer there. Nostalgia is, as Jonathan Boulter puts it, "a mode of being that places the subject in continual relation to the past" (118). Because nostalgia is a

continual relation to the past, and because it is a relation defined by loss, in nostalgia, the act of memory is also a form of preservation through memory. The nostalgic subject, who does not want to lose what they are mourning, calls up the past through memory and so creates it in their mind; in doing so, they make what they are remembering part of themselves. It is a project of preservation that makes the subject into an archive of what they fear to lose (Boulter 12).<sup>32</sup> Nostalgic attachment is an unwillingness to let go so strong that it becomes a reconstruction of identity that incorporates the past into the self.

Nostalgia is a particularly potent lens through which to look at *Brideshead Revisited's* engagement with loss and memory not merely because as *Brideshead's* narrator, Ryder,<sup>33</sup> boldly declares that “[his] theme is memory ... for we possess nothing certainly except the past” (224 [LBC]) but also because nostalgia is a place-oriented concept. As noted above, the term originated to specifically describe the desire to return to one’s childhood country; it was coined from the words “*Nostos*, return to the native land; and *Algos*, suffering or affliction” (Hofter qtd in Fuentenebro and Valiente 405) as a translation for the German *Heimweh* (405), which itself is composed of *Heim*, home, and *Weh*, (psychological) pain or misery. It is a desire to return home (Boulter 166), literal or figurative. This focus on location is in line with how Pierre Nora frames “realms of memory”<sup>34</sup> as places (or objects or events) “where memory crystallizes and secretes

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<sup>32</sup> Boulter argues that both history and subject are impossible and that history must not and cannot be preserved (12). Charles Ryder gives it his best attempt.

<sup>33</sup> Following Davis’s example, I refer to the Charles Ryder who tells the story of *Brideshead Revisited* as “Ryder” while the Charles Ryder who lived out its events is “Charles.” This distinguishes the subject doing the remembering from the subject being remembered.

<sup>34</sup> *Lieux de memoire*, also translated as “sites of memory” or “memory spaces.”

itself,” such that certain sites come to embody memory<sup>35</sup> even as the continuity of memory is disrupted by major changes in society (7). And so, in the middle of the Second World War, ruminating on how the old rustic beauty and traditional way of life is being torn apart and built upon for a new (and in his view, lesser) way of being English, Charles Ryder merely hears Brideshead’s name once more and, all at once, “the phantoms of those haunted late years began to take flight” (15 [LBC]). The name of the location awakens memory as he longs to return to Brideshead not just as place but as the setting for younger, happier years.

This initiates the process of incorporating the past, symbolized by Brideshead Castle, into his identity through memory. Brideshead is both the site of loss and of memory for that loss, and so, through calling up the past in his mind and transforming it into a narrative, Ryder creates an archive of the past and makes it a part of himself and his identity. He explains that his memories “are [his] life—for we possess nothing certainly except the past” and that they are “memorials and pledges of the vital hours of a lifetime” (225 [LBC]). Memories are both tributes to the “vital hours” of a life and the very cornerstone of identity. By revisiting his memories as a form of memorial, Ryder is recreating his sense of self to incorporate Brideshead Castle and all that he experienced there. This is the archival task of nostalgia.

However, his description of the past, the events that occur, and what he says of its meaning all change between the LBC and 1960 editions. While many of these changes

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<sup>35</sup> For Nora, this is about collective memory. For more on *Brideshead* as an act of collective memory, see Rothstein.

are minor, their cumulative effect causes the way *Brideshead Revisited* explores nostalgia to differ between its earliest and latest major editions.

## 2.3 Revisions to the 1960 Edition

A not inconsiderable amount of research has been conducted on the variations between editions. Robert Murray Davis has been a leading voice in exploring and arguing for the significance of variations between editions (“Clarifying”; *Past Redeemed; Writer; “Serial”; “Revisited and Revised”*), and scholars have also noted the significance of the differences between versions in their analysis of larger themes of the work (e.g., Stevens; Koziol). I add to the work on the textual differences between editions by considering the relevance of the temporal moment of republication.

As noted above, Waugh described his revisions to the 1960 edition in its Preface as being “many small additions and some substantial cuts,” noting, “I have modified the grosser passages but have not obliterated them because they are an essential part of the book” (9). An overview of the kinds of differences between the LBC and 1960 editions suggests that the revisions generally fall into four main categories:

1. *Revisions to character*, which tend to be primarily although not exclusively changes to dialogue and often are differences more in nuance than in broad strokes; an example of such a change outside dialogue is the change of Ryder’s summary of Rex’s speech from “He wanted a woman; he wanted the best on the market, and he wanted her cheap” (176 [LBC]) to “he wanted her at his own price” (197 [1960]);



2. *Revisions to reflective passages*, which affect what statements the narration directly makes about ideas such as memory or youth, e.g., the cutting of the lines bolded below that describe the memory effect of the jewel-encrusted tortoise that Rex gifted Julia as “one of those needle-hooks of experience which catch the attention when larger matters are at stake, **and remain in the mind when they are forgotten, so that years later it is a bit of gilding, or a certain smell, or the tone of a clock’s striking which recalls one to a tragedy**” (164 [LBC]; cut lines bolded);
3. *Revisions of descriptions*, which were often cuts but occasionally additions, substitutions, or restructurings, e.g., “The diamonds in [Julia’s] hair and on her fingers flashed with fire” (246 [LBC]) was restructured into “The diamonds flashed in her hair and on her fingers” (272 [1960]); and
4. *Alterations of events*, which are invariably changes to parts of scene rather than wholesale additions to, substitutions of, or eliminations of large chunks of the book, e.g., the cutting of the few lines referencing the issues with plumbing at Lord Marchmain’s (96 [LBC]; 109 [1960]).

There are, of course, places where these categories intermingle; a description of a character is also a characterization, and an event may also serve to characterize individuals. Moreover, because the novel is narrated by Charles Ryder from the distance of years, revisions to the narration are also revisions to Ryder’s narrative voice and therefore to the Ryder who is narrating. While this is less the case to revisions of other characters’ characterization—there is little to be said about Ryder the narrator in the difference between Sebastian saying Aloysius has been put “in the bedder” (31 [LBC])

and him being put “next door” (45 [1960])—some changes to characterization *do* reflect on Ryder. For example, Sebastian is described in the LBC as “magically beautiful, with that epicene quality which in extreme youth sings aloud for love and withers at the first cold wind” (31 [LBC]) and then in 1960 as “entrancing, with that epicene beauty which in extreme youth sings aloud for love and withers at the first cold wind” (40 [1960]).

Certainly, this changes how Sebastian is characterized by putting emphasis on his effect (that he is entrancing to others) or on his intrinsic quality (magic beauty). However, this also affects Charles’s character: in 1960, Ryder reflects on Sebastian *as* entrancing, and so we see that his focus, retrospectively, is on remembering Sebastian’s effect rather than his looks themselves, meaning that in the latter case, the narrator—and therefore Charles Ryder in reflection—prioritizes Sebastian’s effect on him, and perhaps is even still under it. The presence of Ryder’s experience of Sebastian at present in his description of Sebastian in the past is alluded to by the end of the line in both versions, describing the quick withering of Sebastian’s looks; retrospective awareness of Sebastian’s fate is very much part of how Ryder describes Sebastian.

With this in mind, we can now examine how the revisions adjust the construction of Ryder as a nostalgic subject in the act of remembering.

### 2.3.1 The Nostalgic Subject: Ryder in Reflection

The passages Waugh cut the most were the reflective ones. Of the twelve sections with cuts of thirty or more words, seven were passages of reflection, including the largest cut of the novel, the opening to Book I or II, “A Twitch upon the Thread,” at 330 cut words. The cuts and changes to these sections alter the narrator’s statements on memory, youth,

and other concepts by shifting focus from an exchange of the past for the present to the teleology inherent in progression on a path towards God.

Panegyrics on youth are frequent in *Brideshead*; one of the earliest comments on nostalgic reflection makes an argument for how Ryder intends on handling his memories:

How ungenerously in later life we disclaim the virtuous moods of our youth, living in retrospect long, summer days of unreflecting dissipation, **Dresden figures of pastoral gaiety! Our wisdom, we prefer to think, is all of our own gathering, while, if the truth be told, it is, most of it, the last coin of a legacy that dwindles with time.** There is no candour in a story of early manhood which leaves out of account the home-sickness for nursery morality, the regrets and resolutions of amendment, the black hours which, like zero on the roulette table, turn up with roughly calculable regularity. (62 [LBC]; bolded material cut in 1960).

The essential premise of the passage, that nostalgic reflection on youth often overlooks the misery experienced in early life, remains regardless of cuts, as does the touch of irony of Ryder reflecting on these “virtuous moods” while describing how he once moped about his father’s house feeling abandoned by Sebastian. Across all editions, Ryder is making a direct and candid declaration that, in his narration, he intends on eschewing nostalgic glossing-over of misery. It is a kind of methodological statement regarding his story and its authenticity.

The methodology, however, is more strongly stated in 1945, compared to the more focused comments of 1960. By citing these “Dresden figures,” Ryder moves this

discussion of memory into the realm of commodities—popular, unrealistic commodities (Cliffe) of an imaginary past that can be set up on the mantle to admire. This analogy is put against the purchasing power of wisdom as a legacy that *is lost over time*. The forward motion of time thus becomes an implicit exchange: the Dresden figures of nostalgia gained in old age sit in contrast to the wisdom of youth, which is now lost. Movement away from youth is not just loss of pleasure and joy but also of a kind of knowledge. In 1960, Ryder makes a more focused declaration that there are black moods in youth and that, by implication, he intends to be honest rather than nostalgic in his reminiscences about the past; in the LBC, he heaps extra scorn onto memories that turn the past into something cheap and false. The essential concept is the same. But with that is the additional assertion not lost in the cut lines: that youth has a particular wisdom in it that is inevitably lost over time. Ryder's refusal to be dishonest in his memories thus resonates also with a sense of longing for the legacy he had then, now only remaining as wisdom. The narrator in the present, remembering the past, posits that between now and then there has been an exchange.

Several other lines from the LBC edition, cut in the 1960, resonate with the idea that the past and the present relate to each other through an exchange. At the very close of the Prologue, as Captain Charles Ryder in 1944 comes upon Brideshead Castle and hears its name, he looks on the present layout of Brideshead and overlays this description of Brideshead now with his memory and knowledge of Brideshead then. This description is bookended by cuts.

Outside the hut I stood **awed and** bemused **between two realities and two dreams**. ... From where I stood the house was hidden by a green spur, but I knew

well how and where it lay, couched among the lime-trees like a hind in the bracken. **Which was the mirage, which the palpable earth?** (15–6 [LBC]; bolded material cut from 1960)

The passage itself is rife with lines that contrast the past and present, constant between editions: Ryder mentions the camp, representing the war and awful bustle of the present, before immediately moving to discussion of the stream and the splendour of an ordered man-made pastoral past on the opposite side where “we used to sometimes walk to tea” (16 [LBC]). Such juxtapositions between an ugly and unpleasant present and a beautiful past persist throughout the description, establishing a relationship between the two time periods through description alone. However, the two cut lines frame this relationship in a way that resonates with Ryder’s suggestion, in the cut lines about youth’s wisdom, of an exchange between them. The “two realities and two dreams” hold the time periods in parallel. *Both* are realities. *Both* are dreams. Ryder’s question regarding the “mirage” and “palpable earth” indicates a confusion that comes from equivalency. In the 1945 LBC, Ryder experiences the relationship between past and present as an uncertain trade of equal elements; in 1960, he does not.

Another, much later reflective passage also shows revisions to the LBC’s resonances with exchange, and here we see the alternate relation between past and present that is more strongly argued for in 1960. Discussing the progression of love, and specifically Sebastian as “the forerunner,” meaning the predecessor to Julia in his affections (257 [LBC]), Charles reiterates and elaborates on the concept of the forerunner in the long internal monologue:

(‘)Perhaps,(‘) I thought, while her words still hung in the air between us like a wisp of tobacco smoke—a thought to fade and vanish like smoke without a trace—(‘)perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols; **a hill of many invisible crests; doors that open as in a dream to reveal only a further stretch of carpet and another door** (*a vagabond-language scrawled on gate-posts and paving-stones along the weary road that others have tramped before us*); perhaps you and I are types and this sadness which sometimes falls between us springs from disappointment in our search, each straining now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace of two ahead of us. (303 [LBC]; 355 [1960]; bolded material cut from 1960, enclosed and italicized material added to 1960; lack of closing quotation mark in original)

This monologue maintains its essential concept of the idea of past, more imperfect forms of love being set aside and replaced by newer ones, in what Scott J. Roniger parallels to the idea of successive loves replaced by higher ones described in Plato’s *Symposium* (44). The culmination of these succession of loves is, of course the love of God and Charles’s embrace of the Catholic faith.<sup>36</sup> Charles’s ambiguous concept of the forerunner in this passage is a version of the theological concept of “type” and, implicitly, antitype in Christianity, where previous figures of the narrative in the Old Testament are types that foreshadow and are superseded by their antitypes. Julia (and Sebastian before Julia) is the “type”; left unstated is the antitype for which the search is conducted, God and the relationship of love Charles will have with him. While both editions imply the teleology

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<sup>36</sup> For a larger discussion of the structural patterns of repetition and elaboration that bring Charles to the Catholic faith as suggested by Charles’s forerunner comment, see Raby; Davis, *Past Redeemed*.

of this journey from type to antitype, it is much more strongly pronounced by the metaphor of the graffiti on the road when compared to the series of doors. 1945 offers an exchange of hills and doors for different but potentially equivalent hills and doors; nothing distinguishes each from the next in this metaphorical framework. In contrast, the road travelled by others not only puts Julia and Charles in the context of a larger history but also implies an eventual end destination. Thus in 1945, the repetition reinforces the idea of a kind of equivalence like that of the past–present exchange, while in 1960, the repetition of the forerunner is escalating iteration that leads to a particular endpoint in the present. Teleology replaces the ambiguity of exchange.

Iteration as an exchange and iteration as a ladder towards an end point, of course, are not mutually exclusive concepts and can exist simultaneously. However, where these two ideas occur together, the cuts in the 1960 edition consistently de-emphasize the significance of the exchange by lowering emphasis on equivalent repetition while either adding or retaining the significance of a movement towards the divine. Both appear together in Ryder’s panegyric on the languor of youth, which asserts that much of the experiences of youth will return—“The zest, the generous affections, the illusions, the despair, all the traditional attributes of Youth—all save this [languor]—come and go with us through life” (79 [LBC])—while also implying the teleology of the path to faith by referencing the Beatific Vision, perfect salvation in communion with God and the Saints. From a Catholic perspective, there is no end point more concrete than that communion. However, the 1960 edition cuts a lengthy proclamation that “again and again in ripper years we experience, under a new stimulus, what we thought had been finally left behind, the authentic impulse to action, the renewal of power and its concentration on a new

object; again and again a new truth is revealed to us in whose light all our previous knowledge must be rearranged” (79 [LBC]). Because the idea that all elements of youth save languor “come and go with us through life” has already been put forward in the sentence just before this one, the 1960 edition is more concise. Its concision, however, also drops (as the cuts to the Dresden figures passage do) the implication of wisdom in youth—the “authentic impulse to action” and the “new truth” propose youth as containing insight and intelligence that recurs through life—and de-emphasizes the element of equivalent repetition simply by dwelling on it less.

Repetition is, of course, a feature of nostalgia. The desire to return home that haunted the Swiss in France and so inspired the coining of *nostalgia* (Fuentenebro and Valiente 405) provokes a kind of compulsive repetition. The nostalgic subject who uses memory to return over and over to the happy past recreates the longed-for past/home in mind and memory and so becomes an archive for the past they long for (Boulter 5). We can see in this impulse how Ryder’s reflections turn him into a historian who archives “each sign and site of memory” (Rothstein 328). But repetition is not just about getting back to the happiness of the past, and Ryder himself notes that his youth was not just happiness; as Jill Plain observes, for Ryder his memories of the past are “both a place of consolation and a site of loss” (171). Nostalgia is rooted in a kind of trauma, of the irretrievable loss that obsesses the homesick (Boulter 6), and trauma invites repetition as much as desire does. One might return again and again to the good thing now gone as a form of consolation or a way to avoid an unpleasant present moment, but one may also revisit the causes of loss, as if perhaps to find some sense for how it may have been avoided then and so with new knowledge avoid future losses. Perhaps one may revisit that loss to try to



find some higher reason in all the pain one experienced. One may even revisit the event simply because one can't *not*.<sup>37</sup>

Whatever reason for the compulsion to relive the painful past through memory or experience, it is described in more detail in the LBC edition than in the 1960. In both editions, Ryder describes the jewel-encrusted tortoise that Rex gifted Julia as something that “became a memorable part of the evening, one of those needle-hooks of experience which catch the attention when larger matters are at stake” (164 [LBC]; 186 [1960]) but in the 1945 LBC he describes the specific mechanism of return, concluding the sentence with how such events “remain in the mind when they are forgotten, so that years later it is a bit of gilding, or a certain smell, or the tone of a clock’s striking which recalls one to a tragedy” (165). That triggering of memory, the way it persistently comes back against one’s will, is his greater preoccupation in the LBC, while in 1960 Ryder allows the “catch[ing]” of his attention but is not compulsively drawn back. This is the same intrusiveness Ryder describes in his philosophizing on memory as being like pigeons that are peacefully everywhere “until, suddenly, the noon gun boomed and in a moment, with a flutter and sweep of wings, the pavement was bare and the whole sky above dark with a tumult of fowl” (225 [LBC]). But while this line shared in editions allows for memory as a sudden returning shock, in 1945 he offers an addition of memory “perching sometimes, if I stood still, on my shoulder **or pecking a broken biscuit from between my lips**” (225 [LBC]; bolded lines cut from 1960). Even before the tumult, Ryder describes memories

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<sup>37</sup> While Freud ultimately decided that repetition compulsion was too “daemonic” in the end and invoked the death drive to explain it, most current theorists of trauma consider the repetitive need to relive trauma an attempt to master the moment of trauma, integrate it into the mind, or come to terms with the feelings it provokes (Herman 42; but see also P. Russell for a contemporary case for repetition compulsion’s “daemonic” character).

as not just lingering around him in 1945 but as persistently interacting with him— intruding with invasiveness. The narrator of the LBC is overwhelmed by his memories, drawn in again by the repetition of them again and again against his will; they still preoccupy the narrator of 1960, but key cuts reducing resonances with intrusion and compulsion from the earlier edition suggest that in this version of the story, Ryder has more control over his journey into the past.

The largest single cut in the novel—the over three hundred words excised from the opening paragraphs of “A Twitch upon the Thread”—declare, through their description of the lost past, exactly what it is that Ryder continues to return to and so mark a difference between how the two versions of Ryder relate to the past. Ryder declares that his memories “are the memorials and pledges of the vital hours of a lifetime” (225 [LBC]). He calls them “hours of afflatus” and likens them in an extended metaphor to when “a race which for centuries has lived content, unknown,” preoccupied with the basic work of survival and no more, suddenly engage in greatness. But he specifically mentions two kinds of greatness, and the first is “all manner of crimes” and may “go down in the end of agony”; descriptions of “a record of new heights scaled and new rewards won” come next (225 [LBC]). Despite this comingling of horror and pain with success and triumph, the return to normalcy is described with great pathos: “the vision fades, the soul sickens, and the routine survival starts again” (225 [LBC]). Describing this past, which seems as horrible as it is beautiful, Ryder longs for and lingers in this idea of hours where the highest and the lowest come together. This impression is echoed by the next paragraph, also wholly cut, which contrasts the heightened experiences described against a humdrum day-to-day life where “we are seldom single or unique” and “get

borne along, out of sight of the press, unresisting” except for these brief interludes of intensity (225–6 [LBC]). Ryder seems to be yearning for a hard, gemlike flame with which one cannot always burn, no matter how much one might like to.<sup>38</sup> As he recreates the past to integrate it into himself, he does not just integrate Brideshead Castle as the English country house symbolizing order and tradition (Hemmings 151) but also chaos and upheaval—not just the Roman Empire in decline and fall, but the declining and falling itself. In the LBC, where he is driven to repetition, the past is a site of both great pain and great joy, but because these heightened emotions only exist in memories, the intrusive memories also bring vibrance to a dull existence. We can see therefore what the trade is, what Ryder has lost in exchange for finding the grace of God and the faith of the Catholic Church—why the Ryder of the LBC is caught between two realities and two dreams.

But the Ryder of 1960 is not. In his analyses and reflections, Ryder of the LBC explores in greater detail the value and worthiness found in youth, describes memory and the past as offering a trade between the heights of the past against newfound faith, and is compelled by repetition. The Ryder of 1960 focuses more on the importance of honesty and candour, frames the relationship between past and present as a progression, and is not as controlled by memory but moves through it. These passages reflecting on the past all suggest an underlying tension between the teleology implicit in the journey of a secular mind finding God and the sense of loss present in Ryder’s nostalgic reflection of his past. On one hand, the past was a heathen world where Charles had not accepted the grace of

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<sup>38</sup> For more on *Brideshead Revisited* and the Decadents of the late nineteenth century, see Lockerd.

God, so movement from that past towards faith is a form of progress. On the other, there was goodness in it, and the loss of what was good is something so difficult to find consolation for that Ryder falls into nostalgic reflection to recover something. Ryder's panegyric on youth concludes in both editions with the thought that

Perhaps in the mansions of Limbo the heroes enjoy some such compensation for their loss of the Beatific Vision; perhaps the Beatific Vision itself has some remote kinship with this lowly experience; I, at any rate, believed myself very near heaven, during those languid days at Brideshead. (79 [LBC])

The first half of this presents an exchange: the virtuous heroes, in Limbo due not to a fault of their own but simply because they were pagans, may be offered the bliss of the languor of youth in exchange for never being able to reach heaven,<sup>39</sup> which means that youth's languor is a reasonable compensation for being denied heaven. The second half of this instead presents the concept of the forerunner: the languor of youth is the lowly forerunner to the bliss of the Beatific Vision, meaning that iteration moves the faithful towards the highest good. Both the trade and teleology are present here. It is this tension, the focus on consolation on one hand and progression on the other, that shifts between editions through surrounding revisions. In the LBC, he is more focused on seeking

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<sup>39</sup> Because Charles refers to "heroes" and the "loss" of the Beatific Vision, Charles is likely referring to the literary Limbo of Dante's *Divine Comedy* with the virtuous pagans in a castle; he likely does not mean the more strictly doctrinal Catholic proposition of the Limbo of the Fathers, which is considered a temporary state for the holy who lived pre-Christ and so could not ascend until his death and resurrection, nor the Limbo of Infants for children who die unbaptized but have not committed any sin (Toner). Here, as in other places, it seems Ryder is drawn most to the literary rather than doctrinal approach to Catholicism.

consolation and yet more strongly describes a past that he cannot be consoled over the loss of. In 1960, focusing on progression, Ryder is more capable of moving on.

Through the sum of the cuts between editions, the LBC Ryder is also more ruminative and reflective. He spends more words thinking about how memory works and is constructed. This plays out not only in the passages above but in other descriptions of how memory or knowledge forms that were cut from the 1960 edition. After describing Julia's early history, Ryder explains that "All this I came to know, bit by bit" (183 [LBC]) in both versions; in the LBC, he includes the detailed method by explaining how he learned it "from the stories she told, from guesswork, knowing her, from what her friends said, from the odd expressions she now and then let slip, from occasional dreamy monologues of reminiscences" (183). But this is omitted in 1960. Ryder does not share how memory was constructed.

This lack of explanation of how he constructed Julia's past mirrors the cut to his admission that, in Julia's long anguished monologue about sin, "her voice, now muffled in my breast, now clear and anguished, came to me in single words and broken sentences, **which may be strung together thus:—**" (278 [LBC]; bolded material cut from 1960).

The longer versions of the passages put more focus—or in the second example, any focus at all—on the construction of Ryder's telling of Julia's story. He similarly spends more time in theory in the 1945 LBC, pausing to contemplate how he could describe the Burgundy he drank one afternoon as "[t]he Pathetic Fallacy resounds in all our praise of wine. For centuries every language has been strained to define its beauty and has produced only wild conceits or the stock epithets of the trade" (175). In 1960, these lines are cut (196–7). Ryder simply praises the wine instead of questioning how he could do

so, in the same way that he simply constructs Julia's past without explaining how and presents her words without explaining that he was putting them together. Waugh may have intended to simply cut what he considered excesses, but what he created was a narrator less prone to lingering in philosophy than the narrator that had first found wide circulation. For the LBC's Ryder, analysis and introspection are part of the process of nostalgia, and so of preserving and immortalizing Brideshead. The process of nostalgia is more direct and requires less analytical commentary for the Ryder of 1960.

This plays out in the prose itself. As noted above, because Captain Charles Ryder, living through World War II, narrates in the first person, changes in how he describes the past are changes to how his narrative voice works and therefore to how he, a man in the act of remembering the past to find solace in the present, constructs himself. Davis, discussing the cuts between the serial and volume editions of Ryder's first vision of Brideshead castle, says, "The individual variants ... are not great, but their cumulative effect is significant" ("Serial" 36). The same cumulative effect holds here. The cuts in descriptions mean the narrative lingers less on images, so Ryder himself lingers less on these images of the past. The diamonds that "flashed with fire" (245 [LBC]) on Julia's hair and fingers in revision "flashed" (272 [1960]); no time is spent describing the music of Julia's debut season as "floating out among the plane-trees, couples outside sauntering on the quiet pavements or breathing the summer air from balconies" (179 [LBC]); these cut lines leave behind a sparser description of the affair. The very day that Ryder is sent back through at first memory is treated more brusquely: "a cloudless day in June, when the ditches were **white** (*creamy*) with **fool's-parsley and** meadowsweet and the air heavy with all the scents of summer; it was a day of peculiar splendour, **such as our climate**

**affords once or twice a year, when leaf and flower and bird and sun-lit stone and shadow seem all to proclaim the glory of God**" (21 [LBC]; 29 [1960]); bolded material cut from 1960, enclosed and italicized material added to 1960). Ryder describes this as his "heart return[ing]" to the day (21), but the day he returns to is sparser in description and therefore there is less dwelling upon past sensory experiences. Cuts to description have the cumulative effect of creating a narrator who moves more quickly through sensory description of events.

Ryder is always a narrator engaged in the archival work of remembering Brideshead Castle and his relationship to the Marchmains to incorporate it into himself and find himself renewed through his arrival to the Catholic faith. He is always nostalgic. He is always cast back into the past. But the way that he approaches the past changes through revisions to the narration. The LBC publication has a narrator who often suggests that there has been an exchange between the heights and passions of his past and the consolation of faith in the present; he is driven by repetition, analyzes and philosophizes over youth, past, and memory through extensive reflection; he lingers for a long time in sensory details of his memories. His nostalgic journey is at times intrusive, as if the invasion of trauma; it seems to hold him in its power, for he is inconsolable for the loss of it. Through the revisions in the 1960 republication, Ryder the narrator takes on a somewhat different tone: he focuses more on candour and directness in his movement through the past, framing his journey as a progression rather than a trade and working through images of forward moment. He gives events with little commentary or reflection, just as he shortens many of his descriptions. His memories are always with him, but his approach to them is more controlled; he is not as easily commanded by them. His

nostalgia is more like a managed journey through his history. The 1960 republication changes the resonances of Ryder's construction of the past through revisions to the narration, and so this republication changes the resonances of the nostalgic subject that is at the centre of its story. Waugh's 1960 revisions to the uniform publication entered a new framing of nostalgia—one perhaps less influenced by the immediate aftermath of the war—into the permanent public record of his works.

### 2.3.2 Charles the Character: The Path(s) to Faith

Differences between publications also change the past self that Ryder constructs through memory, the Charles of the Oxford days to his pre-war departure from Brideshead Castle. Davis highlights the importance of differentiating between the narrator in reflection and the character of the action (*Writer* 143) and argues that Waugh took efforts in the process of revision prior to the 1960 republication to clarify which views belong to Charles the character and which to Ryder the narrator (123). This distinction between the present self in reflection and the past self being remembered is significant for understanding revisions that show Charles's path toward the Catholic faith. While changes to Ryder the narrator's character show an altered approach to memory, different resonances in Charles's character show a changed concept of the journey to God.

Revisions to the sex scene between Julia and Charles change Charles's approach to the relationship. This consummation is an important moment in Julia and Charles's relationship, as it is the transition from a flirtation into a full affair. Because Julia's relationship with Charles is a "forerunner" to that ultimate love, the God of Catholicism,



it is also a step on his path toward faith. The LBC version of this scene contains mystical elements but also has strong elements of possessiveness:

So at sunset I took formal possession of her as her lover. It was no time for the sweets of luxury; they would come, in their season, with the swallow and the lime-flowers. Now on the rough water, as I was made free of her narrow loins and, it seemed now, in assuaging that fierce appetite, cast a burden which I had borne all my life, toiled under, not knowing its nature--now, while the waves still broke and thundered on the prow, the act of possession was a symbol, a rite of ancient origin and solemn meaning. (261 [LBC])

The phrasing “it seemed” shows that this is Ryder reflecting his past self’s opinion and memories; that is how it *seemed* to him in the past tense. As such, we can note that Charles is undeniably self-centred in how he experiences their sex. There is nothing of how Julia may have felt about it, whether she viewed it as he did, whether she enjoyed it. That he “took formal possession” might raise some alarms; the entire phrasing of “made free of her narrow loins” could raise some more. But there is also spirituality: Ryder is possessive, but his possession is “symbol” and “rite,” and that rite is an “ancient” and “solemn” one. Rodney Delasanta and Mario D’Avanzo pick up on this, describing it as “almost mystical in tone and diction” (141) and asserting that, as the Brideshead estate is representative of the Catholic Church, Ryder enters into it through “the ‘brideshead’ of Julia” (142). Similarly, Bernard Bergonzi sees it as a moment with “a ritualistic, even a religious significance” (28). Charles, thus, is possessive and hungry, without full regard for Julia’s personhood, but in this moment, he is also experiencing a kind of religious consciousness that is another step towards his ultimate faith.

It is exactly that kind of religious consciousness that the 1960 edition strips away. While retaining the poetry in the second sentence, the passage now replaces the final sentence with, “Now on the rough water there was a formality to be observed, no more. It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed. I was making my first entry as the freeholder of a property I would enjoy and develop at my leisure” (288 [1960]). The degree to which this is almost entirely uninspiring of romantic sentiment has been much commented upon. Michael Gorra notes that Waugh, in reworking this passage, “could only change Julia from an exalted sexual object into an exalted piece of real estate” (181). Patrick Denman Flanery, taking an overview of the passage from Private Edition to 1960 uniform edition, notes a progression in this revision of increasing coldness, with “[t]he final version ... the coldest of the three,” seeing this change as necessary to cut out the “stronger romantic tone which is incongruous with Waugh’s larger narrative purpose” (206–7). Marcel DeCoste considers it a “heartless description” that links Charles’s possessiveness to Rex’s own acquisitive desire for Julia (*Vocation* 37) and specifically notes that while the 1945 version “does less to reify Julia or to reduce sex to a transaction. ... Waugh’s subsequent changes ... serve to underscore that this love, however superior to Ryder’s fetishization of art, is still limited by its strictly erotic character” (*Vocation* 37n18). What I note is that this crass, possessive language of a real estate transaction that increases Charles’s resonances with Rex is *specifically* a replacement of the mystical elements. Any suggestion of faith or the divine is gone. Charles’s experience is set in the material world, and it is through material desire that he, in the past, experiences Julia.

This kind of substitution is a trend throughout the course of Julia and Charles's relationship. In the LBC version, Charles has several moments of religious resonance surrounding the claiming of Brideshead and Julia, but the 1960 edition changes these to secular and transactional language. While sitting with Julia on the Brideshead estate, discussing their future, Charles originally describes the sun as "drawing out all the hidden sweetness of colour and scent" from their surroundings (279 [LBC]). In revision, however, he describes it as "spreading out all the stacked merchandize [sic]" (308 [1960]). Here, the movement is from poetic language to the language of purchased objects. Later, we see a push away from the religious in another passage where Ryder reflects on his younger self's eagerness at the idea of perhaps getting to own Brideshead and asks, "Need I reproach myself if sometimes I was rapt in the vision?" (322 [LBC]). To be rapt in something carries the older meaning of being "[c]arried up and transported into heaven" or "[t]ransported spiritually, by religious feeling or inspiration" ("rapt"). The colloquial use still holds these resonances, and this is certainly not the first time the connection between Brideshead and heaven has been made. But here, so late in the book, rather than being carried up to heaven, Charles is revised to have been "taken by" (354 [1960]) the idea—an entirely secular description, one that potentially returns to the language of possession. Together, these revisions change Charles's pre-conversion resonances with religious experience in his relationship to Julia and Brideshead and increase his resonances with the acquisitive materialism of Rex.

Waugh also made other revisions to Charles's relationship to faith, particularly his direct relationship with it. One of the earliest declarations of Charles's relationship to faith

occurs in Chapter 4, where Ryder outlines his younger self's relationship with religion in terms of his upbringing. In the LBC, this explanation is given as follows:

The view implicit in my education was that the basic narrative of Christianity had long been exposed as a myth, and that opinion was now divided as to whether its ethical teaching was of present value, a division in which the main weight went against it; religion was a hobby which some people professed and others did not; at the best it was slightly ornamental, at the worst it was the province of “complexes” and “inhibitions”—catchwords of the decade—and of the intolerance, hypocrisy, and sheer stupidity attributed to it for centuries. No one had ever suggested to me that these quaint observances expressed a coherent philosophic system and intransigent historical claims; nor, had they done so, would I have been much interested. (85–6)

In 1960, this relationship is phrased much differently. When discussing his education in faith, Ryder instead explains,

The masters who taught me Divinity told me that biblical texts were highly untrustworthy. They never suggested I should try to pray. My father did not go to the church except on family occasions and then with derision. My mother, I think, was devout. It once seemed odd to me that she should have thought it her duty to leave my father and me and go off with an ambulance, to Serbia, to die of exhaustion in the snow in Bosnia. But later I recognized some such spirit in myself. Later, too, I have come to accept claims which then, in 1923, I never

troubled to examine, and to accept the supernatural as the real. I was aware of no such needs that summer at Brideshead. (98)

As an explanation of Charles's starting point regarding religion, this revision necessarily changes the look of his eventual journey towards faith. Davis notes that the revisions change from focus on "reason and alternative systems to theology" to "statements of faith in theology and the overt act of prayer" (*Writer* 182–3). He also adds that revision makes Charles "indifferent rather than actively hostile or condescending toward religion" and so makes his progress to faith more credible (183). Kermode, who seems generally scornful of the use of religion in *Brideshead*, considers it an improvement because Charles's "intimacy with the Flytes may teach him something of 'the operation of divine grace' but nothing directly about the validity of the Church's historical claims" (Stannard 285). What both critics gesture towards here is that these changes move Charles from approaching faith (or the lack thereof) in the abstract to a more concretized, personal exploration. In the LBC, there are no actors, just the vague idea of his education; in 1960, we understand his faith through the concrete examples of his Divinity masters, his father, and his mother. In the LBC, Charles's understanding of faith is rooted in its philosophical and ethical premises; in 1960, Charles is oriented toward his personal experiences and losses and the concept of prayer and action. Where revisions to Ryder as narrator cut out most of the reflective analysis, here we find that Charles's actual childhood experiences shift from an analytical framing to real events and experiences. Charles's starting point on his journey to God thus moves from the general to the particular.

That shift is also the revision that occurs at what is essentially the finish line of Charles's path to God, at least as far as the events of the novel are concerned. As Lord Marchmain

is at death's door, a priest is brought in to offer him absolution. Charles has been adamantly against this, feeling this went against Lord Marchmain's rejection of faith in his life; Julia is now in favor. Charles is aware that this dispute has higher stakes, sensing that "the fate of more souls than one was at issue" (326 [LBC]) and referring to "the thread [threat (360 [1960])] that [he] had felt hanging over Julia and [him]"<sup>40</sup> being averted when, earlier, Lord Marchmain had refused the priest (327–8 [LBC]). But in the final moment, Lord Marchmain sees the priest, and as they gather around him, Charles feels a shift in attitude:

I suddenly felt the longing for a sign, if only of courtesy, if only for the sake of the woman I loved, who knelt in front of me, praying, I knew, for a sign. It seemed so small a thing that was asked, the bare acknowledgment of a present, a nod in the crowd. **All over the world people were on their knees before innumerable crosses, and here the drama was being played again by two men—by one man, rather, and he nearer death than life; the universal drama in which there is only one actor.** (338 [LBC]; bolded cut from 1960)

Davis considers this version "melodramatic in language and beside the point of the scene" (*Writer* 179). I consider it abstract in a way that keeps character with the LBC edition, where Ryder reflects on the past with an analytic mindset and began his journey

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<sup>40</sup> The change from "thread" to "threat" between versions may also point to Charles's lesser pre-conversion sensitivity to religion in the 1960 version; the "thread" in this novel suggests the "twitch upon a thread" of Father Brown (and the title for the second [LBC] or third [1960] section of the novel) first said aloud by Lady Marchmain while reading a Father Brown story, then explained by Cordelia as being God catching his lapsed faithful and bringing them back to his grace (1945, 220). Thus, in the LBC, Charles may be sensing the "thread" of faith about to catch him and bring him to it, while in the 1960, Charles only perceives a threat.

to faith by taking a philosophical approach. Here, Charles the character frames his desire in the abstract: it is the “universal drama,” an experience shared “[a]ll over the world,” just as Ryder the narrator considers the experience of youth or lapsing into memory in abstract ways. His first moment of prayer comes later, as he suddenly prays to God for Lord Marchmain not to wipe the oil away (338). Thus, Charles begins considering religion in the abstract, and it is through an abstract consideration that he makes the final leap towards faith.

With this in mind, when we consider the revision that Davis highlights as focused on Charles’s “state of mind” and “establish[ing] more firmly his movement from doubt” (*Past Redeemed* 179), we also see what we have found elsewhere: the elimination of analysis and the use of concrete and specific images, substituting for the bolded lines above: “I prayed more simply; ‘God, forgive him his sins’ and ‘Please God, make him accept your forgiveness,’” followed by a paragraph break and then the final, “So small a thing to ask” (371 [1960]). Here, we have a specific mention of Charles praying to match the reference to Charles *not* being told he might perhaps pray by his teachers. It is a specific, tangible act, the act of prayer, that acts as climax and conclusion of Charles’s transformation. More importantly, here Charles is actively desiring that sign of faith. Charles is already aware that faith will sever him from Julia and Brideshead Castle with her. Because of the amplified resonances between Charles’s relationship to Julia and possessive desire towards her and Brideshead itself, Charles’s act of prayer is also a deliberate surrender of his earthly desires. He is, in the 1960 edition, possessive to a degree he is not in the LBC edition, and so he actively and concretely surrenders his

profane claims of possession through a prayer in a way he does not do, and perhaps does not *need* to do, in the LBC edition.

This gives us two similar but not identical journeys to faith. In the first, Charles's past self shows more resonances with religious impulses and latent mysticism. He takes half-movements towards faith, with his sexual relationship with Julia and his attempt to claim Brideshead quasi-religious experiences that prepare him for the ultimate revelation. He is more introspective and analytical, and he finally understands faith by putting it in the construct of an abstract shared narrative in which he and those with him now take part. All this is experienced by a narrator who is still highly introspective, lingering in the past with long descriptions and still, at times, seeming held captive by it, struggling to find consolation for its loss. This narrator reflects on the journey—from incorrect abstractions to the true one—as a necessary trade of an intense, enriching past for a present that offers faith.

In the second, revised journey towards faith, Charles is more possessive and, specifically, more material. His relationship with Julia and desire for Brideshead are part of the path he takes to find God, but they are not in themselves quasi-religious experiences that prepare him for the Catholic faith. Rather, they are thoroughly grounded in the material world. Being more grounded, with his initial experiences of faith all about specific experiences, his final acceptance of faith requires a concrete act that is a surrender of his earthly claims and a sacrifice for the sake of love of another. The narrator who remembers this is less prone to reflection or lingering in the past description; he frames the journey as a forward progression, like steps towards a higher place, with the past loved and necessary but now to be set aside for the greater good of achieving Grace.



Of course, Charles is possessive in the LBC edition, too, and he still reflects in the 1960 edition. But the shape of the journey changes because the revisions made alter the resonances, and they make a different argument about faith itself. In the LBC edition, we find that a reflective subject who is longing for the past, almost to the point of rejecting the present, can still use this as a means of renewing faith. In the 1960 edition, we see that a man who is truly lacking in his concern with the material world and earthly claims can still take a path to Grace. The religious element, so heavily criticized by reviewers of the 1945 editions, does in fact differ in the 1960 versions, and that differentiated narrative is what takes the stamp of posterity through a uniform edition.

### 2.3.3 Anthony Blanche, Counternarrative

Anthony Blanche, arguably the only significant character outside of the Flyte family, acts as a contrasting perspective at key points in the narrative. Although Sebastian briefly references his family and Julia is narrowly avoided on Charles's first visit to Brideshead Castle, Anthony's commentary on the Flytes is our first true introduction to the family as a whole. Davis highlights his importance as "the first and most consistent critic" of the Flytes who "cause[s] us to examine our evaluation of the characters" ("Clarifying" 307). His monologue is the first explicit suggestion that we ought to question the Arcadia Charles has found, and he frames the other Flytes in advance of their first appearances. Anthony also serves as an aesthetic judge, an accurate prophet who judges Charles's artistry with precision, although he lacks insight on the fullness of life and remains in arrested development (DeCoste, "Merely" 315). He has been described as "the decadent heart of Charles's Arcadia" (Lockerd 251) and a linearity-disrupting scene stealer who

“challenges his apportioned space by dominating scenes” (Stevens 5), taking control of both readerly attention and the events and affairs within the narrative itself every time he appears. By appearing so early in the narrative and acting as a highly memorable prophet of what is yet to come, Anthony Blanche disrupts the peaceful Arcadian journey through memory by forcing Charles—and the reader—to pay attention to the snakes already in the garden.

Anthony’s monologue in Book I, Chapter II, also happens to have seen the most thorough and consistent revisions and, as a result, the most commentary on this change. In the most extensive treatment of this, Davis argues that it is “[b]ecause Anthony is neither authoritative nor unreliable to a predictable degree [that] Waugh expended great pains to control more and more accurately the reader’s response to him” (“Clarifying” 307). In his analysis of the revisions of Anthony’s scenes from draft version to the final 1960 edition, he highlights that “Blanche was too attractive” in earlier manifestations (310), and so the 1960 edition reframes him as a “more ordinary kind of eccentric” (311) whose romance and romantic partner Stefanie are, through revision, “made to seem banal” (313).

Simultaneously, Davis sees these changes as making him a more credible commentator on the Flytes in general and Sebastian in particular (315). Of these revisions to Anthony’s character, Grace Stevens agrees with Davis’s description of Blanche revised an ordinary kind of eccentric, particularly discussing it as an reduction of his charisma; Stevens argues that Anthony’s 1945 introduction highlights his “charismatic performativity” and the “near mythic aura” that he possesses, while in the 1960 edition Stevens sees instead “exterior signs of the character and how these set his character part from others, jarringly so” as the general presentation of the story and asserts that this is part of a trend

throughout the story, made stronger in the 1960 edition, of Anthony's non-normativity being pushed out of the narrative (4). Stevens does not see Anthony as being made less queer but rather less charismatically so.

Looking at these revisions together, which reduce Anthony's charm and revise his character, we find that while in the LBC edition, Anthony had more resonances with other characters, the 1960 edition reduced those associations. The revisions reduce his parallels to Charles and Sebastian by altering specific wording and reshaping the relationship with Stefanie, softening what resonances remain; simultaneously, his credibility increases as he becomes more critic and commentator than artist manqué and forerunner. Put together, these alter how Anthony frames events and changes how he functions as a counternarrative to Charles's journey through nostalgia towards faith.

We discussed above the function of the forerunner in Charles's path along the ladder of love to God, but the forerunner as "type" can be understood theologically in terms of the Old and New Testaments. Where Sebastian is the type to Julia and Julia the type to God in a narrative of Charles seeking the highest form of love, a type in the Old Testament is the imperfect version of its antitype that appears in the New Testament. Following this frame, Anthony Blanche acts as a forerunner (in the theological sense of an Old Testament type) for Charles in the LBC edition when he compares himself to Charles and compares Sebastian to Stefanie, Anthony's former lover.

In the LBC version, he begins by drawing the parallel between Sebastian and Stefanie, highlighting first Sebastian's charm several times and then linking it to Stefanie by saying, "Of course those that have charm don't really need brains. Stefanie de Vincennes

intoxicated me four years ago; but I was besotted with her, crawling with love like lice” (42 [LBC]). He then implies a parallel between himself and Charles, highlighting that before Stefanie he “might have been anything; an artist even; it is not impossible; it is in the blood” (53). This description of himself as the artist *manqué* comes shortly after he declared to Charles, “[Y]ou are that very rare thing, An Artist” (52). Soon after, he describes Sebastian’s lack of intelligence and links it to Stefanie’s (56). After establishing these connections, he makes it clear what kind of threat Sebastian is to Charles through the example of Stefanie:

Stefanie was like that: never dull; at least never really dull; at least not for the first year; and then, my dear, when she had become a habit, Boredom grew like a cancer in the breast, more and more. ... And she went on with the murder in a gentle, leisurely way, quite, quite unconscious that she was doing any harm. It is not an experience I would recommend for An Artist at the tenderest stage of his growth, to be strangled with charm. (57)

Anthony was an artist. Stefanie was simple and charming. Anthony loved Stefanie, but then Stefanie bored him. This destroyed Anthony’s art. With Anthony already having made it clear that he is like Charles and Sebastian like Stefanie, his warning is clear: Anthony is warning that Charles will become bored with Sebastian’s charm and eventually have his artistic talent strangled by it, just as Anthony’s was. Thus, Anthony frames himself as type to Charles’s antitype, one destroyed as an artist through a relationship with someone who is a type to Sebastian’s antitype. In doing so, he seeds doubt and discomfort around Charles’s relationship with Sebastian and tell Charles (and the reader) that there is danger in this Arcadia.

The LBC edition implicitly reinforces the parallels Anthony makes through repeated phrases and ideas. Anthony ends his first paragraph about Stefanie by saying, “I never heard anyone speak an ill word of Stefanie, except the duke; everyone loved her, whatever she did” (53 [LBC]). This end-paragraph comment, with all the attendant emphasis from its position, is echoed 250 pages and several decades later when Cordelia, describing Sebastian’s current living situation now that he has separated from the family and fallen almost entirely to alcoholic dissolution, says of Sebastian, “He’s still loved, you see, wherever he goes, whatever condition he’s in. It’s a thing about him he’ll never lose” (304). The parallel is not just in idea but in rhythmic pattern in the repetition of *loved* and the use of a nonessential clause after a comma that starts with a three syllabic word ending in *ever* and ends in a two-word, two-syllable combination of noun and verb. As a resonating echo, it is made more powerful by being transferred from the mouth of one of the most unsettling of what DeCoste refers to in his ““Merely Hints and Symbols”” as the “oracles” of *Brideshead Revisited* to Cordelia, the most reliable and insightful of the oracles and perhaps the most insightful of all secondary characters.

Anthony’s connection of himself to Charles on artistic grounds is also supported by Charles’s own language: Anthony describes Julia as “one thing only, Renaissance tragedy” (54 [LBC]), and Charles later falls into the same framing, describing a scene between himself and Julia as a play and then categorizing it as “Drama. Tragedy. Farce” (291). However, Charles’s repetition of Anthony’s descriptions of Julia are complex. Introducing Julia, Anthony describes her as having “[a] face of flawless Florentine Quattrocento beauty” (54). The first time Charles echoes this, he says Cordelia “had not the promise of Julia’s full Quattrocento loveliness” (219), but the second time he

develops it, saying of Julia's features that "the head that [he] used to think Quattrocento, which had sat a little oddly on her, was now part of herself and not at all Florentine—not connected in any way with painting or the arts or with anything except herself" (239). These echoes suggest that Charles and Anthony share the same vision of Julia but that Charles, the developing antitype, has evolved past Anthony by beginning to separate Julia from a purely artistic frame. Just as later repetitions of language and idea echo Anthony's language about Stefanie and so reinforce parallels between her and Sebastian, these repetitions of ways of thinking about Julia, framed in similar language, reinforce the parallels between Anthony and Charles. Anthony's suggestion that Stefanie was to him as Sebastian was to Charles is not wholly accurate—Sebastian leads Charles to art, love, and eventually faith, not disillusionment and artistic death—but the statement has a ring of truth supported by linguistic parallels from more reliable figures who reinforce the resonances.

However, the strength of the parallel is strongly reduced in the 1960 publication. Most significantly, the connection of Anthony and Stefanie as forerunner to Charles and Sebastian is practically eliminated in its entirety. Both descriptions of Anthony as artist are entirely cut, with no reference to the idea that he might ever have been an artist (63 [1960]) and no description of him being "strangled by charm" (67 [1960]), so Anthony no longer figures as the artist manqué to Charles's future artist. If anything, he is set up to be the opposite of an artist by the removal of these lines. In both editions, he declares, "Artists are not exquisite. I am; Sebastian, in a kind of way, is exquisite, but the artist is an eternal type, solid, purposeful, observant—and, beneath it all, p-p-passionate, eh, Charles?" (62 [1960]). In the LBC edition (52), this line serves to set up a complex

narrative figure: Anthony had the potential to be an artist, but that potential was strangled by Stefanie's charm, and so now he is something exquisite but certainly not an artist. In 1960, however, without references to Anthony's lost potential as an artist, it simply poses him as *not* an artist at all, like Sebastian. With his expounding on the "proper experiences of an artist" (67 [1960]) later in that conversation and then critiquing of Charles's work (296–301 [1960]) years afterwards, it is clear that not only is Anthony not an artist, he is what might be called the opposite of an artist: a critic. Thus, rather than a type for Charles's antitype, Anthony in 1960 is an outside commentator with insights onto events who is very unlike the man whom he is addressing.

This comes hand in hand with the elimination of external verification of the connections Anthony draws. While the description of Julia as a Quattrocento beauty in its initial and then evolved forms is retained in the 1960 edition (64, 245, and 265, respectively), Anthony's description of her as a Renaissance tragedy is completely cut and given no replacement (64), weakening Charles's echo of Anthony's artistic reading of Julia. Likewise, Stefanie and Sebastian are no longer confirmed as similar through Cordelia's phrasing; while they are both, of course, still charming, and Anthony still connects the charm and insipidness of both, the distinct syntactical phrasing of "everyone loved her, whatever she did" (53 [LBC]) is now replaced with a repetition of Anthony's main complaint, her lack of intelligence: "I never heard anyone speak an ill word of Stefanie, except the duke; and *she*, my dear, is positively cretinous" (63 [1960]). While they remain paralleled, that parallel is not confirmed by the much more credible outside source of Cordelia. Thus, while there are some connections still retained, all outside verification

of Anthony's connection is eliminated, overall weakening resonances between the two pairs.

These changes, with several others, have a curious result: at a dinner many years later, Anthony declares that he warned Charles about the effects of charm. But in the 1960 edition, he did no such thing. Anthony's warning, in both publications, comes after a powerful critique of Charles's art as being just "charming":

I was right years ago—more years, I am happy to say, than either of us shows—when I *warned* you. I took you out to dinner to warn you of charm. I warned you expressly and in great detail of the Flyte family. Charm is the great English blight. It does not exist outside these damp islands. It spots and kills anything it touches. It kills love; it kills art; I greatly fear, my dear Charles, it has killed *you*. (273 [LBC], emphasis in original).

This is partially true, insofar as Anthony highlights Sebastian's charm extensively and these references are mostly unchanged: Sebastian is supposed to have been "charming through the grille" in confession (62 [LBC]); he is implicated as potentially betraying Anthony when referenced in "a lesson never to trust mild old men—or charming school boys" (51); he is a "little bundle of charm" (53); and he is, in a slight variation of syntax, described as having "charm ... such charm," more emphatically in the LBC and more smoothly in 1960,<sup>41</sup> as a lead-in to Anthony's critique of Stefanie's charm. Indeed, of the

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<sup>41</sup> The variant lines are as follows:

"No, Sebastian has charm." He held up his glass of hock to the candle-light and repeated, "*Such* charm" (51 [LBC]).

"No, Sebastian has charm"; he held up his glass of hock to the candle-light and repeated, "*such* charm" (61 [1960]).



38 times (36, in the 1960 edition) that “charm” or “charming” appears as a descriptor, Anthony uses ten of them for Sebastian and two for, by implication, both Sebastian and Stefanie, all in this scene. Yet despite the retained emphasis on charm throughout, the shift in Anthony’s characterization from artist manqué to pure critic means that Anthony never warns Charles about the *dangers* of charm on art. Anthony no longer describes himself as an artist, so he no longer warns that it is a terrible thing for an artist to be strangled by charm; he never says what charm would do to Charles. As such, while Anthony says in both publications that he warned Charles about charm, this is much less true in the 1960 edition than in the LBC. The only potential warning he gave in the 1960 publication, without the emphasis on charm’s damage to an artist, is simply that Charles may one day fall out of love with Sebastian and be left as bitter and cynical as Anthony.

The meaning of Anthony’s claim that he warned Charles about the Flytes is also altered. He does indeed warn Charles about the Flytes in both editions; this is, as noted above, one of the major sections of Anthony’s speech and important for how the Flytes are initially framed. But, due to revision, it is not the *charm* of the Flytes that Anthony warns Charles about. Anthony’s line connecting the Flytes to charm, “They’re all charming, of course, and quite, quite *gruesome*” (53 [LBC]; emphasis in original), becomes simply, “They’re quite, quite *gruesome*” (64 [1960]; emphasis in original). He also no longer implies Julia’s charm through resonances with Stefanie. In 1945, Julia is connected to Stefanie’s charm by Anthony’s “everyone loved her” line, which is paralleled by him saying that “[d]ogs and children love [Julia]” (54 [LBC]). Both lines are deleted in the

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The use of a full stop to break up the sentence increases the emphasis, while the semicolon suggests less of a cycling back to the previous clause to repeat it and instead more of a reiteration.

1960 edition, breaking the link. Julia and Stefanie are instead connected not by charm but by insipidness, as he retains the line that Julia is “as smart as—well as smart as Stefanie” (54 [LBC]). Because of the deletions to all suggestions that the Marchmain family is charming, the line in both editions that “there was really very little left for poor Sebastian to do except be sweet and charming” (54 [LBC]) no longer suggests that sweet lack of intelligence is what Sebastian has done with the family charm; instead, it implies that both Sebastian’s sweetness *and* his charm stand *in contrast* to the entire Marchmain family, who have neither. Anthony’s breakdown of the Marchmain family, therefore, resonates less with the attractions referenced in the LBC edition and instead retains only their dangers.<sup>42</sup> As such, Anthony’s warnings take on different resonances in the different publications: in the 1945 LBC, Anthony warns Charles about Sebastian and the Flytes together as charming people who will strangle his art; in 1960, Anthony implies that Charles will fall out of love with Sebastian’s charm, just as Anthony fell out of love with Stefanie’s, and warns that the Flytes are *not* charming but very gruesome people. He suggests that Sebastian’s family is an external danger that comes with him, rather than a danger that reveals the hidden dangerousness of Sebastian, and he never makes any direct warning to Charles that charm can kill.

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<sup>42</sup> This is not, of course, to say that the Marchmain family is not described as charming by anyone in the 1960 edition. As in the LBC edition, the first presentation of the Marchmain family *in absentia* comes through Sebastian explaining his choice to keep Charles and his family separated: “I’m not going to have you get mixed up with my family. They’re so madly charming. All my life they’ve been taking things away from me” (37 [LBC]). Sebastian, Charles, and the narrator all call Lady Marchmain charming, and the narrator references “the family charm” in Cordelia’s smile (103 [1960]). What is significant is that in the 1960 edition, Anthony, who gives the story’s two major speeches about charm in his first and final meals with Charles, does not connect the Flytes to charm in his introduction.

Together, the resonances Anthony creates between characters are, on republication, seriously reduced, leaving them to function in separated groups. Anthony is no longer like Charles. Stefanie is less like the Marchmains, and Sebastian is still like Stefanie but less so, and certainly not like the rest of the family. Further, Anthony, no longer the artist *manqué*, no longer *can* make warnings about loss of art. He did not have any art to lose, and Stefanie was not explicitly the cause of any serious loss in his life except perhaps of youthful joy. The total effect of the republications is to change how Anthony functions as a warning to Charles. In the LBC, Anthony represents a path that, if he is not careful, Charles might trip down—the path of an artist who lost his capacity for art thanks to the dangers of charm. In the 1960 edition, however, Anthony is primarily an outsider offering correctives based on his canny insights into others. His path is not one that forks off from Charles's but a parallel journey that offers Anthony perspective for commentary. Revision changes Anthony's resonances from a lost artist to an artist's critic and from one on a path that diverges from Charles's to someone on a path that has little to do with Charles at all.

#### 2.3.4 The Shifting Ethos of Anthony Blanche

Not only is what Anthony says changed, but so is how Anthony says it. Through revision between publications, his character as a speaker—from the perspective of classical rhetoric, his *ethos*—is revised, which creates a change in the rhetorical effects of his speeches. As noted above, both Davis and Stevens comment on how revision to his introduction made Anthony a less attractive and charismatic figure. These revisions to

Anthony's characterization change his resonances, which shapes how the information he presents is framed.

While Anthony does not change in many core aspects—he is always Tiresias, genderqueer and quoting modern poetry on a balcony—in the earlier LBC edition, Anthony's charisma and charm is made up of, in part, suggestions that he has near-mystical powers. Ryder's introduction for Anthony, in the LBC, begins with a description of what Anthony does to the party:

From the moment he arrived the newcomer took charge, talking in a luxurious, self-taught stammer; teasing; caricaturing the guests at his previous luncheon; telling lubricious anecdotes of Paris and Berlin; and doing more than entertain—transfiguring the party, shedding a vivid, false light of eccentricity upon everyone so that the three prosaic Etonians seemed suddenly to become creatures of his fantasy. (32)

Anthony is, of course, highlighted as charismatically entertaining here, but the introduction specifically emphasizes that he does “more than entertain”: Anthony engages in the magical act of transfiguration. While it is a “vivid, false light” that he scatters over the rest, this is a powerful act, one where he transforms others so they become part of his own reality. Anthony appears as a mix of a figure of mockery and one of incredible power, a man who is absurd and farcical in his use of a “self-taught stammer” but who can also change those around him to suit his frame. This mingling of farcical and strangely august characteristics is repeated in the following paragraph:

This, I did not need telling, was Anthony Blanche, the “aesthete” par excellence, a byword of iniquity from Cherwell Edge to Somerville, a young man who seemed to me, then, fresh from the sombre company of the College Essay Society, ageless as a lizard, as foreign as a Martian. He had been pointed out to me often in the streets, as he moved with his own peculiar stateliness, as though he had not fully accustomed himself to coat and trousers and was more at his ease in heavy, embroidered robes; I had heard his voice in the George challenging the conventions; and now meeting him, under the spell of Sebastian. I found myself enjoying him voraciously, like the fine piece of cookery he was. (32)

As above, Ryder approaches Anthony with a mix of mockery and respect. He is “ageless as a lizard, as foreign as a Martian,” both of which are distinctly unflattering in their derisiveness. Yet immediately after, his walk is described as strangely august with its “peculiar stateliness.” This works with the idea of Anthony in “heavy, embroidered robes” to create resonances between Anthony and a powerful priest or king. Thus, the contradiction in the similes used for Anthony: lizards and Martians are comical, but an ageless foreigner with a stately walk is something mythic, as if Anthony truly is the oracle Tiresias come from Ancient Greece to proclaim to them all. The swing back towards calling him “a fine piece of cookery” brings the description back down to earth, but it does not erase the prior associations, merely balances them out again by reiterating the elements of farce and falseness already present. Through references to transfiguration and ancient orders, Anthony in the LBC edition is associated with both charlatanry and true mystical power, mingled together in one.

Anthony's 1960 introduction, however, is much more unified and focused away from "peculiar stateliness" and towards "cookery." As Stevens notes (4), his revised introductory paragraph note focuses on his appearance rather than his effect on others:

He was tall, slim, rather swarthy, with large saucy eyes. The rest of us wore rough tweeds and brogues. He had on a smooth chocolate-brown suit with loud white stripes, suede shoes, a large bow-tie and he drew off yellow, wash-leather gloves as he came into the room; part Gallic, part Yankee, part, perhaps, Jew; wholly exotic. (Waugh 41 [1960])

This shift also alters Anthony's associations. Entertainment is no longer something he actively creates, nor does he retain a power of transfiguration. He is a character (or caricature) to be witnessed by others, but not one who affects them by his own force; his dress is unusual, marking him as an eccentric or an aesthetic, and certainly as a form of performer, but this is for performance on a stage. It is all false light, not transfiguration. Anthony's mixed heritage, concluding with the comment that he is "wholly exotic," serves to frame him as foreign, just as before, but rather than being so strange as to be from Mars, he is grounded specifically to any location on Earth that isn't "here," very likely in association with negative stereotypes. These revised resonances are developed in the new second paragraph of description, which makes several major cuts and one significant replacement:

This, I did not need telling, was Anthony Blanche, the 'aesthete' par excellence, a byword of iniquity from Cherwell Edge to Somerville. He had been pointed out to me often in the streets, as he pranced along with his high peacock tread; I had

heard his voice in the George challenging the conventions; and now meeting him, under the spell of Sebastian, I found myself enjoying him voraciously. (41)

While Anthony here remains a strange and exotic figure railing against the commonplace, the implications differ. Not only is he not from the otherworldly Mars, he is also no longer an ageless figure. The laughability of the lizard comparison is gone, as is Ryder referring to a piece of cookery, but so too is the sense of wonder: neither Ryder nor Charles seems amazed or awestruck by his strange mix of farce and dignity at this point; that dignity is, for the most part, removed. Most notably, the resonances of Anthony's gait change: rather than a stately walk—one that is peculiar, but still associated with the majesty of kings and clerics—he “prance[s]” with a “peacock tread.” While Anthony in the LBC publication has associations with effeminacy, vanity, and garish display, in the 1960 publication these associations are essentially the only ones he has. Thus, farce is the dominant note without a contrast of dignity. Anthony's introduction no longer has him as a mix of high mysticism and foppish, Wildean aestheticism; he is presented as the latter exclusively, a caricature of a certain kind of undergraduate.

Anthony does, of course, retain wisdom across all editions. Anthony marking out all the flaws in Charles's paintings (279–301 [1960]) remains unchanged, meaning that he retains his position as the prime commentator on artistic values (and Charles's artistic failings), and when he is disappointed in Charles's art, he adds, “But they tell me, my dear, you are happy in love. That is everything, is it not, or nearly everything?” (297). Despite Anthony's propensity for sardonic comments, this phrase seems to echo a phrase that the narrator, with his years of reflective wisdom, considers as an answer to his cousin Jasper scolding him over his friends: “I could tell him, too, that to know and love one

other human being is the root of all wisdom” (55). While Charles did not say it at the time—unlike the narrator, he “felt no need for these sophistries” [55]—the narrator’s reflective tone, and the trajectory of the story as leading Charles from one love to another and finally to God, suggests that it is not mere sophistry but very possibly a truth: it was loving Sebastian that eventually brought Charles to the Catholic faith, making that love indeed the root of his wisdom. As such, Anthony saying that being “happy in love” is everything indicates that Anthony has some idea of a similar truth, wry as he may be about it and disappointing as his personal life seems to be. But these are facets of his character that play out much later from the introduction; it is not his wisdom but his foppish farcicalness that is highlighted in the 1960 edition when Anthony Blanche is first presented and that prepares us for his earliest speech and his criticism of Sebastian and the Flytes. Thus, in the uniform republication, Anthony Blanche resonates more with the minor characters of Waugh’s earlier farces than the more complicated and human characters in *Brideshead*. It seems that, in transforming from a former artist to only ever a critic, Anthony lost his appealing dignity.

Together with the revisions that transformed Anthony Blanche from artist manqué to critic, these reframe Anthony’s disruption to the narrative through his first major scene. In the LBC, Anthony is an eerie warning for Charles. He is an artist, like Charles, who fell in love with a charming person, just as Charles did. But the charm destroyed his artistic ability, and so Anthony warns Charles of the dangers of charm, both in his relationship to Sebastian and in the potential dangers posed by the Flyte family. The parallels Anthony draws are partially supported by other moments in the work, and Anthony’s general mingling of the farcical with a certain august dignity makes him a



figure that one cannot and yet must take seriously. The effect is, overall, one of mingled truth and falsehood, flagged from the start: a strangely attractive warning of what Charles could become, focused on the world of art. In 1960, in contrast, Anthony stands at a remove. He warns Charles only of the dangers of falling out of love with charm and of the supposed hideousness of the Flyte family, not the lure of their charm. But he is not a figure to take seriously in and of himself; he is a comical one, an appearance to laugh at and not be drawn to. The ill-ease he creates is not from his attractiveness and the uncertainty around him but from how one of his prophecies immediately plays out, making it impossible to laugh him off. As a disruptive figure, thus, in the 1945 LBC, Anthony is primarily disruptive to Charles by holding up an uncanny mirror to him and the world he is in, but in 1960, he offers disruption by commenting from an external position on possibilities that Charles is not yet ready to see. Anthony always cuts through the nostalgic Arcadian greenery to offer a warning of what is yet to come, but the resonances of these warnings change with changes to Anthony's character.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Charles Ryder in the state of reflection is the nostalgic subject, a man engaged in the archival project of incorporating Brideshead Castle—and all his history and memories—into himself to preserve the past against a bleak future and to create a narrative of himself. *Brideshead Revisited* is a nostalgic record—“a souvenir” of the past—that was immensely popular outside of its home country and target audience and that attempted to archive history against a disaster and then was published again, fifteen years later, after disaster turned out to not be coming to the party. It became, in Waugh's words, “a

panegyric preached over an empty coffin” (10 [1960]). Referring to speeches that he regretted in 1960, he explains that he “retained them here in something near their original form because, like the Burgundy ... and the moonlight they were essentially of the mood of the writing” (10). He similarly says he could not delete but only revise “the grosser passages” because “they are an essential part of the book” (9). Waugh’s mood had changed with fifteen years’ distance from the end of the war, but he did not wish to change the book from being “a souvenir of the Second War rather than of the ‘twenties or of the ‘thirties, with which it ostensibly deals” (10).

But he *did* change it from being a souvenir of the Second War; he made it a souvenir of his 1960 reflections on its earlier publications. In altering those “grosser passages,” he remade his nostalgic subject, so that his Ryder is less introspective and analytic and more direct and blunt, less controlled by the past and more managing it, less desperate in his sense that he has exchanged one good thing for another and more confident that his succession of loves has led him to the higher truth. Waugh recreated, too, his everyman pilgrim, reducing his quasi-religious moments of gestures towards faith and increasing his possessiveness, revising his interest in the theory and story of religion into concrete acts of prayer. His counternarrative figure in the form of Anthony Blanche, early disruptor of Arcadian gaiety, was refigured from a threatening alternate path caused by the poisons of charm that Charles was drawn to, to a farcical outsider whose external position gives him insights into the truth. The man remembering the past in nostalgia, the past self he nostalgically remembers, and the first major presentation of a threat to the nostalgic happiness—all three were revised and therefore of a different tone in republication.

In 1945, Waugh released *Brideshead*, a narrative of looking back; when he looked back on the story itself before the 1960 publication, it was that very retrospective perspective that he saw fit to alter. This is fitting, for memory's task is always to rewrite the past, and republication by an author in his lifetime is an opportunity for such remembering.

Looking backwards, even in a state of nostalgia, is an act of wondering what might have been done differently, how a better present could have been made if only the past were different, how what was lost—like the “esteem of [Waugh's] peers” (9 [1960])—might be preserved. Republishing the 1960 edition offered that opportunity to, within limits, engage in just such a rewriting of the past—not one just in the head, but one entered into the public record and with the potential to usurp the earlier version in the publication record. Thus, while the LBC *Brideshead Revisited* of 1945 is certainly a souvenir of a time of fear and uncertainty, where consolation was necessary and the past was a place worth lingering in to avoid a terrible present, the republished *Brideshead Revisited* of 1960 took more to heart a determination not to linger in the past, nor indeed to overthink it, but to move onward and consider the progress. And this was a uniform edition: it was published so that these revisions would be maintained for posterity. Beyond the stated intentions of the Preface, that later, revised republication has become a souvenir of what fifteen years' distance did to Waugh's views on his work.

## Chapter 3

### 3 In Conversation: Audre Lorde's *Sister, Outsider* as Collection

#### 3.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, we have discussed republication in terms of the production of non-serialized novels. That is, we have focused on cases where a work published as a single, complete unit was later published again, also as a single and complete unit. While Chapter 1 discussed *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s magazine publication, it did not do so by contextualizing it with other articles in that issue of Lippincott's,<sup>43</sup> and while Chapter 2 did consider *Brideshead Revisited* in light of its republication as part of a series of uniform editions, the novel was not discussed in terms of the relationship this created between *Brideshead* and Waugh's other works. Instead, these chapters focused on differences in language, the significance of the material aspects of the work, and the cultural contexts surrounding various publication moments in relation to controversy (*Dorian*) and time (*Brideshead*). I did not discuss at length the significance of republication from a story in a periodical to a single monograph or from a monograph to a monograph as part of a larger series.

To consider these questions, I want to now turn to a different kind of publication: that of a collection. This term is very broad, potentially covering everything from the collected works of a single author to a series of books published under an umbrella title. For the

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<sup>43</sup> For such a discussion, see Lorang.

sake of our discussion, the pertinent definition is as follows: a collection is *a publication composed of multiple discrete works,<sup>44</sup> often originally published in other places,<sup>45</sup> brought together to be published as one unit.<sup>46</sup>* This framework allows us to discuss a variety of types of collections as sharing commonalities and to then distinguish between them. In particular, I distinguish kinds of collection in relation to publication history and structure rather than genre of content. The collection types I define are as follows:

1. *A single-author monograph*: a collection of various works, often of the same genre, by a single author. This type of collection is generally published under a title that suggests unifying or prominent themes regarding the various works, and information about prior publications, if there were any such publications, is often not included or put in small print in the front or back matter. Examples include *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) by Angela Carter (short stories), *Stations* (1975) by Seamus Heaney (poetry), and *I, Robot* (1950) by Isaac Asimov (short stories).

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<sup>44</sup> This is distinguished from issues of a serialized work “collected” together to be republished in one volume because serialized segments, while published in discrete sections (and even potentially across more than one periodical or magazine), sum up to a single work. Continuity between units is what defines their serialization.

<sup>45</sup> While prior publication of various works in a collection is quite commonplace, this is not necessary to the definition employed here, although it *is*, of course, necessary for consideration in the context of this dissertation.

<sup>46</sup> This definition excludes the publishing term of a “collection” as an editorial collection, where multiple works are published as separate units within a series that generally shares formatting and that is published under a collection title. While that type of collection cannot be considered entirely separate from the idea of a collection under discussion here, as both invite exploration of the connections made between individual works when republication groups them together, I appeal to the materiality (in N. Katherine Hayles’s sense) of the two types of collection to justify my distinction: multiple titles published together inside one book, where they are literally bound together, are experienced in a fundamentally different material way than multiple titles published across several books.

- a. The last of these is an example of the subtype of the *fixup novel*, a term from the science fiction community (Clute and Langford). A fixup novel is composed of works, generally short stories, that were originally published as independent units, frequently in periodicals, before they were brought together and revised to create a more unified narrative that could then be published as a novel. Other examples include *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) by Alice Munro and *The Big Sleep* (1939) by Raymond Chandler.
2. An *anthology*: a collection that brings together works of multiple authors based on genre, movement, region, period, theme, or other grouping. A thematic collection generally has an editor who is generally responsible for selecting the works, and it often defines a movement, asserts the best examples of a genre, or otherwise presents a kind of “argument” about the grouping. Examples include *American Gothic Tales* (1996) edited by Joyce Carol Oats (genre/region), the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies (1912, 1915, 1917, 1919, and 1922) edited by Edward Marsh (movement/period), and *Poems of Black Africa* (1975) edited by Wole Soyinka (theme/region).
3. A *Collected Works*: a collection of works by an author that attempts to define the body of said author’s work through the republication of items from the entire span of the author’s career. It is unusual for any item in a Collected Works not to have been previously published. A *Complete Works*<sup>47</sup> (the collection of all works by an author) and a *Selected Works* (the collection of some but not all, generally the most “noteworthy” works) have somewhat different functions (the former

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<sup>47</sup> For a history of how Complete Works have been conceptualized over time, see Dongelmans.

claiming completion, the latter claiming significance), but both are types of Collected Works in the sense that they reflect on an author's publication history to present the material of their career. While a Selected Works of Katherine Mansfield may contain the same number of stories as her single-author monograph *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), they are functionally different: a Selected Works takes the author's career as its organizational unit, while *The Garden Party and Other Stories* is an output of any set of stories, usually a set that has not been published as a single-author monograph before. Further, while Collected Works generally draw together major publications that have already circulated widely in monographs, even if they may also present new material, the single-author monograph generally publishes material previously published only in periodicals or other "ephemeral" publication venues, if at all.

For this study, I have chosen to look at a single-author monograph as an example of collecting republication. This minimizes questions about editorial intervention and the creation of movements and genres that would be raised by the anthology; it also takes the question of the author function, which would have primary importance in a discussion of a Collected or Selected Works, and gives it a secondary role in the discussion. This is so we can focus on the republication process as it relates to the different material conditions of a single-author monograph and those places where a work may be published beforehand. My interest for this chapter is in how single-author monographs function in terms of the *recontextualization* of the works that they present.

### 3.2 Prior Research

The single-author monograph is rarely discussed as a collection; literary studies as a field tends to approach works as discrete entities, outside of their publication context, preferably in anthologies of a period that can be selected from when determining our course syllabi (perhaps one reason the anthology is the most studied form of collection under discussion when we look to the question of book history<sup>48</sup>). Where the single-author monograph is studied, for example in Timothy Alderman's 1982 dissertation on the integrated short story collection, the question is generally not tackled in terms of publication but in terms of defining a genre.

One study that does examine a collection in terms of its publication history is George Bornstein's "Building Yeats's Tower / Building Modernism" in his *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*. Looking closely at the construction of W.B. Yeats's *The Tower* (1928) throughout its publication history, its bibliographic codes, and the interrelationship between poems in the volume itself, Bornstein argues that "Yeats's enlisting poems for service in different books could change their emphasis by changing their contextual and bibliographic codes" (77). He demonstrates how the various publications of Yeats's poems in assorted periodicals and small books, with different bibliographic coding, could create varying associations with nationalism, continental politics, or the artist as an individual, all for the same poem. The poems are not isolated artefacts; they are contextualized by where they are set. Bornstein also takes into consideration the role that Yeats's *Collected Poems* had on refiguring both the individual

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<sup>48</sup> See for example Yu; Golding; Mahaffey; Ferry.



poems in *The Tower* and *The Tower* as a poetic unit that was included in the volume. He highlights how the absence of the postcolonial and gendered coding that was in the Cuala Press volumes, combined with the tower image in the Macmillan volume for the *Collected Poems* edition, allows the poems to seem “more detached from history than they originally had” (79); the independence of *The Tower* as a volume, he argues, was weakened when it was put into sequence with other volumes. Here, he briefly outlines how a single-author monograph’s sociopolitical resonances are transformed by their placement in a Collected Works. He argues for the significance of bibliographic codes and publication history:

A particular fixing of a fluid textual situation has led to a misperception of [*The Tower*] as a final, well-wrought product rather than a contingent, often contradictory process. And the invisible ideology of editing has collaborated in that misrepresentation by mistaking the literary work merely for its linguistic code and thus obscuring its historically contingent status (81).

Context matters, particularly when we make historical arguments about a work’s significance. Bornstein’s analysis of *The Tower*’s transformations is a cogent argument for recovering the publication histories of collections to clarify how their resonances change through republication.

Cogent as this argument is, there is a very practical reason literary studies tends to focus on words above all: the accessibility of books in contrast to that of periodicals. While the availability of single-author monographs varies depending on print run and period, books are more likely to be preserved and made available in libraries. As noted earlier (see

Introduction), even a monograph that is not readily directly available as a physical first edition is likely to have reprints or virtual copies with identical texts to reference for the linguistic code. Meanwhile, the bibliographic codes of books are generally more extensively preserved and recorded by textual scholars in contrast to an author's periodical contributions, which are often listed, but not with descriptive detail or contextual information (Ives 61). Thus, the resources of scholarly research tend to be designed for and directed at monographs, making monographs generally more accessible for textual criticism.

In contrast, not only are the bibliographic codes of periodicals rarely recorded, but a periodical issue is, by nature, often not reprinted, except at times in collected yearly volumes. This often leaves us with only first printings, however large their runs may be, and with survival dependent on someone having chosen to preserve rather than toss out what is generally considered to be ephemera. Frequently, surviving copies are scant, but the workarounds used for similarly hard-to-come-by first editions are less available. This is partly because of the lack of bibliographic records describing periodicals, thus denying even indirect access to the materiality, and partly because scans of periodicals may leave out important surrounding material such as advertisements and end papers. Even bound copies preserved in libraries—already transformed through the binding, but reasonable objects of study if a scholar is attendant to this fact—have in the past frequently excluded these materials, which now cannot be recovered (Beetham 23). A periodical is simply harder to get at.

Of course, this is not a universal truth. A short story published in a widely circulated, and therefore preserved, periodical may later be published in a monograph with a small print

run that is inevitably lost to time. But in my own research, I found it frequently difficult or impossible to access, for example, most of the periodicals in which the short stories of Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* were initially published.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, while the first publications for the stories in Asimov's *I, Robot* are extensively recorded, the periodicals themselves wherein these short stories were published are difficult to access. While Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* is an excellent model, its study is made possible by the material realities of *Sister Outsider* as a relatively modern monograph that republishes essays earlier published in thoroughly archived and preserved periodicals. If those periodicals had not been preserved, I would not have been able to engage in this project.

Defending against the tendency of periodicals to disappear into history, Margaret Beetham says, is part of the *work* of republication from periodicals. Noting that the authoritative "text" of a serialized novel is generally that of its book publication, she asserts that fiction has a "periodical form" in only a "limited and contingent sense" (25). Transition from periodical to volume publication, whether novel or collection, is "a rescue of the text": both "into the book form, which is physically stable" and "from the periodical into a recognized genre, i.e., fiction or poetry or essay" (25). Print periodicals<sup>50</sup> are destroyed; worse, they are replaced, with each issue offering fresh material and

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<sup>49</sup> In a rare case of a monograph being even more difficult to find than periodicals, while there are traces—however sparse—of all the periodicals listed for prior publications, I have never found any reference outside of that in *The Bloody Chamber* itself to *The Straw and the Gold*, edited by Emma Tennant and published by Pierrot Books in 1979, wherein "Puss-in-Boots" was supposedly first published. Not even WorldCat has a record.

<sup>50</sup> There is a separate conversation to be had about electronic periodicals, which are widely accessible and immediately put into the archive in a way that print periodicals are not. However, like all things—even books—electronic periodicals are also subject to potential impermanence; for more on the risk of erasure of electronic material, see Chapter 4.

reference back to previous issues sparse. The shelf life of a work that only exists in a print periodical is roughly as long as the length of time between issues. Republication as a monograph can be rescue into survival.

But the truism that periodicals are ephemeral and monographs are enduring does not ask what is to me the more interesting question: when a work from a periodical is “rescued” into the archive of quality monograph republication, what exactly is it that is not saved, and is something else created?

### 3.3 Sister Outsider

Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* (1984)<sup>51</sup> is a collection of essays and speeches, first published in this form by the Crossing Press as part of its Feminist Series. Prior research on this collection has tended to focus on one or more of Lorde’s most famous essays or speeches within the collection individually for the contribution to theory (see for example Ferguson; Rivera-Fuentes; Higashida; Martin; Musser), as a theoretical lens to examine Lorde’s creative writing (e.g., Rudnitsky; Keating; H. Russel; Lauter; An. Brown) or the works of others (e.g., Millward; Moya), and in terms of how these essays influenced their personal pedagogy (e.g., Young; Aptheker). These explorations of her essays published in *Sister Outsider* all point to the volume’s power as a work of theory in philosophy, feminist studies, queer studies, Black studies, pedagogy, and literature.

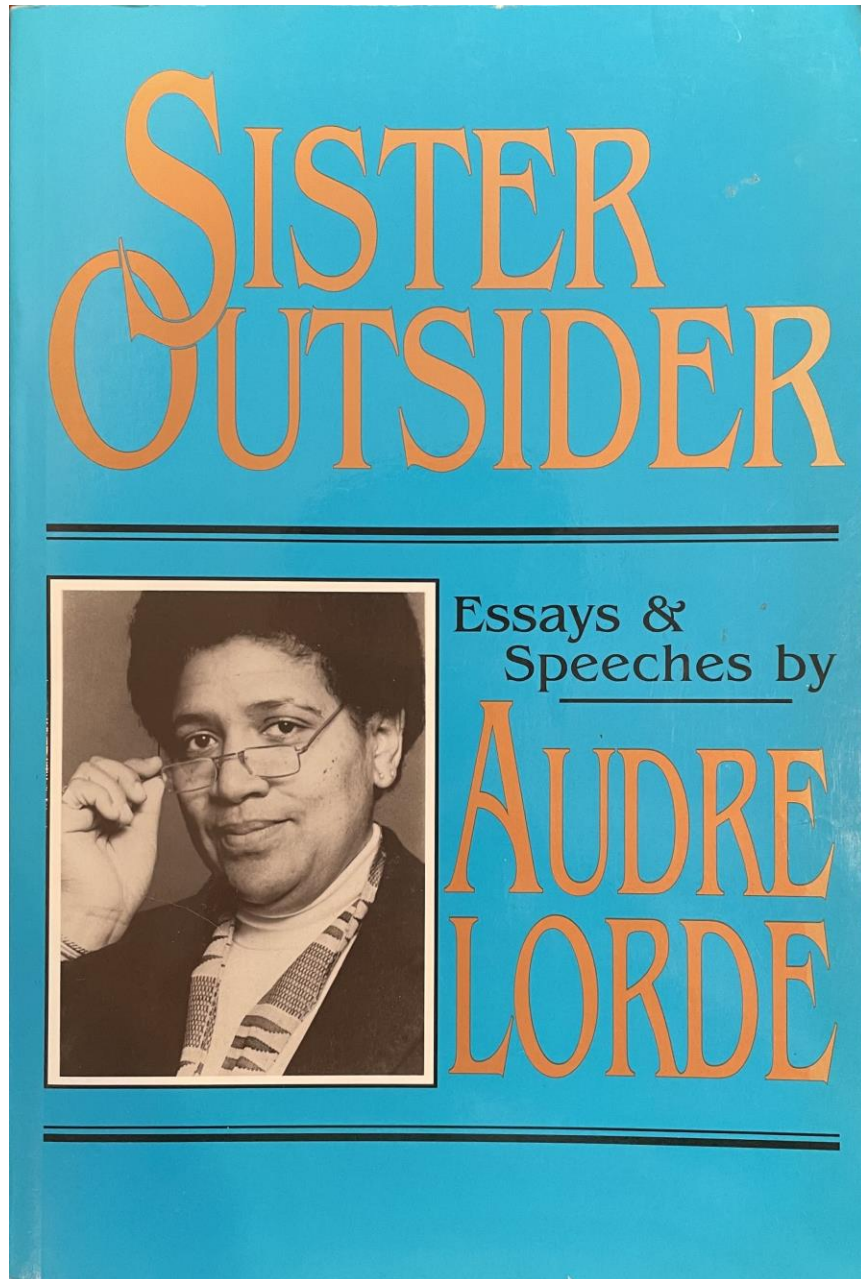
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<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, I could not access a first edition of *Sister Outsider* due to COVID-19 restrictions on library access. I therefore cite from a later imprint of that edition, having referenced quotes against other publications of *Sister Outsider* to confirm as much as I was able consistency between publications.

There has also been important work on contextualizing the historical events around some of the publications. For example, Benjamin Mangrum discusses Lorde's run as editor at *Chrysalis*, reading her "Poems are Not Luxuries" (published with revision in *Sister Outsider* as "Poetry Is Not A Luxury") as a theoretical work and examining the issues surrounding the implementation of these theories as practice in *Chrysalis*. The "Open Letter to Mary Daly" is a key reading in feminist studies, and its publication and Daly's supposed lack of response (see Katherine) as well as the discovery of a letter of a response (see Daly) have been discussed in terms of the history of the development of feminist discourses. Lester C. Olsen's work ("The Personal") on the rhetoric of Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" speech (discussed in a later section of this chapter) also invited a discussion clarifying some events some around this event (Benjamin; Olsen "Reply"). To these historicizing discussions, I add a materialist and textual studies approach analyzing the bibliographical and linguistic codes of the two publications of Lorde's essay on sexism and the conference presentation and textual publications of "The Master's Tools."

By the time of *Sister Outsider*'s publication, Lorde was already a well-known poet and activist, but this publication was the first collection of her theorizing into one volume and is now considered a classic of Black and lesbian feminist thought (Collins 18). Its editor, Nancy Bereano, had courted Lorde for an essay collection, believing that it would be of significant and unique importance to lesbian literature, and after some consideration, Lorde signed a contract for *Sister Outsider*'s publication on 19 November 1982, with an expected publication of 21 May 1984 (De Veaux 315). In the contract, Lorde successfully negotiated that the publisher would have to consult with her for the book's jacket and

typographical design (316), indicating her investment in how the bibliographic code would define her and her work. Galleys of the first installment of the collection and a rough draft of the cover design were sent to Lorde on 23 January 1983; the cover featured a photograph of Lorde that she had submitted (318). The final essay in the collection, “Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report,” was written as the collection was being typeset (336), at some point between her late December visit to Grenada (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 176n) and its publication in the January/February 1984 issue of *The Black Scholar* (15.1).



**Figure 2. Cover of *Sister Outsider*, thirteenth printing, published by Crossing Press.  
Based on the first edition cover.**

The essays and speeches in *Sister Outsider* cover a variety of genres, including not just essays and speeches but travel writing (“Notes from a Trip to Russia”), a letter (“An Open Letter to Mary Daly”), and interviews (“An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne

Rich”). Subjects vary broadly, from childrearing (“Man Child: A Black Lesbian Feminist’s Response”) to poetry (“Poetry is Not a Luxury”) to cancer (“The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”) to the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada (“Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report”), but perhaps the best encapsulation of its themes is to say that the collection addresses matters relevant to Lorde as a self-described “black, lesbian, feminist, mother, poet warrior” (de Veaux xiv). Recurring throughout is the idea of “difference” and how rather than something to be feared or shunned, difference is a source of creative potential that must be acknowledged and respected.<sup>52</sup>

Together, the essays declare the body of knowledge that Lorde contributes to intersectional feminist thought and so who Lorde is as a thinker. It is Nancy Bereano who guides readers to view the collection in this way in her introduction:

When we began editing *Sister Outsider*—long after the book had been conceptualized, a contract signed, and new material written—Audre Lorde informed me, as we were working one afternoon, that she doesn’t write theory. “I am a poet,” she said.

Lorde’s stature as a poet is undeniable. And yet there can be no doubt that *Sister Outsider*, a collection of essays and speeches drawn from the past eight years of this Black lesbian feminist’s nonfiction prose, makes absolutely clear to many

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<sup>52</sup> For Lorde’s most explicit articulation of this concept in *Sister Outsider*, see “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.”



what some already knew: Audre Lorde's voice is central to the development of contemporary feminist theory. She is at the cutting edge of consciousness. (8)

In this introduction, Lorde's identities are centred. These identities include her race, gender, sexuality, and political orientation, but they also include her identity as a poet. From these opening paragraphs, readers are told to understand the collection not as the work of a theorist but of a poet who is producing theory. *Sister Outsider* is framed by its introduction as an output of Lorde's identities, most centrally her identity as a poet; as her identities define the collection, so the collection therefore works as a declaration of who she is as a contributor to feminist theory: someone vital to its advancement and able to integrate feeling and thought. *Sister Outsider* describes Lorde as an activist and thinker for a broad audience, and the introduction tells us as much and guides the reader toward a specific definition of the Lorde being described. The introduction is thus not subtle in indicating that it as a work is supposed to define Lorde to us as a thinker, even as our understanding of Lorde is supposed to guide our reading of her work.

The introduction also guides readers in their interpretation by explaining Lorde's definition of "understanding" as "the figuring out and piecing together, the moving from one place to the next" that "provides the connections" (10). This conception of "understanding" as something developed over time, a kind of movement, is supported by the chronological ordering of the collection. Most essays within had already been published or presented in other venues prior to their publication in *Sister Outsider*. Only "Notes From A Trip to Russia," which was edited from journal entries (Lorde, *Sister* 13n)

had no prior publications.<sup>53</sup> All other works in the collection had been published or presented previously in various journals, books, conferences, and talks between 1977 and 1984. All articles begin with a contextualizing footnote, either about the composition or first publication of the material therein, and they are placed in chronological order. This structure invites readers to pick out themes, such as the significance of anger or the creative value of difference, when they first appear and take note as they develop throughout the collection, understanding these developments as part of Lorde's growth. Bereano describes this in the introduction as Lorde "develop[ing] themes, reworking and building on them over time to create theory" (Bereano 12). And indeed, reading through the collection in order, certain themes—the creative vitality that comes from difference, the value of the erotic for creativity and connection, the significance of acknowledging and making use of anger—appear and reappear, articulated in independent essays in different contexts and manners, but connected by virtue of occurring again and again in the same book. An example of this can be traced through how "difference" is used:

- "Difference" first appears in "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" as only a brief reference to how "[feelings and the honest explorations of feelings] become a safe-house for that difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action" (Lorde, *Sister* 37). The core idea, that difference is needed for change and action, is not explored in any depth. The reader may observe it, but they will likely not flag it as the key theme of the essay.

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<sup>53</sup> "Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report" is not noted in *Sister Outsider* as having any other publications, presumably because of timing issues around writing and publication. As noted above, it appeared in *The Black Scholar* 15.1 (1984), a special issue on the late 1983 US invasion of Grenada.

- When the term appears again several times in “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” difference is figured as a gap to be bridged between women (*Sister* 44). This is a vital part of taking action as women.
- In “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on barriers to Women and Loving,” difference as a vital force returns again, where the misunderstanding of it is described as the root of multiple forms of prejudice and as “a dynamic human force, one which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self, when there are shared goals” (*Sister* 45). Lorde explores the positive nature of difference throughout this address to other Black women, but she also addresses the threat of difference within the community as something that “must not blind” Black women *as* a community (*Sister* 52). It is positive but also, as above, must be bridged.
- In “The Uses of the Erotic,” Lorde explains that the erotic “lessens the threat of [others’] difference” (*Sister* 56) for her. Reading this in light of prior essays on bridging difference, this essay offers a tangible path for avoiding being blinded by difference: creation of an erotic connection.
- “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” is framed as an opportunity to clarify “some of the differences which lie between us as a Black and a white woman” (*Sister* 67). Where before, difference is a creative opportunity and the fear of it is a threat, here, difference is something that should be given concentrated attention. Here, differences “expose all women to various forms and degrees of patriarchal oppression, some of which we share and some of which we do not” (*Sister* 70). In the context of feminist theory, this clarifies that difference has significant material

consequences in the lives of women and that this must be acknowledged, not merely “bridged” over.

- “Man Child: A Black Lesbian Feminist’s Response” reiterates that “difference does not have to be threatening” (*Sister* 78) in the specific context of accepting a male child as different from a female child, but not necessarily someone who will work to support patriarchy.
- “An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich” is in some ways a practical depiction of the concept of difference, as it is discussion between the two women about their differences and how these are a source of disagreement and misunderstanding between them but also of learning and creative potential.
- “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” then moves on to criticize a feminist conference that did not explore difference at its panels. Here, Lorde asserts that “Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. ... Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” (*Sister* 111–2).

Throughout, difference has been discussed but never truly given focus. It is only in “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” that difference is given focus; this essay is in some ways a culmination of all the threads that came before. Here, Lorde unifies many of the earlier hints of her theorization of difference to argue for difference’s value. Moreover, she clarifies the earlier assertion that fear of difference creates prejudice: what separates us, she says, is not difference but “our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them

and their effects upon human behavior and expectation” (*Sister* 115). Reading the essays in order up until this point allows a reader to understand this as a development from her prior figurations of difference’s relation to prejudice.

The theme of difference is not abandoned at that point, of course, and is given further development in “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” where Lorde’s conception of distortions around difference is developed into her distinction between hatred and anger, arguing that hatred desires to destroy difference, but anger can be used to understand the distortions that surround difference and access the creative energy in difference that the distortions occlude (*Sister* 129). Rather, the theme has been so thoroughly developed by this point that when “Learning from the 60s” discusses how distortions around difference have been exploited by those outside the Black community to fracture it and “Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger” discusses reaching across differences, a reader approaching the text in chronological order will have a full understanding of what Lorde means by difference and how she came to this conception of the term over the course of these essays.

We can see from this example that the collection’s structure preserves (a selected version of) Lorde’s development of theoretical concepts over time. Moreover, due to the footnotes introducing each essay and the information provided in the essays themselves, some of the original context is preserved, which further clarifies the development. A reader can infer, based on the publication information provided and the text of the essays, the basic gist of the contexts from which these essays arose.

However, what the collection does not preserve, by its nature, is the voice of any individual other than Lorde (and, briefly, Adrienne Rich) involved in these conversations. The structural format of the book, that of a collection of essays, sets each essay in conversation with the others, allowing repeated themes and ideas to resonate with one another. The resonances between these essays and the material that originally surrounded them, however, cannot be preserved by the format of a single-author monograph. An examination of one essay in its first publication and its republication within the collection demonstrates how the republication process changes what a work can be considered “in conversation” with.

### 3.4 Conversations in *The Black Scholar*

Founded in 1969, *The Black Scholar* is “the first modern Black studies and research journal” (“About Us”), aiming at “uniting the intellectuals in the street” (Biga 3). Mixing “the scholarly and the artistic, the professional and the public/non-specialist” (“About Us”), *The Black Scholar* has connected different Black communities in discussion since its founding (McClendon 108). Lorde first published with them in 1978, when editor Robert Chrisman had invited her to contribute to an issue on “Blacks and the Sexual Revolution” (de Veaux 201). Her essay “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving,” published in *The Black Scholar* 9.7 (1978), was ground-breaking as the first such contribution from a publicly lesbian Black woman in a journal with a target audience of Black intelligentsia; it was also Lorde “[engaging] Black public discourse on her own terms” (de Veaux 213). This would not be the last of her essays published in *The Black Scholar*; of the fifteen essays and speeches in *Sister Outsider*

alone, *The Black Scholar* published three. The second of these publications, “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface,” was first published as “The Great American Disease” in *The Black Scholar* 10.8 (March/April 1979) in a special issue Reader Forum on “The Black Sexism Debate,” and is our subject of discussion.

The Reader Forum in which Lorde participated was centred around an essay in the previous issue. The Volume 10.6–7 special issue on Human Rights U.S.A. (March/April 1979) covered a wide range of American human rights issues, from Black political prisoners (Moore) to the case of Native Americans (Durham) to the Olympic Project for Human Rights (H. Edwards). It also contained three essays centring on women and women’s issues: Kalamu ya Salaam’s “Women’s Rights are Human Rights!” (a Marxist analysis on the importance of supporting women’s rights and particularly those of Black women), “Business Goes On As Usual: Cut/One” by Michele G. Russell (a brief, descriptive narrative on the experiences of Black women in Detroit), and Robert Staples’s “The Myth of Black Macho: A Response to Angry Black Feminists.” It is the last of these that inspired the responses that were most of *The Black Scholar*’s subsequent issue on “The Black Sexism Debate” (10.8–9, May/June 1979).

Staples organizes his essay around two publications, Michele Wallace’s *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1979), a monograph critiquing sexism in the Black community, and Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf* (1976), a choreopoem about the experiences of seven Black women who suffer racist and sexist oppression. Staples asserts that the two authors have presented a narrow analysis of the issue of sexism in the Black community and ignore capitalism’s role in racism and sexism. In developing this point, Staples criticizes the

“angry Black feminists” of his title by asserting that they have failed to try to understand or articulate the causes behind the actions of Black men that they perceive as sexist. He questions whether the way men have been socialized can be termed sexism, asserts that based on the current statistics, Black women will exceed Black men in education and economic prosperity in the near future, and argues that the works of Shange and Wallace have been promoted and leveraged by white media as a weapon against Black men.

The multiple essays circling around the subject in *The Black Scholar*'s Human Rights issue indicated that *The Black Scholar*, even in an issue not centred on women's rights, considered these rights worth discussing. But it was Staples's essay that formed the core of the discussion that ensued in the following issue on Black male–female relationships. In the back matter to the March/April issue, Chrisman indicated that they had secured responses to Staples's essay from multiple authors in the Reader Forum (“Why Newsprint?”); in the subsequent issue on the debate, he elaborated that many of these were invitations and that the responses to Staples's essay, “both solicited and unsolicited,” were numerous, such that the resultant Reader Forum could not include all replies but was intended to be representative (“The Black Sexism Debate”). While most respondents did not argue against Staples's assertions that sexism in Black communities is tied to racism and capitalism and that white media used the publications of Black women to attack Black men, Staples's other assertions were more controversial.

Lorde's response confronted Staples directly. She called it an attack on Black feminists and criticized its arguments by demonstrating continued economic disparity between Black men and women and arguing that it is not the role of Black women to articulate the position of Black men but for Black men to speak for themselves (“Great” 17). Citing



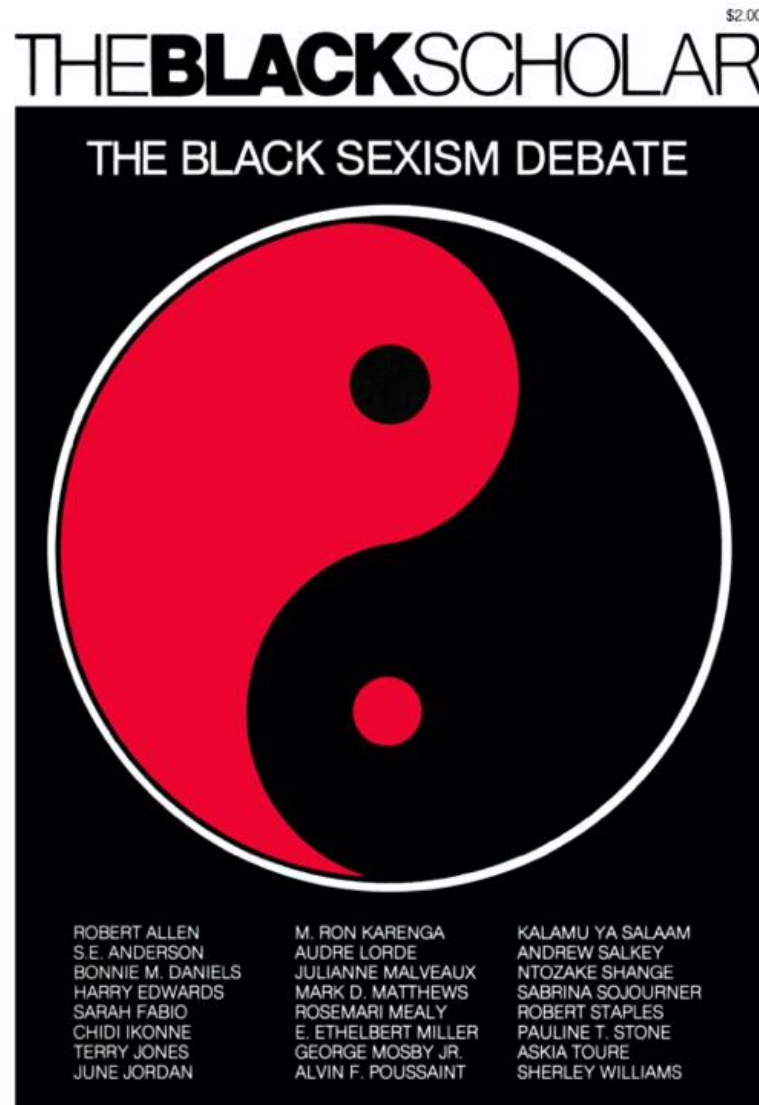
specific examples of violence against Black women, she asserts that Black women's self-love that Staples criticized is not narcissism but something that Black women have been denied (18), argues that the violence of sexism being derivative of capitalism requires that it be combated just as racism is (19), and argues that Black men are invited to join Black women in the fight but that, as it is Black women who experience sexism directly, they must defend themselves (20). Finally, she asserts, "What black women are saying is that this abuse is no longer acceptable in the name of solidarity nor of black liberation. Any dialogue between black women and black men must begin there, no matter where it ends" (20). Her essay is not particularly a defence of Shange or Wallace (she states that Black feminists "other than Shange and Wallace" have opened up necessary dialogue amongst Black people about violence, thus decentring their role in this conversation [17]), but she also rejects Staples's opinion as mistaken and hypocritical, arguing for the importance of Black feminism in general and asserting that Black women have an equal right to the "curious rage" that Staples ascribes to Black men as a result of capitalism (17). Lorde's essay directly rejects Staples's underlying arguments about feminism's place in the Black community.

### 3.4.1 Framing: *The Black Scholar* 10.8–9

Lorde's essay, however, did not speak on its own. It was framed by the issue of *The Black Scholar* in which it was published. Its framing—in terms of the title page and introductory material from the editors, the essay's place within the overall structure of the Reader Forum, and Staples's essay and rejoinder—creates the context in which the essay

exists as a periodical publication. This is the conversation that the essay takes part of in its first publication.

The title page and editor's introduction to the special issue, alongside the editing, frame the forum in which Lorde takes part as a back-and-forth between interconnected halves of a whole. The cover (Figure 3. Cover of *The Black Scholar* 10.8–9, "The Black Sexism Debate.") shows a *taijitu* in black and red, outlined in white against a black background. This symbol, known as the yin-yang symbol to Western audiences, positions the sexism debate as one between complementary opposites, each of which contains the seed of the other. Moreover, this symbol shows opposites as in balance and unified. This symbol, set under "THE BLACK SEXISM DEBATE" in large white letters, guides our understanding of the debate as one mirroring the symbols. The debate between Black men and women is one between contrasting but complementary individuals who are complete and balanced only in harmony with one another. Further, *The Black Scholar* centres the concerns of Black men and Black women, eschewing the common white and black *taijitu* colouring and instead using red and black. The cover's design reinforces that this is not a general debate on sexism but an opening for the conversation on the *Black* sexism debate. The names of contributors set alphabetically in columns on the cover focuses the issue on the participants of the discussion. This issue is dialogic; the speakers are themselves a focus.



**Figure 3. Cover of The Black Scholar 10.8–9, “The Black Sexism Debate.”**

All of these values—complementarity and cooperation, balance, dialogue, and sexism as a specifically Black liberation issue—are explicitly articulated and developed in the editorial introduction to the issue. The introduction argues against the idea that discussions on sexism in the Black community are divisive or diversionary; Chrisman asserts that this discussion is “an important step in the process of re-uniting our people

and revitalizing the struggle against oppression” and that criticisms from Black feminists have “strengthened the understanding of conscientious black men and women who seek to improve not only the collective black human condition, but the quality of their lives in terms of their individual personal relationships” (“The Black Sexism Debate”). He asserts that unity between the sexes is necessary for progress in Black liberation and that a dialogue from multiple voices is necessary to accomplish this. He reasserts the idea that the dialogue is necessary when asserting that “this Forum on black male/female relationships can be one step toward re-unifying the black movement.” A multiplicity of voices is important in this framework; commenting on the number of solicited and unsolicited replies to Staples’s essay, Chrisman regrets that not all responses could be published but states that the journal “published what we trust is a representative selection.” This indicates that discussion is a way forward to unity, and unity must come from a plurality of voices. The cover and introduction together clearly frame the ensuing discussion as a necessary dialogue that is not about separation but about cooperation and a “constructive exchange” (“The Black Sexism Debate”) that will further the cause of Black liberation; this implies that all essays published in this issue are in line with this goal, or they would not have been included. The introduction thus frames the feminist bent of Lorde’s essay as functioning to support Black liberation.

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# THE BLACKSCHOLAR

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## Figure 4. Table of Contents of The Black Scholar 10.8-9, "The Black Sexism Debate."

Indexing features, meanwhile, organize readers' focus. While the Reader Forum is the central matter of the issue, the table of contents (Figure 4) only gives limited information about the individual essays supplied by contributors. The contributors are grouped

together in pairs, with their names listed but not the title of their works. This lack of elaborating information on Reader Forum contributors in the index is mirrored by the Contributing Authors page. While Mark D Matthews, Robert Staples, E Ethelbert Miller, George Mosby, Jr., and two book reviewers (Robert Allen and Chidi Ikonné) are listed, the other book reviewer (Mallard Wellington Benton, Jr.) and the Forum contributors are not. Both the table of contents and the list of contributing authors focus on the Reader Forum as a group rather than as individuals, perhaps in line with the publication's stated goal of creating a more unified Black liberation movement out of disparate voices.

The other items in the table of contents have more individuation, but they keep the focus of the issue primarily on women's (particularly Black women's) rights, with all but a few items outside of classifieds and advertisements focused on women's publications or women's issues.<sup>54</sup> One poetic contribution, "For Ntozake Shange" by E. Ethelbert Miller, is even an explicit rejection of the assertion that Shange's writing is anti-Black man and questions how she can be so misunderstood "by blindmen who call their blindness blackness / & by women who would turn all men to stone" (90). The surrounding material thus remains within the focused question of "the Black Sexism Debate," as the issue is titled. However, only Matthews's article and Staples's rejoinder are given a

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<sup>54</sup> The exceptions are David Koff and Musindo Mwinyipembe (on the documentary *Blacks Britannica* about racism in Britain), one of the four book reviews (about Howard N. Meyer's *The Amendment that Refused to Die*, regarding the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution), two of three letters to the editor (the third was Barbara Smith's refusal to respond to Staples's article on the grounds that the article contains "so many half-truths, untruths and unfounded assumptions ... that the allotted four to five pages would not even be adequate space to correct the factual content, let alone to make an analytical response" [89]), and possibly one of the poems (George Mosby Jr's "telephone call" is "for loretta randolph" [90], and I cannot confidently assert whether it is about women or women's rights).

separate title, which gives them extra focus. At the level of organization, Lorde's essay is thus folded into the larger Reader Forum rather than individuated.

Lorde's essay is also contextualized by the relationship the Forum creates between it and the other essays. The essays of the Forum do not directly respond to each other because of how they were assembled. *The Black Scholar* did not make a general call for the theme of "The Black Sexism Debate" but rather asked scholars to comment on "the Staples essay and the issues raised by it and the works of Ms. Shange and Ms. Wallace" (Chrisman, "The Black Sexism Debate"), so the Forum essays primarily respond, directly or indirectly, to Staples's original article from the previous issue, not to an undirected general theme or each other. However, the grouping of the response essays under the shared umbrella of the Forum puts them in indirect conversation with one another, as a reading of any one essay informs and is informed by readings of the others.

For example, Kalamu ya Salaam's "Revolutionary Struggle/Revolutionary Love," placed directly after Lorde's essay, with his name paired with hers in the table of contents, alters the resonances of Lorde's essay through comparison. Where Lorde's essay rebukes Staples overtly, naming and critiquing his comments directly, Salaam takes an indirect approach, never naming Staples directly but offering a counternarrative to Staples's and stating, "*Instead of attacking black feminism, we should be fanning the flames of struggle by heightening the anti-sexist critique of America and linking that critique with a critique of capitalism and racism*" (21–2, italics in original) and that "women ideologically and physically defending themselves should not be confused with women hating men" (22). In one way, Salaam's essay complements Lorde's by supporting its ideas and validating women's right to their own rage at injustices (Lorde, "Great" 17). However, the contrast

of its mild tone also potentially heightens Lorde's resonances with the idea of "angry Black feminist" Staples is indicting, in the eyes of readers so inclined to see Black feminists this way, by offering a contrastingly less aggressive reply from a male contributor. Significantly, this interpretation—that men replied calmly while women replied in irrational anger—is presented in this *Black Scholar* issue itself in the form of Staples's rejoinder, which I will discuss later.

Essentially, because all the pieces respond to the same work, there are many resonances between them, such as along the line of Staples's statistical analysis of the decrease in the educational and pay gap between Black men and Black women: Lorde critiques his analysis of the wage gap by pointing out that, despite gains, Black women remain the lowest paid group, which to her shows how poorly they started off (17); June Jordan directly inserts the statistics on wages to show that even when more educated, Black women are paid less than their Black male counterparts, countering Staples's argument that the higher rate of education among Black women would lead to Black women overtaking Black men in wages by the end of the century (39–40); and Julianne Malveaux corrects Staples's statistics and offers a different statistical analysis to show, as Jordan did, that educated Black women earn significantly less than their male counterparts (34). This is not a back-and-forth direct dialogue between contributors, but it creates resonances between essays that inform and affect interpretations of a reader who may peruse multiple parts of the issue.

The organizational structure of the Forum also offers an interpretive lens. The Forum responses are divided into three sections: "Feminism and Black Liberation" (six essays), "Political and Historical Aspects of Black Male/Female Relationship" (six essays), and



“Cultural and Interpersonal Aspects of Black Male/Female Relationships” (five essays). Each title indicates a thematic focus and therefore an interpretive guide for the essays that appear under its heading. S.E. Anderson and Rosemari Mealy’s “Who Originated The Crises? A Historical Perspective” appears under the “Political and Historical Aspects of Black Male/Female Relationship” heading, indicating a sociohistorical lens is the best way to read it; June Jordan’s contribution, which centres raw data on Black male/female income, is under the same heading and thus would seem to encourage the same lens. But this is not the only heading Jordan’s essay could have been placed under: the “Feminism and Black Liberation” category would have also suited it, as she structures her data towards a feminist argument and then turns it towards the Black liberation argument: “The point is not whether *he* earns a couple dollars more or less than *she*; the point is that, as a people, our ability to provide for ourselves is under worsening, white institutional attack, right now.... But we can’t do anything that’s good, together until we begin to tell the truth” (40, emphasis in original). The specific placement of an essay in one or another section, when there are multiple possible places, guides reader expectations and interpretations through the lens of the title.

Lorde’s essay is the first of the Forum under the “Feminism and Black Liberation” heading, which guides attention away from the cultural and interpersonal aspects of Black male/female relations in her essay (which may have been emphasized under that heading) and toward the questions of feminism’s role in Black liberation. This influences, for example, the resonances of the following paragraph:

As I have said elsewhere, it is not the destiny of black America to repeat white America’s mistakes. But we will, if we mistake the trappings of success in a sick

society for the signs of a meaningful life. If black men continue to do so, defining ‘femininity’ in its archaic European terms, this augurs ill for our survival as a people, let alone our survival as individuals. Freedom and future for blacks does not mean absorbing the dominant white male disease. (“Great” 19)

This paragraph discusses both Black liberation in the context of feminism *and* the cultural (and historical) influences of European sexism on Black male/female relationships. Not surprisingly, culture, history, interpersonal dynamics, and the question of Black liberation and feminism are intertwined throughout Lorde’s essay. But the section title guides reader attention to Black liberation and feminism as the central focus of Lorde’s essay. It suggests this is the focus of its thesis and sets it specifically into dialogue with all other essays in that section, which are, by nature of the section title, implied to have theses on the same subject. The choices of the periodical publication influence the resonances of the text with different interpretations.

The most overt interpretation for Lorde’s essay in the journal issue, however, is that offered by the placement of Staples’s works. A summary of Staples’s article begins the Forum, and Staples’s “A Rejoinder: Black Feminism and the Cult of Masculinity: The Danger Within” closes the Forum. These brackets shape the conversation around him. In his rejoinder, Staples interprets all Forum contributions from women as one:

That [the response to the article] was so sharply divided along gender lines was not what I expected—or wanted. The men, whether they agreed with me or not, discussed the issues I raised. The women chose to attack me as a male rather than deal with the flawed work of their sister in arms, Michele Wallace. From reading

their responses, one would think I had advocated a classical male chauvinist position, of dealing with women by keeping them barefoot and pregnant. It almost appears that Michele Wallace's anger, confusion and logic has infected the black female body politics. (63)

Staples putting all female respondents under this single umbrella means that Lorde, too, is interpreted by him here. He asserts that all the women attacked him based on gender and, by implication, did not discuss the ideas he raised. He refers to their responses as "infected" with Wallace's "anger, confusion and logic" (63). He further indicates that their essays are complicit in the "machinations of racism and capitalism": "My female respondents choose to aid and abet these forces rather than contribute to the dialogue needed to iron out the differences between black men and women" (63). Thus, he reads Lorde's and the other women's essays—and tells the reader to read them—not as arguments with ideas or information worth considering to further the causes of feminism and Black liberation but rather as irrational, confused invectives that enable the oppression of the Black community. While Staples does later respond to some points brought up in the essays of both male and female respondents, this opening assertion clearly indicates that the women's essays are not *worth* responding to, in contrast to those of the male respondents. We thus return to the pairing of Salaam's indirect criticism with Lorde's direct critique. The contrast in tone between the two works could support Staples's reading, confirming in the minds of some readers that Lorde's essay should be dismissed out of hand as that of an irrational and angry Black woman. And significantly,

Staples has the final word here; there are no further responses in this issue, nor are there any follow-ups in later issues.<sup>55</sup>

*The Black Scholar's* special issue offered a forum in which Lorde's voice could engage with public discourse in the Black community (de Veaux 213), but like any periodical publication must, it also embedded her essay within the larger needs of the issue and journal. The title page and introduction framed the overall discussion as one of balance and interconnectedness. The organizational features of the table of contents and contributors' list folded her into the grouping of Forum contributors, and these grouped-together essays emphasized different resonances in her work. The use of titled sections put particular emphasis on how her essay argues for the interaction of feminism and Black liberation, and Staples's rejoinder offers an overt reading of her essay that also serves as the final word on the subject.

*The Black Scholar* published a conversation of which Lorde's essay was only one part and that had been shaped and managed by other hands. The format of this issue as a forum amplified the strength of the resonances between Lorde's essay and those in the surrounding material, but even publication in a periodical without a reader forum encourages articles to be read against each other. The nature of the periodical is intertextual. Republication in a collection offers an alternative kind of intertextuality.

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<sup>55</sup> I do not argue that this framing was intentional; it very likely was not. Rather, I read it simply as an interpretation made stronger by the format of the publication.

### 3.4.2 Reframing: Republication in *Sister Outsider*

Republication of “The Great American Disease” under the new title “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface” in *Sister Outsider* recontextualized the essay. Without the surrounding material from *The Black Scholar* that creates a conversation with others at a specific moment in time, the essay is instead contextualized as another step forward in Lorde’s development of her theoretical concepts over the history of her activism.

Further, rather than Staples’s essay and response framing and guiding interpretation of Lorde’s essay, this position is reversed: Staples’s writing is absent from the collection, so its substance can only be inferred by what is in Lorde’s essay. The essay itself has been somewhat revised for republication, and the revisions reduce focus on the original conversation, reworking the content of the essay for a more general context and audience.

Most obviously, the contextualizing material of *The Black Scholar* issue is absent, so the essay is no longer framed by these external contexts but rather by the narrative of Lorde’s developing theories. There are no other Forum contributors to fold her in with or compare Lorde’s essay with, nor is there a title page to suggest the principles of the *taijitu* for interpretation or a section heading to place the focus on feminism and Black liberation.

Rather than being contextualized by the sexism debate in the Black community in which it was first published, the new surrounding material places this essay as one piece of a larger mosaic in Lorde’s theorizing of difference and the fear of difference. Its rejection of sexism is one component of, for example, Lorde’s argument for the interconnectedness of all other “forms of human blindness”—racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia—discussed in “Scratching the Surface” (*Sister* 45), which addresses sexism in the Black

community alongside homophobia, specifically lesbophobia among Black women, in an intersectional approach that also interweaves issues of racism. The interpretation of the essay as written by “an angry Black woman” who rejects Black men is made difficult, even impossible, by the immediately following essay, “Man Child,” which refuses feminist separatism and embraces the positive Black masculinity that Lorde sees in her son. And when Lorde asks, “Is [the rage of Black men] any more legitimate than the rage of Black women?” (*Sister* 61) in “Sexism,” she answers herself with her developments on the importance of anger for instigating communication and positive change in “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” and “The Uses of Anger.” Thus, while the essay in *The Black Scholar* is one voice among many, a perspective that can be contrasted and compared to those around it at this moment in time, that same essay in the collection is Lorde’s voice with a specific focus at a specific moment in time, with themes and ideas that have been developed in earlier essays in the collection and that will be developed in later ones, all of which contextualize and provide different lenses for understanding the whole of her argument.

Further, her position in relation to Staples is essentially reversed by republication: where in *The Black Scholar*, Lorde’s essay is placed after a summary of Staples’s original essay and the Forum is concluded by a rejoinder from Staples that characterizes and dismisses Lorde’s arguments, in Lorde’s essay collection, Staples’s argument is now only known through Lorde’s representation of his work. Staples’s essay, of course, is not erased; the collection clarifies that the essay is in response to Staples’s essay and indicates where it may be found (*Sister* 60n). By no means does Lorde try to erase Staples’s voice; any curious reader can readily find it. But it is decentred, and most readers even at the time of

*Sister Outsider*'s publication were unlikely to have direct access to Staples's essay or rejoinder except through memory. Even among those *Sister Outsider* readers who read *The Black Scholar*, a reader would have to have kept a periodical from five years ago or be able and willing to access an archive that contained the issue to read the essays to which Lorde responds. Thus, the form of the single-author monograph as a collection of one author's works removes Staples from the centre of the conversation, leaving out his interpretation, and instead centres Lorde and interprets Staples through her.

In some ways, Staples is less interpreted by the republished version of the essay than the original, courtesy of revisions to the text. While the first publication begins, "In Robert Staples' attack upon black feminists, there are saddening and obvious fallacies and errors" ("Great" 17), the republication focuses on the role of feminism in the Black community, only approaching Staples at the end of the introductory paragraph:

Black feminism is not white feminism in blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as Black women, and addressing those issues does not make us any less Black. To attempt to open dialogue between Black women and Black men by attacking Black feminists seems shortsighted and self-defeating. Yet this is what Robert Staples, Black sociologist, has done in *The Black Scholar*. (*Sister* 60)

Here, contextualizing information about Staples's essay is presented, but the original opening line is removed; there is no implication that the essay that follows is a rejection of Staples's "fallacies and errors." Rather, while it is clear this is a response to Staples, the introduction places focus on the argument of what Black feminism is and how it is

important for the specific issues that face Black women. This is the clear thesis statement and core concern, organized around the main point of discussion; Staples is brought in only to explain the occasion.

Other revisions further decentre Staples's original essay and orient the argument around general discussions. Where the first publication has, "Unfortunately, the Staples article does not [examine and articulate the position of Black men]. It merely whines at the absence of his viewpoint in women's work" ("Great" 18), the republished version condenses this point to "No point is served by a Black male professional who merely whines at the absence of his viewpoint in Black women's work" (*Sister* 62–3). Staples is clearly present, and the general thrust is the same, but rather than Staples being specifically called out, the argument is extended to others that fit that generalized description of Staples. Similarly, "Staples states" ("Great" 19) is changed to "It has been said" (*Sister* 63); "black men like Staples" ("Great" 19) is revised to simply "Black men" (*Sister* 64); "not Staples" ("Great" 20) is removed from the end of the clause "it is for Black women to decide whether or not sexism in the Black community is pathological" (*Sister* 65); and the statement that "We do not approach that question theoretically, as Staples does, who evidentially cannot recognize how he himself is diminished by sexism" ("Great" 20) is broken up into two statements, with the claim about best interests revised to "For Black men are also diminished by a sexism which robs them of meaningful connections to Black women and our struggles" (*Sister* 65) and now placed after the statement that abolishing sexism "is in [Black men's] best interests also" (65). With Staples decentred, the essay is less of a response to his argument specifically, so the mention of the diminishing of Black men in general can be removed from a section about



Staples's argument and instead be placed in the section of the argument focused on the benefits of anti-sexism for Black men. The decrease in references to Staples overall serves to generalize the argument.

In a similar process of generalization, specific references to Shange and Wallace are excised: the two references to them as a pair ("Great" 17) are entirely absent from the republished essay (*Sister* 60), and reference to Shange's call to Black women's self-love ("Great" 18) becomes a general comment on the call for Black women to love themselves (*Sister* 62). Only one reference to Shange survives (*Sister* 61). As a whole, the republished essay minimizes reference to Staples's essay and the Shange and Wallace works to which his essay responded. This is an extremely practical choice for a collection; it allows the argument to be comprehensible to an audience that may lack the context that informs the original debate. It also further pulls the essay outside of its original context and moment in time, decreasing its resonances with the original conversation and increasing its resonances with the general applicability of all the arguments in Lorde's essay collection.

Other changes across publications clarify the ideas presented in the essay and build connections to other essays in the collection. Early in the essay, the republished version adds the line, "We recognize the fallacies of separatist solutions" (*Sister* 61). This clarifies that Lorde's feminist position is not one of completely separating women and men but of repairing the relationships between them. That clarification connects well with the position in "Man Child" that, while Lorde is a woman who seeks relationships with communities of women, she will not reject her son for being a man. The ideas together suggest that in Lorde's conceptualization, rejection of the prejudices common

among dominant groups does not mean rejecting people from those groups—that, after all, would not match her approach to difference. It is the dominance itself that must go. Likewise, the argument for the connection between all kinds of prejudice as fear of difference, articulated throughout the collection, is suggested through an additional line in the republished essay, “Polygamy is seen as ‘creative,’ but a lesbian relationship is not” (*Sister* 65). This line connects sexism to homophobia, as the contrast between acceptance of polygamy as one man with many wives and rejection of two women in relation indicates that male-centred relations are permitted but not the reverse. This connection resonates especially with Lorde’s discussion of lesbophobia in the Black community in “Scratching the Surface” earlier in the collection. Lorde’s revisions in the essay’s republication refine her argument and further develop its assertions within the context of her theoretical work. Republication makes it part of a larger whole.

On original publication, “The Great American Disease” was part of a larger conversation in *The Black Scholar*. It was one voice in a forum discussion among the periodical’s correspondents, occasioned by Robert Staples’s essay on Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide* and Michele Wallace’s *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. In this periodical publication, *The Black Scholar*’s paratextual materials framed Lorde’s essay, and surrounding publications further offered interpretative frames. All of this positioned the essay within the development of a discussion within a specific community at a specific time.

Republication of this essay under the name “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface” brought it out of the periodical cycle and preserved it as part of a different, larger context: Lorde’s prose theorization over an eight-year period in her life. The new surrounding

material was Lorde's own work rather than that of others. Revision further moved the essays from the specifics of the debate in *The Black Scholar* to a more general piece of theory that fits into the concepts developed over the body of the collection. Republication as recontextualization moved Lorde's essay from one conversation to another—the first a conversation between multiple voices in a specific community at one time, the second a conversation held by one woman with her own ideas over time. Rather than being located in a particular moment and place, it became an expression of general principles that were applicable outside the original occasion that invited their writing.

### 3.5 Breath into Air: Speeches

*Sister Outsider* is not exclusively composed of prose works published in academic or literary journals. Among the fifteen works published, six first began their public life as speeches at conferences or events. This provides us with both theoretical and practical questions about how these can be approached within the context of this study.

The first theoretical question is, of course, whether a speech at a conference constitutes a “first publication.” This returns us to the introduction, where I defined a publication as a work's release to the public. As noted, there is a natural fuzziness that arises because “publication” is very much dependent on historical circumstances. From the standpoint of an academic's CV, a conference presentation is not really a publication; only a journal publication is. But from the perspective of a release to the public, a panel where two thousand people attended (Aptheker 289) cannot be considered less of a public than a small press journal that circulates in the hundreds.

Yet there is the material consideration to consider. When a book is published, the public that it enters gets to have a book. This applies to most other forms of word-based publication that might be considered: entrance into the public is conducted through the release of a stable object that can be referenced as the published work. In contrast, a speech presented to the public rarely gives its audience a permanent iteration of that speech; unless a recording is made, a speech disappears as it is being said. Thus, while it has a public reception, it is not a published object.

Our second theoretical question is how we can define the “surrounding material” of a speech at a conference. When a short story or essay is first published in a periodical, that periodical issue is the surrounding material. Other surrounding context could be information about the publication history, earlier or later issues, historical information, and so on, but the surrounding material of a work in a periodical issue is the entirety of the issue and only the issue. What do we define as the surrounding material of the conference? Information about how the conference was organized is definitively a kind of outside context and therefore out, and the presentations of other panelists are analogous to other items published in an issue and therefore in. But does that include audience responses and comments or include informal discussions in hallways? These do not quite parallel letters to the editors, classifieds, or other marginal material in a print publication, as they are generally not selected by an editor for release, but they *are* part of the larger picture of a conference. Further, if we consider the material aspects of types of paper relevant to our understanding of versions, do we also consider the “material” aspects of the size of a room or audience attendance—the form that goes along with the verbal content? A periodical issue is convenient as a unit for the surrounding material because it

is a concentrated unit. A conference is an event that takes place over time and space and is much less ordered.

Meanwhile, the major practical question for studying speeches is access. A conference speech is an even more recalcitrant subject of study than a periodical. Recordings are rare, and when they are available, they do not cover the full body of the conference. They may not include responses and will often not have information about the room or attendees. To access a conference that occurred in the past, one must reconstruct it from the material available. These are often primarily 1) published proceedings, which are usually accessible but will usually only include text of the papers presented, not information on delivery or audience responses, and those versions of the papers may not correspond to what was actually said, and 2) firsthand accounts, which are often more difficult to access and may be subject to errors of memory but can offer pertinent information about room size, audience response, and audience attendance. They cannot provide a definitive recreation, but they can provide some approximation. Thus, while recovery of a periodical issue may be difficult, recovery of a conference is literally impossible. We can only use testimony, text, and available recordings to attempt to create a working understanding of the event.

Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" provides an example of the complexities that arise from such a study. "The Master's Tools," perhaps one of Lorde's most famous speeches (Olson, "Personal" 262), comments on the absence of papers addressing differences of race, sexuality, age, and class at the *Second Sex* Conference of 1979 at which it was delivered. It argues that feminism's failure to integrate a diversity of voices limits it, criticizes the mainstream feminism movement for

replicating oppressive systems of power by perpetuating imbalances that marginalize the voices particularly of women of colour, and invites white feminists to educate themselves about other women rather than put the burden of education on women of colour. Olsen (in “Personal”) and Benjamin’s reply to Olsen provide some discussion of the event and its consequences in the history of feminist thought and rhetoric; I add to this historicization by discussing how the *Sister Outsider* publication of this work affects the historical record.

The contextualizing information provided in *Sister Outsider* for this speech is as follows: “Comments at ‘The Personal and the Political Panel,’ Second Sex Conference, New York, September 29, 1979” (110n). While this provides all the information needed for further research, that mild “Comments” does little to indicate the controversy and conflict that further research indicates, nor does it supply a sense of audience response. The text of the essay itself, circa 1984, offers us Lorde’s account of the conference:

1. The conference lacks considerations of “difference of race, sexuality, class, and age” (*Sister* 110).
2. Lorde was invited to comment on “the only panel where the input of Black feminists and lesbians is represented” (110).
3. The two Black women who presented were “literally found at the last hour” (110).
4. A paper on “material relationships between women” did not examine “mutuality between women” or “systems of shared support,” which Lorde argues would be found through broader consideration of the perspective of lesbians and women-identified women (111).

5. Only two phone calls to Lorde were made, and these were considered consultation; Lorde was considered the “only possible source of names of Black feminists” (113).
6. There was a “Black panelist” who spoke about the “important and powerful connection of love between women” (113).

No further information about the conference is available within *Sister Outsider* itself, just an arrow that might point a reader on their first steps to discover more. Thus, a reader of Lorde’s essay in *Sister Outsider* can gather the above information about the conference and must make guesses about, for example, how the audience may have responded to this essay or what the other papers at the conference may have been; to learn more of the event, they must do research.

In this case, archival research can recover who was speaking and what, specifically, they spoke about. An examination of the conference program clarifies that this panel was the last at the conference, with papers from Jessica Benjamin, Camille Bristow and Bonnie Johnson, Manuela Fraire, and Linda Gordon; Lorde was one of two individuals invited as a commentator on these papers, Barbara Ehrenreich being the other (Moravec 1). Further, the Herstories archives have a recording of Lorde’s speech, so we can gather some information about audience response. Jessica Benjamin’s recollection of the event is that Lorde “was not speaking to an audience who disagreed with her; she was speaking to an audience who were already inflamed because they felt that certain identities had been left out of the conference” (287). Examining the records, we do indeed hear applause, cheering, and support for Lorde during her speech (“The Personal or the Political I” Side A, 41:14–46:06, Side B, 0:00–03:40), but we also hear murmuring throughout the speech,

the awkward call for a “thirty second stretch” after the speech closes (Side B, 4:17–04:20), and the debate that follows. This suggests that it was neither a hostile audience nor a fully supportive one but an audience of mixed of reactions. This is information that cannot be readily recorded in a print publication.

Further, we can hear and see how the speech used specific examples that were removed in later publications. In her work recovering the appearances of Bonnie Johnson in historical accounts, Michelle Moravec compares the recording of Lorde’s speech at the conference to two published accounts and shows how subsequent publications increasingly removed specific reference to Bristow and Johnson (Moravec 1). Originally Lorde asks readers to “consider how Bristow and Johnson were even asked to do a paper at this conference” and then refers to “Camille and Bonnie’s paper.” Later, however, the first print publication of the speech as “The Role of Difference” in *Off Our Backs* in 1979 changes “Camille and Bonnie’s paper” to “their paper” (Lorde, “Role” 5). By *Sister Outsider* in 1984, reference to Bristow and Johnson’s invitation is completely removed, and the mention of their paper becomes “the Black panelist’s paper” (133)<sup>56</sup>—the panelists go unnamed. I add to this textual tracing that the *Off Our Backs* publication of the essay includes the line “Johnson and Bristow’s observation about the effects of relative powerlessness and the differences of relationship between black women and men from white women and men illustrate some of our unique problems as black feminists” (“Role” 5), but this line is absent in *Sister Outsider* (112).<sup>57</sup> This decreases the amount of

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<sup>56</sup> The singular is likely a typographical error, as it is inconsistent with the earlier reference to two black panelists in the *Sister Outsider* version (110).

<sup>57</sup> There does not appear to be a recording of this section of Lorde’s speech, so I cannot know what Lorde said at the conference itself.



information about the other panelists transmitted in the *Sister Outsider* publication and focuses information on the body of her text.

Thus, only through archival research can we learn that the two Black panelists (*Sister* 110) are Camille Bristow and Bonnie Johnson and that the paper on the “important and powerful connection of love between women” (113) was their “Both and And” (Moravec 1). We can also see that the paper on “material relationships between women” (*Sister* 111) was Fraire’s paper, which was named in Lorde’s speech (Side A, 45:39–46:00) and again in the *Off the Back* publication (Lorde, “Role” 5). Further, there was a reference to Benjamin’s paper (Side A, 43:37–44:12). Arguments about female interdependency presented here in relation to Benjamin’s paper, then developed in the *Off the Back* in the same place (5), are folded into the general discussion of female relations after reference to Fraire’s paper, now anonymous (*Sister* 111). The direct, named references to the other papers at the conference, in the speech and in its first print publication, locate the essay in the conference and as a response to the other papers. These resonances are eroded and at times completely erased in the collection republication.

Moravec asserts that the revisions that remove Bristow and Johnson’s names allow Lorde in the revised essay to “focus her critique” (1). And indeed, this is the same kind of revision away from naming the specific individuals and works that inspired a conversation and toward focusing on general elements that occurred when Lorde’s “The Great American Disease” from *The Black Scholar* was republished as “Sexism: An American Disease In Blackface” in *Sister Outsider*. As in that case, where Lorde’s voice in “The Master’s Tools” started as one among many in a broader conversation, it is republished alone with little specific information about the surrounding conversation, but

with sufficient information given to allow researchers to find out more. In both cases, the revisions reinforce what republication is doing: one part of a polyphonic conversation with complex resonances at a moment in time is republished as a single voice communicating with itself. The context of a speech, however, amplifies the preservation element of republication in situations where recordings are scant or not likely to be extensively reproduced. Even more than a periodical publication, a speech is ephemerally located in the moment where it is articulated. Print republication and revision that removes the direct references to other participants also removes the speech from the conference's context, instead putting it in dialogue with Lorde's other essays. Through republication, it loses conversational context but gains the context of Lorde's other works and endurance beyond its first public airing.

### 3.6 Conclusion

I return to Moravec's project, which has been instrumental to me with contextualizing information about the *Second Sex Conference* that no other source had even suggested existed. Moravec's research on Bonnie Johnson, a search for "one woman, the sort of person who doesn't have papers in a named collection, but who appears scattered throughout resources that also are seldom in one physical location" is a powerful model on the kind of archival work that can be done to reconstruct a scene—and also on the possibility of the increasing difficulty of such work the more marginalized an author may be.<sup>58</sup> To me, it highlights the particular significance of a collection for an author such as

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<sup>58</sup> For a review of several projects that use digital humanities tools that tackle issues of queerness and the archive, see Ruberg et al.

Lorde, a Black lesbian woman and so triply likely to be erased in the historical record, as a means of preserving her voice outside of the moments in which she first spoke.

Publication thus serves as a form of what Lorde stated as the necessity of self-definition:

“For Black women as well as Black men, it is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others – for their use and to our detriment”

(*Sister* 45). Republication of earlier essays and presentations in *Sister Outsider* let Lorde enact just such a self-definition, from cover to texts.

A speech at a conference is not, in an ordinary sense, a publication. But the publication of a conference speech into a collection of essays performs the same work as when an essay from a journal is republished in a collection. As we see with Bornstein’s analysis of Yeats, that is the same work as when a poem is republished from a magazine into a monograph. It preserves, as we have been taught is necessary in the face of the ephemerality of periodicals and oral presentations,<sup>59</sup> and it changes the work’s resonances, as we have seen is always the case with republication. In the case of republication from periodicals, the shift is from resonances with other works produced in the same object at the same time—other items in the periodical issue or at the conference—to resonances with other works by the same author—works that may have originated at different times and places, but now are given the unity of sharing one specific object. Those two functions—defending against ephemerality and changing resonances from a conversation with others to a conversation with other works by the

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<sup>59</sup> There are, of course, other, more enduring approaches to orality, where information is passed down through speech traditions (see for example Mahuika). Knowledge transmitted through such a tradition can easily outlast the rot of paper, ink, and even or especially bits and bytes. However, an enduring orality is not the approach of the North American academic circuits where this speech was first presented.

same author—together mean a survival of a singular voice. Thus recontextualized, with temporally bound resonances reduced, republication produces survival by entering a voice into a material form that enables potentially endless reprinting, as long as markets and/or resources are willing. Republication allows the works in a collection to pull away from the specific situations and moments that first produced them and enter the semi-atemporal existence of the monograph—if it is lucky, to be put into circulation again and again.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Adaptation, Porting, Republication: *Homestuck* in Print and Digital (Re)Incarnations

The technology of publication, and republication, has marched on. Not only has the new technology changed how printed works are produced, but it has also resulted in works that were not designed with print in mind. Digital-born works ask new questions about what republication does. For a publication on the Internet, the language of “version” makes more sense than that of “editions,” because any adjustment can be made manifest in an instant, not just producing a new version but overriding the old one—potentially completely wiping it out of existence. When compared to print or even compact disc and floppy drive publications, Internet-native works have a more tenuous physical existence.

In the context of digital technology, interest in republication has generally focused on the digitization of print or manuscript publications, but the reverse is equally significant. A print publication has much to offer a digital-native work. Print offers prestige: digital-native literature is still often stigmatized as less legitimate, particularly if it is self-published, so a print publication by a traditional publisher can elevate a work’s status. It offers new revenue for its creators (if the original was monetized at all), both in terms of new sales to old fans and in opening a new potential market. And, of course print publication offers a more permanent archive for a work that could, in theory, be deleted without a trace.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Of course, libraries also burn. However, that tends to take more effort.

That last, the threat of erasure, also applies to the imperative for a work to be updated to escape technological obsolescence. This applies not only to works on quickly obsolete storage devices like floppy discs and CD-ROMS but also to Internet-hosted works. As technology of the Internet changes and more of the protocols underpinning older websites become obsolete, digital-native works must port themselves to endure.

N. Katherine Hayles frames the adaptation of print to electronic forms in terms of “materiality,” defined as “the interaction of [an embodied text’s<sup>61</sup>] physical characteristics with its signifying strategies” (103). This materiality then also defines the *user’s* (reader’s, player’s) interaction with the material, determining their experience of the work. Therefore, whether a digital work is produced in print format or ported to more current technology, the materiality that develops from its physical characteristics and signifying strategies in interaction—with each other and the user—must change. A codex is not a website, and Flash is not HTML 5. But such material transformations, which may require a major change in format such as from video to still images, bring us a new question: When is a republication an adaptation?

That gargantuan example of multi-media narrative known as *Homestuck* (2009–2016) forces us to confront this question due to the difficulties that arise when its hypermediacy is republished into new mediums. From first publication to serialized print run to porting into new technologies, *Homestuck* has existed in multiple forms—and some of those forms have demanded that it adapt.

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<sup>61</sup> Note that where Hayles describes the “text,” I refer to the “work,” as per the textual studies tradition of “text” for the linguistic code of a story and “work” for the concept of the story itself.

## 4.1 Backgrounds

### 4.1.1 Publication History

Andrew Hussie's<sup>62</sup> webcomic *Homestuck* has all the iterability that can be imagined for an object repeatedly accessed from a server and incarnated on millions of computer screens worldwide. It was originally hosted on the website [mspaintadventures.com](http://mspaintadventures.com), which had previously been host to Hussie's other works. On the release of its credits on 25 October 2016, *Homestuck* totalled 8,124 pages, within which were 14,915 panels, 817,929 words, and, via its 166 Flash and YouTube videos, 4 hours, 12 minutes, and 18 seconds of audiovisual animated content (Bailey, "Statistics").

The story initially followed reader-input commands from a suggestion box in the style of a classic text-based adventure game, but Hussie eventually stopped taking reader suggestions. *Homestuck* itself is composed variously of text-heavy chat logs, simplistic and stylized images (as if drawn in MS Paint), animated gifs in this style, animated videos with music that combined the MS Paint sprite style with more detailed art by Hussie and various guest artists (the music itself being generally composed by various contributors), hyperlinked branching paths, and interactive games that required completing puzzle sequences. The interface tends to be turned to express the metafictional aspects of the story, such as when the entire site is reskinned to represent

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<sup>62</sup> Hussie is the dominant creative voice and author of *Homestuck* and will be referred to as its author throughout. However, I also want to acknowledge the collaborative elements in *Homestuck*. See especially "Sound Credits" and "Art Credits" for some of the musician and artist collaborators. Other collaborators include Alexis "Gankra" Beingessner, who programmed many of the games discussed in this chapter (Hussie "[S] A6I3 (archive)").

the metafictional takeover of the narrative from characters able to hijack the “comic” itself (Doc Scratch’s Interlude [3764–4081 (website)] and the Trickster Arc [5714–77]), and the “RetJohn” (a portmanteau of the main character’s name and *retroactive continuity*, meaning when a later installment in a series rewrites the meaning of something presented earlier) featured panels retroactively edited to reflect an in-universe, metafictional rewriting of the narrative course of events. From its interactive elements to its multimedia approach, *Homestuck* has been described as “the first great work of Internet fiction” (Knode). Certainly, whatever may be said for its quality and style, *Homestuck* is a creation entirely of the Internet, relying on the Internet’s ability to facilitate easy communication between creator and audience as well as the Internet’s capacity to host a variety of content types. Due to the technology that it relies upon, it is not a creation that could exist as it is in any other time, nor, indeed, any way but digitally.

However, efforts have been made to achieve just that. The earliest such effort began in 2011 when TopatoCo began to publish *Homestuck* in the form of books. *Book One* (2011), *Book Two* (2012), and *Book Three* (2013), covering the first three acts, were as far as TopatoCo got before the project ceased. While there are certainly multimedia elements in these first acts, these are some of the least complicated sections, with only 45 [S] pages, totalling 43 minutes and 1 second of audiovisual content (Bailey, “Statistics”). A year after *Homestuck*’s completion, however, on 6 October 2017, another effort to publish it in print media was announced, this time from VIZ Media, which had also announced its acquisition of the webcomic (“VIZ Media”). *Homestuck* would be put into print.



With VIZ's purchase came a retooling of the mspaintadventures.com site. On 2 April 2018, shortly before the release of VIZ's *Homestuck Book 1: Act 1 & Act 2* (2018)—essentially reprintings of the TopatoCo books—the mspaintadventures.com website was renamed to homestuck.com, although it still contained all of Hussie's prior, non-*Homestuck* publications (Hussie, "News"). Its former page numbering system was also restructured, and all its Flash videos were replaced with external YouTube uploads. While archival copies of the Flash videos and games remain, and while the new website has not dramatically changed the work, *Homestuck* as it was from 13 April 2009 to 1 April 2017 no longer exists.

#### 4.1.2 Theoretical Backgrounds

If anything can be considered an example of a "hypermediacy" that "multiplies the signs of mediation and in this way tries to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience" (Bolter and Grusin 34), *Homestuck* should certainly qualify for its use of nearly every medium and mode of storytelling that can be made to manifest digitally. With this level of hypermediacy involved, we must approach *Homestuck*'s iterations by considering when a republication is an adaptation.

Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as "repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). She acknowledges the complexity of such a definition, and describes adaptation from three different perspectives:

1. As a "*formal entity or product*" (emphasis in original), adaptation is "an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works," which she also calls "transcoding" (7).

2. As a “*process of creation*” (emphasis in original), adaptation “always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation” (8).
3. Finally, as “*process of reception*” (emphasis in original), adaptation “is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (8). Here, she distinguishes between “knowing” and “unknowing” audiences, the former aware that they are engaged with an adaptation and familiar with other versions, the latter unaware or unfamiliar with other versions (121).

Hutcheon does not only use the concept of “medium” (film, print, video game) but also of “modes of engagement” to clarify her theory of adaptation. Discussing a particular machinima (creation of films using game engines) adaptation of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ozymandias,” Hutcheon argues that “[c]onsidering medium alone would not be useful to getting at the success (or failure) of this adaptation: although this machinima is in a digital medium, it is not interactive” (27). Thus, to Hutcheon, it is necessary for adaptation theory to also consider the modes of engagement for users: *showing* (most associated with audiovisual media like films and stage performances), *telling* (most associated with textual media like novels), and *interacting* (most associated with video games) (22). Further, “each medium and each mode of engagement brings with it not only different possible kinds (imaginative, visual, physical) and degrees of immersion, identification, and distance but also different critical traditions” (134). We must consider mediums as well as modes, both in how they are approached and in terms of their cultural legacy, as we tackle the question of adaptation.

So, are the printed or ported versions of *Homestuck* adaptations? In the first sense of a “formal entity or product” announced as an adaptation, yes and no. On their page advertising their print publications, the book series is described as “[a] full-color, hardcover collector’s edition of the landmark webcomic” (VIZ). The product description further announces that *Homestuck* “has been immortalized on dead trees with notes from author Andrew Hussie explaining what the hell he was thinking as he brought this monster to life” (VIZ). VIZ is not announcing the print version of *Homestuck* as an adaptation. Instead, they are billing it as a “collector’s edition” and “immortalization” of the work, much in the same way that a DVD with director’s commentary might be advertised—a republication, but *not* an adaptation.

The announcement for *Homestuck*’s porting, on the other hand, *does* describe it as an adaptation. Hussie’s news post on the subject describes the work as “porting” the content and as “preserv[ing] the original content while updating its delivery” but also refers to it as a process of adaptation three times (Hussie, “News”).

This brings us to the second consideration of adaptation, adaptation as a “process of creation.” In both cases, the basic content has remained constant—it is not a reinterpretation or recreation in the sense of adapting characters, events, or words. These are constant. Rather, considering medium of transmission and modes of engagement as all places where adaptation might be found, we can see that printing or porting both *did* and *did not* require the “(re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation” of *Homestuck*.

Consider the media least changed by these processes. Still images and print were minimally affected by the printing process and even less affected by the porting. For the

porting, *Homestuck* started on a website and remained on one—an unlikely candidate for adaptation. And while the printing process involved some reorganizing of how image and text were arranged in relation to each other, if this occurred between two editions of print-native works, the new version would generally be called a revision or a new version, not an adaptation. Thus, while the digital and print differ in terms of their material existence, as mediums of *text and image*, all versions remained constant. The modes of engagement likewise did not change. In isolation, these segments would seem to be best categorized as republication, not adaptation.

On the other hand, looking only at the print iteration, moving gifs had to be produced as still images when published in a book, so here, the mode of engagement was constant, but the medium change from digital to print did change the gifs from moving images to a series of still images. This is more like an adaptation. The Flash videos were even more so an adaptation in terms of medium, as they existed in an audiovisual medium and had to become static images, without sound. That said, in terms of mode, the Flash videos, like the gifs, remained in the mode of showing. In contrast, the interactive gameplay segments had to be adapted in all senses: their mediums went from digital to print and from audiovisual and kinesthetic to static images and text, and their modes went from interactive to showing and telling.

This also occurred in porting, in even more complicated ways than above. Many things in the porting remained constant because the architecture of hyperlinks, chatlog boxes, and gifs did not change. In addition, the Flash videos did not change mediums or modes: they were audiovisual and used the mode of showing, and this was constant. But they were also ported over to YouTube, which introduced a different interface and thus made them

materially different because the means by which a user would interact with it changed. The Flash games, as well, could no longer function as games, and were ported to a new digital format in a similar way to how they were ported to print: as non-interactive sets of shown images, with the addition of audio that may be played. In addition, structural changes to the website interface required adaptation of other elements in the text.

In sum, in both print republication and porting, some material did require reinterpretation and recreation, but other elements did not. Ignoring that these two versions of *Homestuck* are adaptations will make us oblivious to the change in the materiality at these key moments. But seeing them only as adaptation neglects the sociological element of republication by ignoring that both the print books and digital ports are, to some degree at least, intended to be received as republications of *Homestuck*, not adaptations. Seeing them only as adaptation also ignores what is not adapted between versions. Thus, we must look at them as both adaptations and republications. By looking at what must be adapted and how, as well as considering the implications of serialization for the work's production, we can consider how technological obsolescence affects the work of republication in both print and porting.

#### 4.1.3 *Homestuck*: A Summary

The plot of *Homestuck* is notoriously convoluted and difficult to grasp. There is a reason *Homestuck* has been described as “the *Ulysses* of the Internet”: much like *Ulysses*, *Homestuck* requires a great deal of investment of effort to be read and has been speculated to provoke a similarly adamant justification of that effort as a result (PBS Idea Channel). For the sake of understanding its various versions, however, we only need to

have a general overview of the overall plot and a more specific understanding of certain key elements that affect, and are affected by, areas of adaptation. The initiating action of the plot is quite simple: a thirteen-year-old boy, John, tries to play a video game called Sburb. Where this leads is a bit messier.

John and three friends play Sburb, which forms an interlocking loop of players who can manipulate each other's physical spaces like in *The Sims*. The ultimate first goal is to get each child playing so that they can manipulate the space around each other and ascend into another layer of reality, the Incipisphere, before the Earth is destroyed by a meteor. John and friends do this, and each player is granted a specific Aspect, which supposedly refers to one of the universal constants of the universe. The player granted the aspect of Time—in this case, a boy named Dave—can move backwards in time and change the course of events. When they do so, whatever history they abandon is left behind as a “dead timeline,” destined to terminate, as the main course of events progresses in the form of the Alpha Timeline. Aliens from another universe called trolls (also children) reveal to the four friends that Sburb is designed to destroy one planet in order to create an entire new universe that victorious players are sent to inhabit. It is a form of multiversal reproduction, performed in the manner of a frog that leaves behind many doomed eggs in the hope that at least a few will make it to adulthood. The trolls are the creators of the human children's universe, but they accidentally doomed that universe and the children's game of Sburb.

As a result, the children are forced to engage in a second form of temporal rewriting by initiating what is called the Scratch, which involves the game overriding the original universe of the four kids to switch their places in the timeline with their guardians. In this

version of the universe, it is their guardians, now children, who play the reset game. Normally, the original players would die, but our protagonists escape into the new instantiation of the timeline, joining the child versions of their guardians. However, almost all characters are killed in a massive game over. As a result, John, one of the few survivors, uses the metafictional power of a “juju” to move through not the timeline but *the comic itself* and change its pages. In the resulting new timeline, the players defeat all the antagonists, create a new universe, and finally escape *Homestuck* into a post-comic universe, free of their former reality’s constraints.

The most important elements to take from here are the metafictional incursions of characters into the shape of the comic itself and the issue of timeline rewriting. As we will see, these themes often occur in the places where adaptation is both necessary and complicated.

## 4.2 Paradox Space and Interactivity

### 4.2.1 Interaction Through Digital Interface

As noted, *Homestuck*, at least in its web incarnation, is a multimedia production. Taking full advantage of the multitude of options available to a work posted on the Web 2.0, *Homestuck* features still images; brief, cyclical moving gifs; full videos with sound; interactive Flash videos; branching paths through hyperlink; chat logs with coloured text; walkaround video games requiring user input; a parody of Google Maps; and even interface alteration, during which the website layout is hijacked by characters or events within the story itself, forcing the user to interact with the website interface in unusual

ways. Discussing *Homestuck*, Kevin Veale explores how the meaning of a text is affected by the “the physical and mental processes required of [readers] as they negotiate the text that frames the story,” processes which are affected by the materiality of the content with which readers engage (1028). *Homestuck*, Veale argues, engages readers transmodally through different kinds of labour. In relation to how readers interact with the work, Tim Glaser further argues that *Homestuck*, even in the parts that are not literal gameplay, remediates (and parodies) video games throughout with mechanics that invite reader interaction and comment on video games and game culture (106). The how of reader engagement with *Homestuck* is a key part of the story told.

This remediation is accomplished by a kind of interactivity enabled by the materiality of the digital medium. From hyperlinks to selection screens, *Homestuck*'s interfaces shape a readerly experience that is a remediation of different kinds of gameplay. The dominant frame of the narrative, indeed, is that of a text-based adventure game, in which players input commands that then trigger text responses from the game, depending on what is said.<sup>63</sup> This is expressed from the very first page of the comic (Figure 5).

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<sup>63</sup> Of course, in actual text-based adventures, the input must be something that the game has been programmed to understand and respond to. In this famously tricky genre, this could lead to absurd levels of difficulty.





**Figure 5. Screenshot of the first page of *Homestuck* (1 [website]).**

On initial publication as a serial work, this was literally an interactive element of the narrative, as readers were able to “play” by making suggestions.<sup>64</sup> Even after the choices were made, the continued use of > (the greater-than sign) throughout the narrative is a persistent remediation of text-based adventures (Glaser 102). *Homestuck* similarly emulates text-based adventure games by using second person in its narration, a

<sup>64</sup> For discussion of seriality and *Homestuck*, see below on “Upd8s.”

characteristic of the genre. After the command, “> John: Captchalogue smoke pellets” is given (8 [website]), the next page reads, “You stow the SMOKE PELLETS on one of your CAPTCHALOGUE CARDS in your SYLLADEX” (9). Combined, a remediation of “gameplay” is created: when a reader clicks such a hyperlinked marked by a > that indicates an input of a command, then moves to the next page that uses the second person narrative that would be generated by their input command, they are also “playing” the adventure game by “selecting” the next action and reading the resultant text. While the actual source of text is the author Hussie, the experience is a remediation of the interactive experience of these old computer games.

Other elements of the digital interface further create a level of interactivity. Aside from having to “select” commands to “play” the text-based adventure, players must also click open Pesterlogs that display dialogue between characters (see Figure 6 and Figure 7).

While this is not the level of interaction that comes with most games, it *does* partly create a coherence that “is spatial and is created by the player within a game space that is not just imagined or even just perceived but also actively engaged” (Hutcheon 51), as Hutcheon describes video games doing. This is because the image/dialogue division, where dialogue must be opened through selection, remediates the common gameplay mechanic of needing to select and thereby interact with characters to trigger their dialogue in display, creating a spatial hierarchy between visual and textual elements that develops through player interaction. It is not quite the full suite of “aural (music, sound effects), visual, and kinesthetic provocations” of active gaming that make for a deeply interactive mode of participation (Hutcheon 51), but it is closer than would be created without this feature.



Figure 6. Screenshot of page with Pesterlog hidden (3427 [website]).

## Karkat: Answer Terezi.



Hide Pesterlog

```
gallowsCalibrator [GC] began trolling carcinoGeneticist [CG]

GC: K4RK4T, 1 H4V3 GR4V3 4ND S3RIOUS N3WS TO R3PORT
GC: 1 H4V3 D1SCOV3R3D TH3 SC3N3 OF 4 R34L L1F3 MURD3R!
GC: T4VROS W4S TH3 V1CT1M >:[
GC: 1M V3RY UPS3T, BUT 1 4M TRYING TO ST4Y PROF3SS1ON4L 4BOUT
1T
GC: TH1S CR1M3 1S NOT GOING TO SOLV3 ITS3LF >:]
GC: 1 H4V3 CONDUCT3D MY PR3ML1M1N4RY FOR3NS1C 4N4LYS1S OF TH3
SC3N3, BUT MY F1ND1NGS H4V3 B33N MOSTLY 1NCONCLUS1V3
GC: (1 4M ONLY PR3T3ND1NG TO THINK TH3R3 1S 4NY CH4NC3 1T W4S
NOT VR1SK4, B3CAUS3 OTH3RW1S3 1T WOULD B3 NO FUN)
GC: 4NYW4Y, 1 JUST W4NT3D TO W4RN YOU TH3R3 1S 4 BLOODTH1RSTY
MURD3R3R ON TH3 LOOS3, 4ND YOU SHOULD B3 C4R3FUL OUT TH3R3!
GC: NOW 1 MUST 4TT3MPT TO R3V1V3 TH3 V1CT1M...
GC: 3333UGH...
GC: K4RK4T YOU C4NNOT 3V3N 1M4G1N3 WH4T TH1S SM3LLS L1K3 >XO
GC: BUT 1 PR1D3 MYS3LF ON B31NG 4 TRU3 PROF3SS1ON4L, 4S W3LL 4S
4N 3XC3LL3NT FR13ND
GC: 1 WILL B3 4W4Y FROM MY GL4SS3S FOR JUST 4 MOM3NT
GC: SO 1F YOU G3T TH1S M3SS4G3 PL34S3 B3 P4T13NT >:]

gallowsCalibrator [GC] ceased trolling carcinoGeneticist [CG]

CG: TEREZI? ARE YOU THERE???
CG: OH FUCK, TAVROS IS DEAD TOO?
CG: TEREZI LISTEN TO ME YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF THERE.
CG: VRISKA IS THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS.
CG: WAIT
CG: FORENSIC ANALYSIS? ARE YOU FUCKING INSANE?
CG: PUT YOUR FUCKING GLASSES BACK ON. GOD DAMN IT.

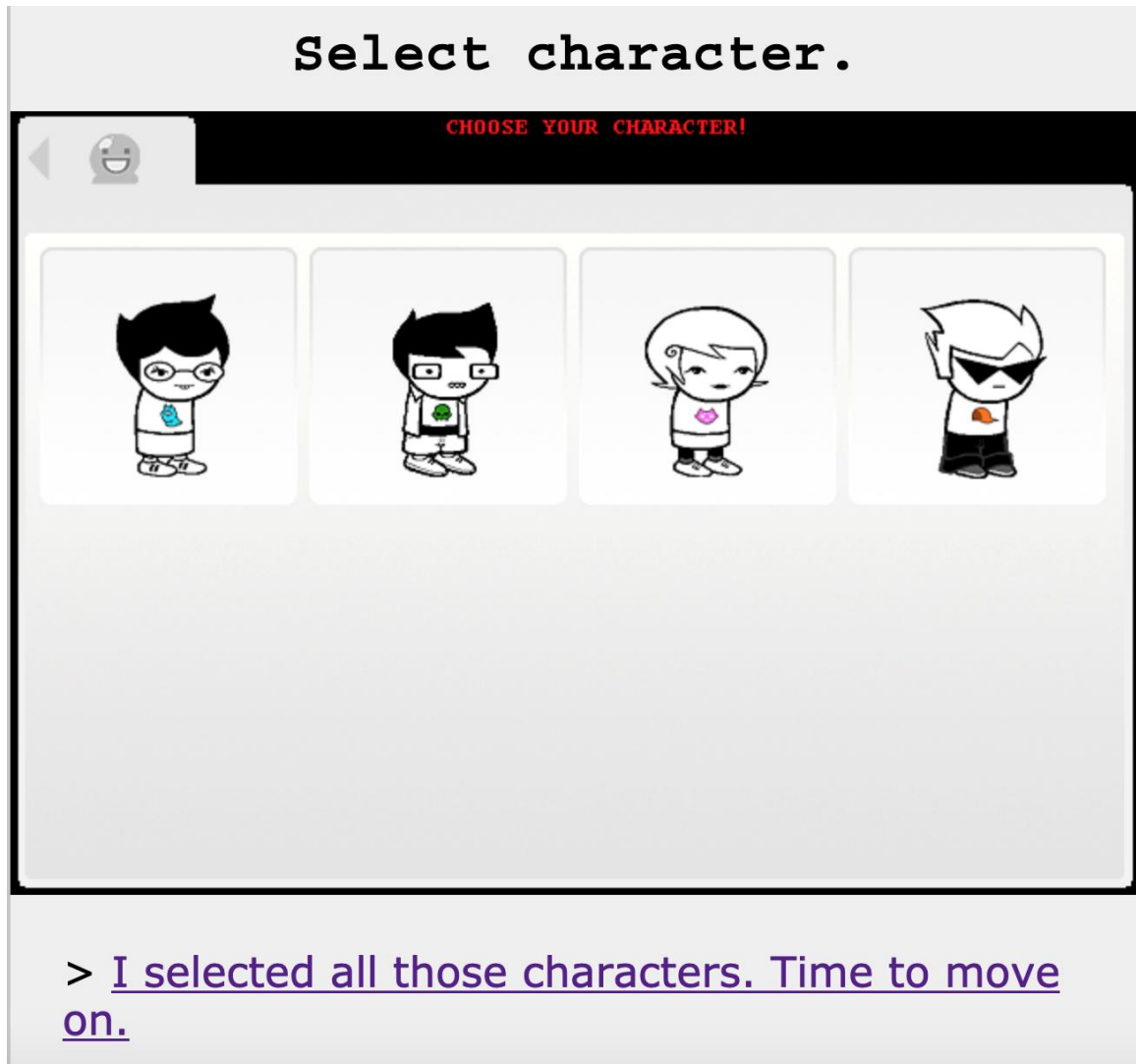
gallowsCalibrator [GC] began trolling carcinoGeneticist [CG]
GC: honk.
CG: AAAAAUUUUUUGH OHFUCK OHFUCK OHFUCK OHFUCK OHFUCK OHFUCK
OHFUCK

carcinoGeneticist [CG] blocked gallowsCalibrator [GC]
```

> [Karkat: Examine Sollux.](#)

Figure 7. Screenshot of the same page with Pesterlog visible (3427 [website]).

Finally, there are the “select screens” introduced in Act 6, where the reader “chooses” which character to “play” as (see for example Figure 8). These are remediations of select screens that occur in various video games. The reader is, of course, not actually playing the character, and the sense of choice is artificial in that the player is expected to go through all characters before moving on (as the bottom command text for Figure 8 indicates). However, these are again ways that *Homestuck* remediates gameplay through its interface to create forms of reader interaction with the material.



**Figure 8. Screenshot of a character select screen (5084 [website]).**

Further on, in some cases, the select screens do not even offer a choice, such as with a set of three select screens (6382, 6397, 6405 [website]) where a reader is only given one non-broken link each time. This is due, in universe, to the metafiction-usurping character of Caliborn shoving stardust into the Act 6 Act 6 game cartridge, thus breaking the “game.” These sections are therefore entirely linear, as the player can only progress in the way the story allows them to, but they are also highly interactive, as they allow the player

to interact with a remediation of a broken game cartridge—something familiar to anyone who grew up on old consoles.<sup>65</sup> The game even adds aural elements of a glitched game (the game beeps when an invalid option is chosen) to the visual and kinaesthetic elements, creating an interactive *denial* of choice.



**Figure 9. Screenshot of one of the broken character-select screens that forces linearity (6382 [website]).**

Further, there are “walkaround” gameplay segments that emulate different games. For example, one mimics the point-and-click adventure game *Myst* (4820–4827 [website]), while others (e.g., 2792) are more in the style of *Earthbound* and similar RPGs, and some (e.g., 1358) have players collect items and even engage in combat with enemies. In these

<sup>65</sup> This is part of the “technonostalgia” that Glaser considers a key feature in *Homestuck* (99).

walkarounds, rather than games being remediated, they are recreated and played—both by the reader-player who is engaging with this element of the interface *and* by the character-player who is enacting the game of Sburb.<sup>66</sup>

The readers of *Homestuck*, therefore, are also its “players” through the game’s remediation of different kinds of gameplay, both in the website interface and the use of playable games. The pre-port digital version of *Homestuck* mimics text-based adventures in structure and, in its interface, has readers “play” the narrative through the selection of commands, the act of clicking open text boxes, and the choice of character select screens. This interface then becomes a feature that can be played with when metafictional elements of the story begin to take over. The story also lets players act out games through walkarounds that emulate point-and-click adventures and RPGs, letting them act as the players of the story. While *Homestuck* also uses the showing and telling modes, several kinds of interactivity are developed through the interfaces and Flash games used on the website.

#### 4.2.2 Interaction Through Tabularity

Such interactivity, of course, cannot be merely *republished* in print. Hyperlinks and character select screens are not easily recreated in physical formats. Instead, the print version of *Homestuck* presents alternative kinds of interactivity and visual movement. The print editions of *Homestuck* remediate text-based adventures primarily through

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<sup>66</sup> Note however that these segments are now obsolete due to Flash no longer being supported. For more discussion on this, see below on *Homestuck*’s porting.



comics rather than hypertext narratives and use the material features of a print codex to enable new ways of moving through the text.

Tabularity is a physical characteristic of a material object that allows for multiple directions of approach to different segments of the object. Christian Vandendorpe asserts that, in the context of reading, “[l]inearity designates a series of elements that follow each other in an inviolable or preestablished order,” while in tabularity, “readers can visually access data in the order they choose, identifying sections of interest beforehand, in much the same way as when looking at a painting the eye may contemplate any part” (22). The written word is generally experienced in a linear manner—you have, hopefully, read the words of this sentence in sequence—but a document with headings and subheadings enables a reader to take a tabular approach by hopping freely between sections. This kind of open movement is often associated with hypertextual and multimedia works because these works often offer a variety of possible entry points and allow readers to follow multiple paths through the work, but it can also exist in print when a printed object exists as one physical unit that can be “entered” at any point.

As hypertext, *Homestuck*'s Internet incarnation has all the tabularity anyone could ask for, complete with a page index and a search function. Readers can hop freely through the work with these tools. However, this is in many ways what Vandendorpe calls functional tabularity, as an individual clicking through can approach the text from many directions but cannot behold the entire work all at once. In contrast, the print incarnation of *Homestuck* has the visual tabularity of a codex because it enables multiple visual points of access. One can navigate to any point in a codex without having to first move through others. It is this use of visual tabularity through the material elements of the codex that is

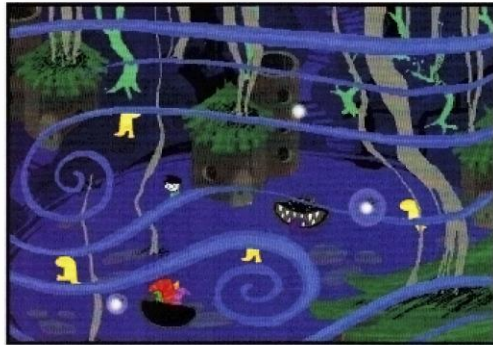
the main way in which the print version of *Homestuck* offers some level of interactivity to its reader.

As discussed above, changes in the way that image and text are set out on the page would ordinarily be referred to as revision, not adaptation. The images and text are not changed; only their layout in relation to each other. Yet this layout change also transforms what was the primary interface on the digital platform, and this interface was part of the remediating text-based adventures. As a result, any change to the interface also remediates the text-based adventure games that *Homestuck* parodies. Figure 10 shows how the panel–text structure shown above in Figure 5 has been reorganized on the page to follow the four-panel structure of a comic, with images boxed in by a black border and narrative text unboxed below.

001486-001488



OH GOD HOW CAN SHAVING CREAM BE SO FLAMMABLE



A big gust of wind conveniently comes along and blows out all the fire.

It is really convenient.



The townspeople rejoice and are more than willing to give you all the credit. You suspect it is probably because they are not all that smart.

> John, the uncarved tablet you retrieved.

94

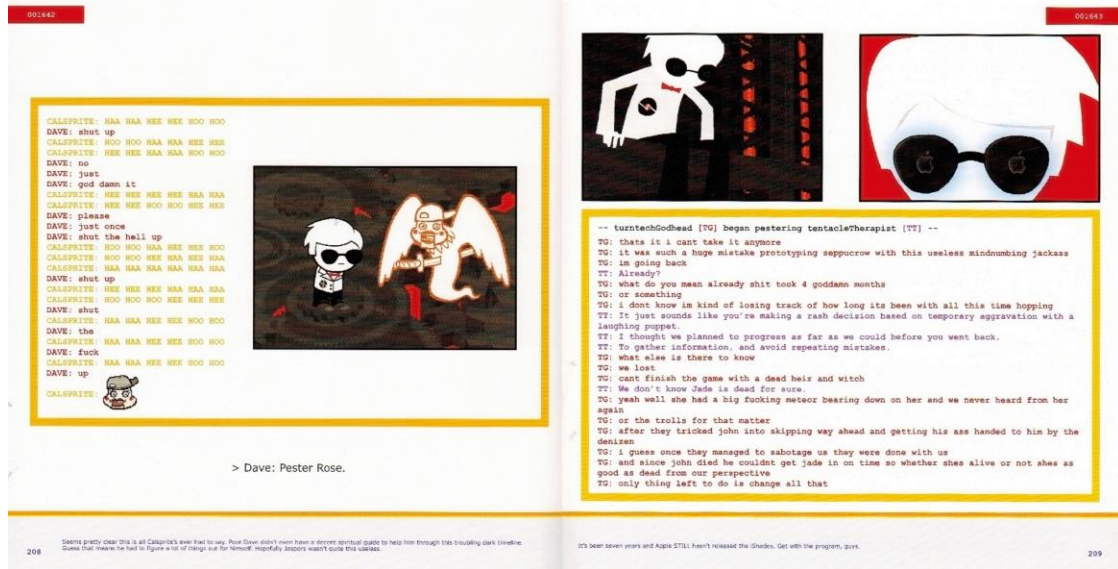
I'm not sure if shaving cream is flammable at all, actually. It probably isn't. It's just a funny idea to insist that it is, repeatedly, without any clear reason why. Along the same lines as stubbornly insisting Tab has sugar in it.

**Figure 10. Four-panel comic restructuring in the *Homestuck* print version (94 [book]).**

In the comic, these specific pages would simply be a solitary panel per page, lacking a border, with a hypertext link of either command text of the next inputted action or an arrow to move to the next page, as in Figure 5. But here we see that, while the text commands (which eventually reveal themselves to be the commands of characters in the

story and therefore a kind of dialogue) remain, the hyperlink arrows are gone. They no longer serve a purpose, as the reader no longer requires them to move from page to page. To a degree, this creates a change in mode: while the command text itself remains alongside the use of second person, the reader no longer “inputs” commands to move forward. They interact by turning pages, not clicking through, meaning that the “game” is not enacted by readers through interaction with hyperlinks but shown to them. This removal of the command key weakens resonances with text-based adventure games and increases its resonances with print comics. The text-based adventure game is remediated not as a(n interactive) hyperlink adventure but a (shown) comic book narrative, partially altering the mode.

The restructuring of the layout also creates a new relationship between image and *specifically* dialogue that enables the visual tabularity of comic books. As seen in Figure 6 and Figure 7, Pesterlog texts, when opened, can often be quite long, requiring the reader to scroll down and so lose sight of any text and image that does not fit on the screen. The scroll bar is, as Vandendorpe has noted, the modern incarnation of the scroll of old (139); it creates a linear relationship between what is above and below. One must view the panel first, then scroll down and read the text. In contrast, the printed *Homestuck* tends to ensure that image and text are experienced side by side in significantly less linear structures. It blocks off the chatlogs in thick yellow boxes beneath images or even, at times, embeds panels within the chat log boxes (Figure 11)

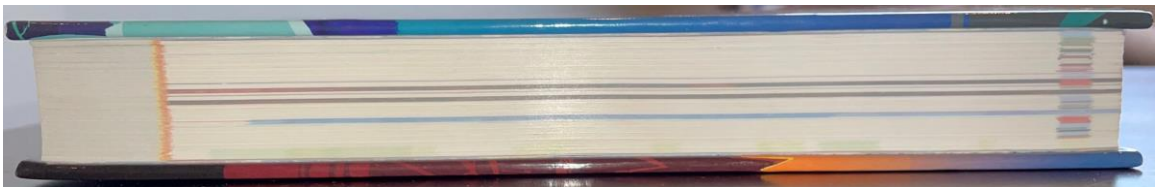


**Figure 11. Reorganized interplay of image and dialogue in print *Homestuck* (208–9 [book]).**

The two variations seen here are pragmatic choices; in the first, the image is embedded into a box's structure where the dialogue lines are short enough to fit, while the long spread of text in the next section fits more readily under than beside the two images that it relates to. But other meaning is created through this relation: where in the digital edition, the image of Dave appeared above his conversation with Calsprite, now the image is locked into the box with the conversation, inviting the reader's eye to move from it to the dialogue and back without ever escaping the frame. This visually mirrors the way that Dave has been trapped with Calsprite for four months, tortured by the abomination that is his supposed guide. The panels above the conversation with Rose, wherein Dave discusses escaping the dead-end timeline into a more productive one, then come to visually show Dave striving to escape the trap. We see a similar structuring in the panel of John creating the paradox clone children, trapped within the chatlog box of

his conversation with Karkat (385 [book]): this conversation discusses how Paradox Space traps everything in causal loops. By visually restructuring image and text, the book enables free play between image and text, rather than the consistent pattern of image above text that resulted from the website interface. New possible resonances can arise from this tabular restructuring.

The book also provides an interactive tabularity that is wholly unavailable to the webcomic through the colouration along the fore edge. The Internet version of the comic, as noted, has an index of pages; it also has a search function that lays out all the text of the work. In this way, a reader can see *Homestuck* along its “fore edge” through the date of publication of each page or the bare textual content. It is the closest to picking up the webcomic and turning it to look at it sideways as is possible for something that does not materially enable us to pick it up and turn it around. But the book *does* have a fore edge, and a head and tail as well. And, closed and examined along that fore edge, this material fact of its medium offers the reader a new way of moving through the text (Figure 12).



**Figure 12. Fore edge of *Homestuck Book 3: Act 4*.**

Perhaps the most immediately obvious feature is the thick yellow line towards the tail end of the book, marking out a white span that is coloured consistently throughout the book. This delineates the author’s commentary, a feature that we will discuss later. More significant for tabularity, we see three sections of the book where the pages have been

coloured right to the edge (the fourth, ending the book, is off-white, and therefore harder to spot). These sections mark what were, digitally, video animations. Each of the print versions of the animations has a still from the animation used as a background, with all panels of the animation are placed atop this still. Thus, the presence of an animation is immediately visually apparent and remains visually distinct because of its unique background, marking it out from the standard white background of all other pages. A reader can easily find these animations by merely thumbing along the edge to a fully coloured section and flipping open the text.<sup>67</sup>

The fore edge also creates a kind of secondary index by marking point of view. Along the top edge of the print comic, there is a thin bar of multiple colours. This, when flipped open, proves to be a bar of colour around the page number of the comic on the website (see Figure 11 [of pages 208-209 (book)] above for an example). These bars have two

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<sup>67</sup> Note, however, that this marking may cause issues for further adaptation. At several key points in the text, a character hijacking the narrative is represented by them physically “taking over” the site through a site reskinning, in essence moving it into a new state of being. These are the metafictional takeovers. Doc Scratch takes control from the metafictional avatar of Hussie, AH, from 3764–4056 [website], reskinning the site in the lime green of the Felt and changing text to his signature white. At this point, AH is forced to try to regain control of the narrative by hiding in the site header and speaking through hidden header hover text. Similar is the sugary Trickster Mode reskinning in neon colours (5714–5777 [website]) and Caliborn’s violent hijacking of both the text and the narrative prompt itself throughout A6A6A1–5 (excepting Intermissions), which also leads to him even violently attacking the prompt; when he does so, the link to the next page is knocked around, forcing the reader to chase it across the screen to progress the story (5780 [website]). On another notable page, an authorial “snop” (snap) physically changes the site skin after a delay (4082 [website]). Each of these indicates the metafictional state of these characters by having them directly alter the very features of the site through which the reader engages with the story. These sections of the text have not occurred in the books published to date, but their most obvious option for remediation would be to change the background colour of the pages. Yet if this were done, site reskinning, with all its metafictional implications, would then become signified in the same way that animations are. It will be interesting to see if an alternative method of depiction is found or if animation and narrative hijacking are ultimately visually identical when presented in print format.

functions: first, should someone wish to examine the page on the website, that person need only type in “[www.homestuck.com/story/](http://www.homestuck.com/story/)” and then the series of numbers presented there. Second, and more significantly for a new, tabular form of interaction unique to this medium, the colour corresponds to the point of view of the section. That is why the bar in Figure 11 is red: these panels are from Dave’s point of view, and this shade of red is his signature colour, the colour of his text in chats. Thus, by looking along the fore edge, we have an index that is unavailable within the comic itself: we can flip between every single section that is in any given character’s point of view merely by looking for that character’s colour. To find all portions of the text from Dave’s point of view, one need merely seek the bright red; to pursue all scenes from Jade’s point of view, one must flip between segments of lime green. This is far beyond a “character select screen” that might choose one of four paths at a few points in Act 6’s narrative: it is an organization of the entire webcomic in relation to different character perspective.

This provides information that is not accessible on the website itself. Not only does the website lack such an index, but also, in sections where there is no prose narrator to indicate point of view through address to a specific character, the exact perspective of a scene is not always clear. And this information provides a new potential way of experiencing the work. A reader could choose to follow only one character’s perspective, hopping between their sequences, or a reader could choose to compare how different points of view are structured or written. The tabularity of the fore edge that permits the



reader free movement through the codex thus invites a new way of interacting with the narrative, one that allows them to chart their own path.<sup>68</sup>

### 4.2.3 Remediating Games and Let's Plays

But of course, hyperlinks are not the only form of interactivity in *Homestuck*: there are also the walkaround games. These game components of the story—one in Act 2 (*Homestuck* 253 [website]), one in Act 4 (1358), five in Act 5 (2792, 3079, 3321, 3438, 3695), and two in Act 6 (the first broken up over 4820, 4825, and 4827 and the second broken up over 5263, 5308, and 5398)—often function as world- and character-building segments rather than sections that advance the plot. In terms of Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, this is the "heterocosm" that adaptations must capture, a game's "spectacular world of digital animation that a player enters" (51). Through the heightened levels of interactivity these game segments offer, the player enters and interacts with the worlds that *Homestuck* creates.

In the case of "[S] Act 4 ==>" (*Homestuck* 1358 [website]), this takes the form of introducing the reader to John's new game-generated world by having the reader play as John. Information about this world had previously been laid out for John and reader alike by Nannasprite (420–425), but at this point in the narrative, the reader of *Homestuck* joins with John in acting as the player of Sburb, filling in details about the world through interaction with game features.

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<sup>68</sup> While there is no way to experience this with the website on its own, this experience of the story could be had with the fan-created "Homestuck POV Cam" Chrome add-on (madman\_bob).

This walkaround game presents a reader with a world of four separately loaded regions, mechanics for battle with game-constructed enemies, and a puzzle in the form of items to collect and deposit; through these mechanics of “play,” it offers the reader an *experience* of Sburb, complete with NPC interactions and hints about plot details. The game underlines terms in NPC dialogue to signal key features of the world now being mapped out, such as “Fireflies” (stuck in the sky, needing to be freed by John), “The Slumbering One” (Typhoeus, a divine figure and potential enemy from whom John is supposed to get his ultimate quest), and the “Pipes” (the visible component of a pipe organ that John is meant to play). This is also how key text is often visually emphasized in video games. Essentially nothing in the walkaround changes the state of the world or narrative, but John and the player together learn and explore the world. This remains a consistent trend with the other walkarounds; while there are puzzles to solve and items to move around, the games are focused more on developing the world and those in that world than on progressing the story.

Indeed, with respect to actual *influence* over the course of events, any progress made in the game is no more than an illusion. The reader-player of a walkaround may make any choice desired, but nothing in the story will change. The moment the reader-player chooses to end the game, events will continue onwards, and when the narrative moves back to John, no actions the reader-player did or did not take will affect the course of events. Regardless of whether or not the reader-player chooses to deposit John’s Dad’s hat in the parcel delivery system to be returned to him, Dad Egbert will find that hat rising out of the parcel delivery system later (1729–1731). As Jesper Juul says about the temporality of video games, “[I]t is impossible to influence something that has already

happened” (n.p.), and everything in *Homestuck* has already happened—not from an extradiegetic perspective (it was once serialized and therefore could be influenced as it was written) but because the premise of *Homestuck* is that all its events exist within the larger frame of reality called Paradox Space, which is defined by closed temporal paradoxes. These paradoxes are primarily causal loops that ensure everything happens as it was always going to, and even the ones that do not initially appear to be causal loops end up being exactly that when looked at in the larger frame of Paradox Space. While players have free will in the sense that they can create an infinite number of timelines, those timelines will always lead back to the main one, making Paradox Space a completely predetermined universe.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The technical explanation is as follows: *Homestuck* covers approximately three universes, each of which has multiple alternate timelines and total resets; this is Paradox Space. Within Paradox Space, there is the idea of the “Alpha Timeline,” which is the central course of events that defines itself as necessarily having happened because it must have happened for it to have happened: a stable (causal) time loop. However, events that do not conform to the Alpha Timeline can occur in the style of the Grandfather Paradox: it is possible for people to take actions that would prevent the Alpha Timeline course of events from happening, thus breaking the causal loops. Doing so, however, creates a “dead-end timeline,” which means that this course of events and all those in it are doomed. At this point, someone from the dead-end timeline (generally the Time player of a session) will go back in time to ensure that the events of the Alpha Timeline happen, and the dead-end timeline will collapse out of existence.

However, this presents another paradox: the dead-end timelines are dead ends because their events contradict the Alpha Timeline, but these “wrong” choices lead to someone going back to ensure the Alpha Timeline events occur. That is, these Grandfather Paradoxes, which cannot happen due to the stability of the causal loops, create the stable causal loops when players exit these timelines for the Alpha Timeline. From the perspective of free will, this means that players of *Sburb* have absolute agency in one sense and are free to do things that will not perpetuate the stable temporal paradoxes, but that even exercising free will adds up to the larger stable temporal paradoxes of Paradox Space, and so any choice taken that contradicts the Alpha Timeline was a necessary deviation that contributed to its perpetuation. As one character puts it, “ANY HOPE THAT IT COULD HAVE PLAYED OUT DIFFERENTLY OR THAT YOU COULD HAVE AVOIDED THIS WHOLE MESS WAS ALWAYS JUST A RUSE” (1903 [website], capitalization original).

In other words, during walkaround games, the player-reader of *Homestuck* and John-as-player of Sburb doubly exist in the same position: not only are they both “playing” Sburb, but also they can do anything they like, and anything they do is part of the story, as they have free will, but events will always unfold as they have always unfolded because of how Paradox Space works, so their choices do not particularly matter.<sup>70</sup> This is one of many manifestations of how *Homestuck* “repeatedly frustrates the user’s desire for explicit interactivity, inviting and then curbing the type of agency promised by many new media projects” (Chute and Jagoda 10). The reader, like the players of Sburb, is offered choices and then hit with the frustrating reality of having no real agency. *Homestuck*’s walkarounds thus have the player-reader fully take on the role of a Sburb player by giving them freedom of choice that does not actually matter. It is fine if any individual reader fails to put that hat in the post, because some other iteration will. All it means is that that specific playthrough is another dead end, a doomed timeline that always had to happen.

This idea of choice—choice that, while ultimately meaningless, is meaningless in the context of Paradox Space’s approach to free will—is kinaesthetically experienced by players in the walkaround sections, but in print, it cannot be remediated. This is because the print version of the walkarounds do not remediate adventure games as Flash games: they remediate Let’s Plays.

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<sup>70</sup> This conception of free will also defines the aforementioned character select screens. The narrative even mocks this by facetiously declaring “You press onward, feeling refreshed and invigorated by all the free will you were just dealt” (5085 [website]) after one such select screen. Regardless of order taken, the sum of the panels remain the same. But choice, even meaningless choice that is negated a moment later—especially meaningless choice negated a moment later—is how *Homestuck* formulates free will.

A “Let’s Play” is most commonly a video recording a player’s experience of playing through a game, with commentary and/or a video of the player’s face as they play. But Let’s Plays can also be static, taking the form of screenshots with accompanying text that describe someone’s particular playthrough. In essence, a Let’s Play is one person’s experience of a game, not a game itself. This is what the print version remediates when it provides screen captures of the walkaround (*Homestuck* 1–30 [book]). This Let’s Play demonstrates battle and grist-gathering once at the start, then ignores them. It presents all text except chat logs through screen captures of the game itself, as a static Let’s Play is likely to. But several possible forms of interaction are ignored: John’s sylladex is not weaponized, so at no point is the Barbosol bomb shown exploding, and Trickster Mode is not shown. These are “easter eggs” of gameplay, elements that are bonuses but not part of the main adventure. The overall result shows the reader a specific instantiation of a playing of the game, as Let’s Plays do, rather than having the player play the game.

The printed version therefore adapts the content of the walkaround in two ways: on the medium level, it adapts the walkaround from an interactive mode to a showing/telling mode, and on the level of remediation, it adapts it from gameplay to Let’s Play. This Let’s Play version is, essentially, the “Alpha” instantiation of John’s adventure, the one that allows the progression of the timeline in Paradox Space, rather than any of the cast-off dead ends. As a result, the reader of the book no longer experiences an embodiment of the elimination of redundant timelines or the exploratory filling in of the universe. The metafictional parts of the story, so reliant on the interactivity available in digital formats, cannot be adapted because the print version is remediating a different aspect of gaming culture—the experience of witnessing another person’s playthrough.

In the republication of the digital-born *Homestuck* in a print medium, adaptation and republication overlap at some points and are separate in others. The reorganization of images and texts in relation to each other, were this a transition from one print publication to another, might only be called revision. But additional consideration of the digital interface of the website edition invites us to also see adaptation here, as the interface's remediation of gameplay is instead adapted into the interactivity that derives from a codex's potential for tabularity. As in any "translation," there are losses and gains. The game sections' interactive embodiment of meaningless choice becomes the *unadaptable*—that which must be completely converted to show and tell, because it is impossible to maintain play.<sup>71</sup> The audience has power over the work, but they cannot interact with it, as a printed work has always already been put into print; it cannot be "made" as it is played. Instead, *Homestuck* as a printed work remediates a different element of gaming culture, the Let's Play.

### 4.3 *Homestuck* Ported: Interactivity and Metafiction

With the work done by the print publication explored, we turn now to the porting of the *Homestuck* website begun on 2 April 2018. Matthew Kirschenbaum has discussed versioning in the context of textual studies, noting especially the issue of survival across technological changes in digital literature. As technology progresses, older digital works inevitably age and are at high risk of obsolescence. Means of countering this have been discussed, such as Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop's suggestion to preserve aging

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<sup>71</sup> Of course, print does allow some kinds of audience interaction, as noted, and choose-your-own-adventure books exist, but they are unwieldy enough on their own without needing to replicate a full walkaround game.

digital works by documenting the experience of “traversing” the work, which also preserves the cultural and historical context. Further, research has been done on various archives’ and libraries’ efforts to preserve digital-born works (Clark et al.; Weston et al.; Taylor) and the difficulties faced by these archives, as well as possible solutions (Grigar; Broussard and Boss).

Here, I look at how *Homestuck* attempted to escape digital obsolescence through porting: a form of republication nominally in the same medium (digital spaces). This kind of republication in some cases may “merely” revise bibliographic codes of a work, while in others it may require some form of adaptation. In *Homestuck*’s case, the content affected through porting is primarily that which expresses the metafictional aspects of the narrative. By looking particularly at how these changes affect the mode of engagement (in Hutcheon’s terminology), we can see how porting trades between fidelity and accessibility.<sup>72</sup>

As noted above, the website was initially called [mspaintadventures.com](http://mspaintadventures.com), its games and animations were Flash files hosted on the site itself, and its page numbering was based on a hidden forum and previous stories posted to the website (for this last, see the discussion on seriality below). The 2018 rehaul of the site, conducted by VIZ Media, was intended to make it more accessible, both on mobile devices and in general, and to ensure that when Flash was no longer supported, the videos and games on the website would not disappear (Hussie, “News”). Accessibility has indeed been key in the restructuring; one

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<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that many moments of interface interference from the metafictionally empowered characters were indeed preserved in the port. These moments, such as Caliborn knocking the link to the next page around (5780 [website]), are not adaptation; they are republication with no apparent variation.

clear accessibility point has been in the new default form for the walkaround game segments. The Flash games are still made technically available<sup>73</sup> through instructions as follows: “\*\* To see this content as originally intended, view on a Flash-enabled device” and then click the following link (for an example, see 1358 [website]). However, despite this being described as the intended format, it is no longer the default, and what is created instead is more accessible to anyone who may have been unable to play the games.

In place of the Flash games, the reader is provided with a speaker button to click to trigger music and then is given a series of image panels to navigate through in sequence, taking the reader through the game in a series of panels just like those used by the print publication for the walkarounds. Indeed, these will be *exactly* like those in the print publication, if future print volumes follow the pattern established by those already out. The walkaround game “[S] Act 4 ==>” uses the same screen captures for its static-image website version as it does for its print publication. This is a very pragmatic choice (there is no point in engaging in the work of capturing those screen images twice) and one that serves to bring the website archive of publication in line with the print publication, with the only distinction now being that the website has music that the print publication lacks, and the print publication has author notes. Thus, as accessibility is increased and obsolescence avoided, interactivity drops, and the question of pointless free will changes from a kinaesthetically experienced interaction to something that is shown and told, as it

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<sup>73</sup> As of 30 December 2020, Flash is no longer supported by Adobe itself. This means someone interested in a Flash version of the content would need to use an out-of-date version of a browser that has Flash support and possibly download the Flash content to play on their own computer, or they would need to pursue other means (see discussion of Bailey and Bambosh’s archives, below).



is in print adaptation. As in print, readers experience a Let's Play rather than a game.<sup>74</sup>

And, as in print, we might consider this adaptation.

Other consequences of porting, however, may instead be thought of as (in the language of textual studies) changes to bibliographic codes. These instances primarily reorganize the interface. However, because the interface is the primary space where the metafictional elements of the story are expressed, these purely “bibliographic” changes can affect the mode by which the metafictional narrative is expressed.

One such change is the page shortly after Andrew Hussie's metafictional author character within the comic (AH)<sup>75</sup> is killed and appears in the afterlife. Normally, the URLs were merely the website name and the page number, but in this case, prior to the porting, the page number instead was “DOTA” (as in Death of the Author). This is significant because AH was a character within the metafictional element of *Homestuck*'s narrative and had the ability to change interface elements, something not afforded to most other characters unless they have a “juju” (as John gets for the RetJohn, discussed below). As such, AH's death was expressed on the level of a URL address, indicating the character's continued ability to affect not just the events in *Homestuck* as a story (in some ways, AH lacks that power by this point) but the interface of *Homestuck* as a comic.

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<sup>74</sup> There is, however, some variation here. Most of the games are adapted as either still screen capture Let's Plays (253, 1358, 2792 [website]) or as video Let's Plays (3079, 3321, 3438, 3695, 4820, 4825, 4827), the latter without a “player” reacting (which is a specific subgenre of Let's Play that is sometimes called a “walkthrough”—or, a Let's Play may be considered a subgenre of walkthroughs). In both cases, the mode changes from interactive to show/tell. However, the Openbound games (5263, 5308, 5398) remain playable. This is because they are not in Flash; instead, they use a HTML5-based game engine, created by Alexis “Gankra” Beingessner, the programmer who implemented many of the games (Hussie “[S] A6I3 (archive)”). Of course, this may merely be a stay of execution, as it were: obsolescence may in time come even for HTML5.

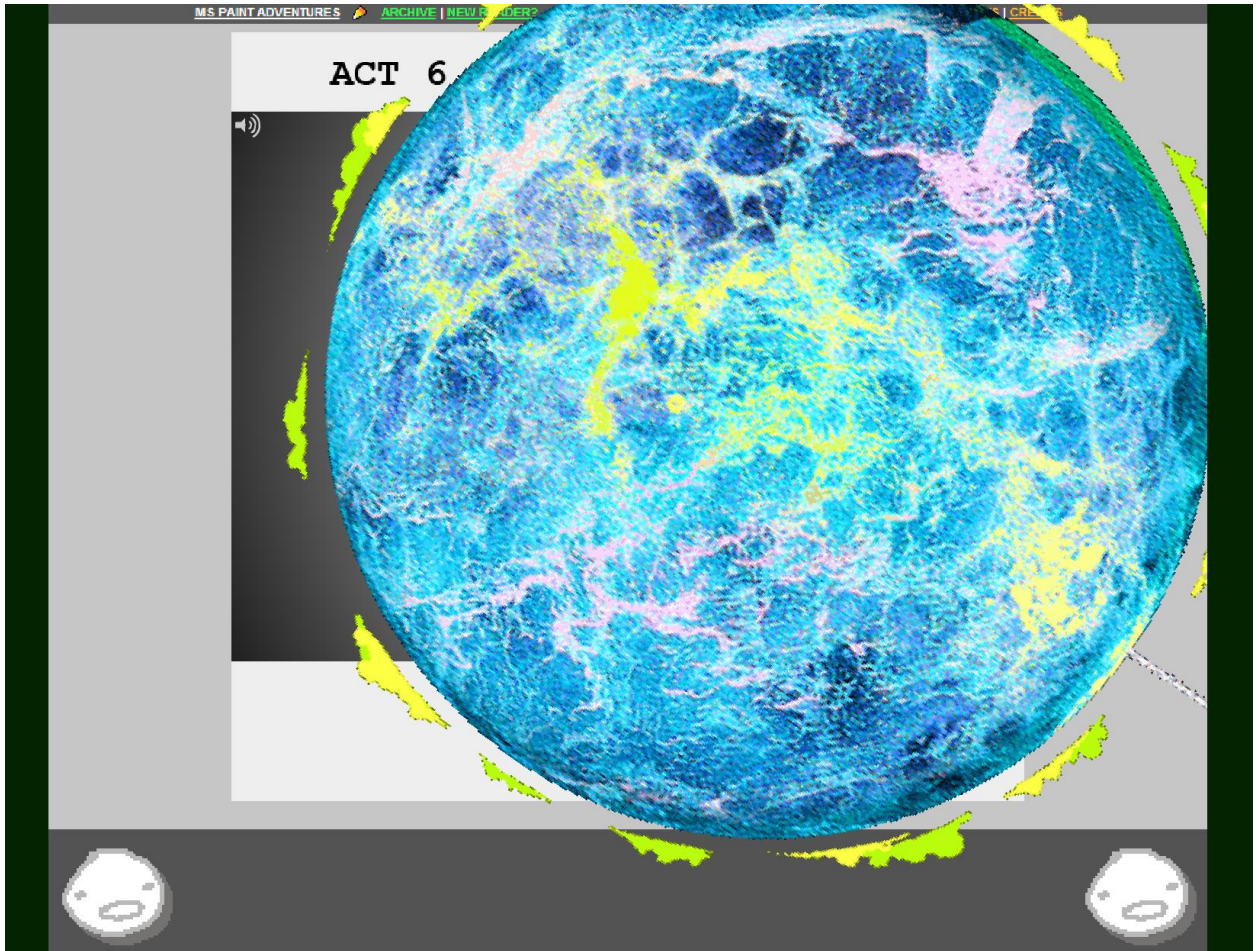
<sup>75</sup> For clarity, I will use “Hussie” to refer to the author of *Homestuck* and “AH” to refer to the character of Andrew Hussie that exists, dies, and has an afterlife in the story of *Homestuck*.

But after the port, this page became the untitled page 4815, with an embedded YouTube video titled “DOTA.” Thus “DOTA” is the title of the video, but *not* part of the page location. This is akin to a change in the bibliographic code (rather than lexical code) because the text stays the same, but its relation to the rest of the text changes, here by altering the location of information within the hierarchy a webpage. While the URL of a page itself frames the entire content of the webpage, the title of a video embedded into the text is framed *by* the rest of the page. Thus, the Death of the Author joke/comment now has a structurally less significant (in terms of interface) but visually more overt (in terms of points of data to which an Internet user is accustomed to paying attention) location in the video title. But a video title is not unusual; all the *Homestuck* videos have titles. No special, metafictional aspect to AH is indicated when “DOTA” is part of a video title rather than a URL. Thus, this change affects the mode because rather than *showing* a metafictional authorial death through aberrations at the level of the URL, it *tells* the reader this information in the video title.

A similar shift occurs with the “GAME OVER” Flash that acts as climax for both Act 6 Act 6 Act 3 and Act 6 Act 6 Intermission 3, switching between the two. In this sequence, many major characters die, and Caliborn, a character with metafictional power who has hijacked the narrative, gets beaten up but continues to assert control over the story. As with the page formally with the DOTA address, the URL for this page formerly ended with “GAMEOVER” but now simply ends in “6901.” “GAME OVER” is now the title of the YouTube video, and, as with DOTA, this reshapes the bibliographic code, knocking GAME OVER down one level in terms of metafictional force but also making it more overt. Just as above, this means that Caliborn’s power to affect the interface down to the

URL itself has been removed. Thus, both Caliborn and AH's metafictional powers are more told than shown.

Aside from this shift in frame from page URL to page/video title, the actual shifting in framework within "GAME OVER" is also altered because of the differences between an embedded Flash video and an embedded YouTube video. The Flash video moves between two site skins, a green one made by Caliborn for A6A6A3 to mark his metafictional takeover of the narrative and the grey default site skin used by A6A6I3, the reassertion of AH's authority in the "margins" of the intermissions. During the animation, characters and objects are occasionally knocked out of frame by the action of the event. This animation uses the website interface to show movement between both the different parts of the story and the different levels of narrative, fictional and metafictional. You can see an example of one such moment in Figure 13: note how the image of the planet escapes the supposed frame of the video and even covers up the navigation links at the top of the page, but the background is grey, indicating that this is part of the Intermission that Hussie still has control over, not Caliborn's green-skinned main act.



**Figure 13. Screenshot from the GAME OVER flash (6901?fl=1 [website]).**

This kind of playing with the interface is, technologically, unavailable for an embedded YouTube video, as that YouTube video is framed by its embedding. The YouTube video always exists within a frame; while a lack of movement on the screen makes the timer bar and title eventually disappear, the small logo in the corner always remains, a reminder that the video is from YouTube and not part of the website. The website interface cannot be altered during the video because the YouTube video is wholly external to it.

In addition, in the Flash version, a reader cannot progress until the video ends: the link to the next page will not appear until the end of the video, after Caliborn clicks the curtains

closed and permits continuation of the narrative. This reinforces Caliborn's domination over the metafiction, even after his defeat at John's hand: John may have bloodied him, but he still has control of *Homestuck* the comic. In the ported version, however, the link to the next segment of the story remains at the bottom throughout the entirety of video rather than being triggered by Caliborn's final act. Thus, it is not the site but YouTube that shifts in frame, while already contained within a secondary frame that removes the video from the confines of the website itself, and it is no longer Caliborn who allows the reader to continue, as they could do so at any time. The signals of Caliborn's domination over the narrative as a metafictional character are strongly reduced. These are not changes to the medium, but they are changes to the materiality, because changes to the interface remove structural elements used to express metafictional elements of confinement and control in relation to the comic of *Homestuck* itself. One is no longer *stuck* in *Homestuck* at the whim of its metafictionally empowered characters during these segments. Just as showing the metafictional power is replaced with telling the reader of it, so too is forcing the reader to interact with the characters' metafictional power replaced with a telling of this power.

The modes of the metafictional elements are also changed in the Trickster portion of the work. When the characters are turned into Tricksters, their semi-metafictional status—here acting as mockeries of the idea that the characters' problems would be solved if they just all got group married—is marked most overtly by the reskinning of the site (also used as a marker of metafictionality for Doc Scratch's and Caliborn's narrative hijackings), which is transformed to garish neon colours, a running header bar of sugary food and treats, and a moving background banner (5714–77). This arc is also marked by a

series of (deliberately annoying, if the music is any indicator) minigames where the reader is asked to “DEPLOY THE CROCKER” by moving Jane’s sprite into the cut out location set for her (5724), “HELP JANE INVESTIGATE” by zooming in on clues until the Trickstered form of Jake pops loudly into the screen with a blast of music (5726), “HELP JAKE TUG” a Trickstered dancing Roxy back into the frame of the comic by pressing the arrow keys back and forth 111 times (5740), and finally “HELP DIRK ESCAPE TO THE SIDE” by pressing an arrow key 1,111 times as he inches across the screen (5759). This last is especially notable for player frustration because, after doing this, the reader is then asked to play again and given the options of “NO” and “FUCK NO,” but attempting to hover over either will replace them with a large “YES” that restarts the Flash. There is clear unity between the sheer annoyance and agony of the gameplay—if the YouTube recording is a marker, a player must press the button rapidly for over a minute and a half, and if personal experience can be counted, it is exhausting—and Dirk’s frustration and anger.<sup>76</sup> The reader-player, subject to the whims of these metafictionally empowered characters, interacts with the material and so aligns their experiences with those of the characters. It is a kind of interactivity that kicks you in the face.

Further, the Trickster segment is a Flash-heavy sequence. Flash videos are automatically triggered on a page loading, which means that when the reader clicks the next page, they have no control over an ominous Trickster face zooming in and taking over the entire

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<sup>76</sup> At this point in the story, Dirk is the only character unaffected psychologically by the Trickster magic and so is essentially the only sober person in a room of people who are literally sugar high. His frustration is expressed in the form of a furious takedown of his friends and a declaration to another person that feeling terrible all the time is just “what it’s like to keep on existing” (5759).

panel (5735). The overall consequence is that this sequence is one of the most inaccessible portions of the story both in terms of technological obsolescence and players with accessibility concerns around different visual and aural elements: it has large sections of flashing text, colours that cause eye strain, obnoxious music, and automatically playing videos that are escalating levels of repetitive and pointless. This segment also forces the reader to participate in events through direct commands to intervene and makes them completely helpless to loud noises, ugly colours, and tiring minigames. Tricksters are, after all, metafictional figures and so can interfere with the interface and coerce the reader as they please.

With the movement from Flash to YouTube in *Homestuck*'s porting, all this changes, as a YouTube user has much more control and autonomy. A YouTube user can move around within a video and pause it—and perhaps more importantly, can choose to play a video if they wish and refuse if they do not. No more the ominous zoom-in that cannot be controlled: the video can be triggered when the reader wishes and fast-forwarded through or clicked to the end of if desired. The reader also no longer must fit Jane into place to kick Jake or click Dirk to the side 1,111 times, as these were Flash games, so instead the reader is presented with embedded YouTube videos that depict these actions. In the latter case, this spares the reader the experience of clicking over that many times (one can readily skip to the end of the sequence) while awful music plays, only to, as one scrolls one's mouse, have control ripped away. These are adaptations in the sense of a reinterpretation and recreation that changes the mode: the experience is being *shown* to the reader, but it is no longer something the reader is made to *enact*. The reader is neither implicated in events nor subject to them; they are one extra, embedded layer removed,

thus reducing the power of these metafictional elements over the very subjects they point towards. The narrative hijack is reduced in force, but it becomes a much, much easier sequence to get through as a result.

Hussie did not mislead in describing the porting as an adaptation: while in many cases, the porting did not adapt anything, some things could not be “merely” republished and instead had to change in medium or mode. This was most prominent in metafictional sections that relied on the interactivity made available through Flash’s ability to integrate with the webpage’s interface, now impossible with YouTube videos. Through the porting, the reader has a greater level of access to, and therefore control of, the material under perusal—and yet this kind of agency contradicts a mode of interactivity where the reader is subject to metafictional powers that frustrate and mistreat them.

#### 4.4 UPD8: Seriality and Audience–Author–Work Interaction

Prior sections have addressed the material considerations of adaptation and republication, but *Homestuck* as a republication must also be considered in relation to its reception mode. Specifically, we must consider the issue of digital serialization. Over the exactly seven-year span of its publication (13 April 2009 to 13 April 2016), the reception of the text was pivotal to its development. As Glaser puts it, “[T]he ‘phenomenon’ of Homestuck and the webcomic itself cannot be separated, especially since many of



Hussie’s design and story choices were influenced by readers, fans, and players” (98).

This reader influence is related to *Homestuck* as a serialized webcomic: its “upd8s.”<sup>77</sup>

“Upd8 culture” was the phrase fans used to describe the intense, rapid responses readers had to announcements of updates to the comic (MartyBellerMask), and this response must be understood in relation to its update schedule. *Homestuck* updated irregularly, often many times a day, with no set schedule. On 26 June 2012, 66 pages were posted, the most in the series’ history, and there were long spans of high frequency posting runs, such as 584 pages posted over 116 days (Bailey, “Statistics”). The average posting rate across *Homestuck*’s entire timespan was 2.5 pages per day, but in this period, there were also long hiatuses, including the 366-day hiatus called the “Gigapause” that came between Act 6 Act 6 Intermission 2 and Act 6 Act 6 Act 3 (Bailey, “Statistics”). Updates were erratic, varying between high frequency posting that could come as several posting sessions at different times in a single day to hiatuses of various lengths, with the longest pauses (including the aforementioned Gigapause, the 244 day “Omegapause,” the 194 “Epipause,” and the 83 day “Masterpause” [Bailey, “Statistics”]) often announced without end dates. If, as Jennifer Hayward argues, a serialization is a production that advertises itself by always promising a future installment (2), then *Homestuck* was a serialization that lured its readership with all the soap opera promises of intertwined subplots, diverse casts, and acknowledgement of audience response (3), but when it came to telling its readership when that promise would be fulfilled, it offered all the

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<sup>77</sup> This phrase derives from the typing quirk of the character Vriska, who replaces any homonyms of “eight” with “8.” Thus “update” becomes “upd8.”

predictability of a slot machine. Sometimes new material came in a deluge; at other times, there was drought.

While various forms of digital serialization are now being theorized,<sup>78</sup> the digital serialization of webcomics has been less discussed in the literature. Gabriel E. Romaguera cites the term “microserialized,” coined by Robert T. Balder, to describe literature “where each published part constitutes less than one percent of the total literary work” (15). *Homestuck*’s smaller updates of several pages would certainly apply, but unlike the websites Romaguera considers, *Homestuck* lacked a predictable production cycle.

We can consider older definitions of serialization against the digital context. Roger Hagedorn describes the serial as being defined by “offering a narrative text to consumers in isolated, materially independent units available at different but predictable times: in a word, in successive episodes” (27–8). However, as the earlier discussion of Hussie’s erratic posting habits indicates, this “predictable” aspect was, in fact, notably lacking in *Homestuck*’s publication. Further, it can be debated whether separate pages on a single website might be construed as “materially independent units.”

Yet the seriality of *Homestuck*’s release is undeniable: it was released in episodes that built on what came before, and it took many of the hallmarks of seriality, including that key use of “delays *across the narrative breaks* ... [that] function ... obviously to stimulate consumption of later episodes” (28, italics in original). Its readers were very

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<sup>78</sup> For discussions of other kinds of digital serialization, such as in gaming, see for example Al. Brown; Salor; Denson and Jahn-Sudmann; Anderson; Thijs van den Berg.

much “at the whim of the medium that presents [the work] (or, more precisely, at the whim of those who command the medium that presents serial texts)” (28). “The whim of those who command the medium” is essential to the metafictional narrative, such as when Hussie’s avatar AH threatens to delay the narrative by explaining troll romance yet again, and then proceeds to do so (2494–5 [website]).

The key elements that enable *Homestuck*’s seriality—its refusal of closure, its intertwined subplots, its ever-expanding cast of characters (Hayward 3)—are not a result of *Homestuck* having *materially independent* or *predictable* releases, for it only questionably had the former and certainly lacked the latter. Rather, in digital format, what enabled seriality was that each release was *discrete* and *detectable*. In terms of being discrete unites, updates were portioned out in pieces. These could be larger or smaller, and they were always attached to former pages, but they appeared as separate, new pages on the website. That all prior pages were readily available merely gave new readers an easy way to catch up and join in on waiting for upd8s. As for the matter of being *detectable*, merely checking *Homestuck*’s main page once daily was inadequate if a reader hoped to avoid spoilers about what had just been released, because a new update—and therefore new, spoiling responses to it on social media—could occur at any time on any day. This portioning out meant readers were positioned to always have an appetite for *more*. But audiences concerned to keep up were able to find out when new pages had arrived without needing to refresh the website regularly courtesy of two tools developed by fans: the MS Paint Notifier and the MSPA Prophet.

The first, the MS Paint Notifier, caught updates as they were posted. Its script constantly repeated checks on the MS Paint website for any new pages. When one was detected, a

pop-up image would appear on the screen of all those who had installed the script, notifying them of the new content immediately (MSPANotify). Users could customize the notifier by adding or creating their own images and gifs, often using characters from the comic as their heralds for new content (see Drillgorg or Ktalaki for examples). This system of notification prevented readers from being accidentally exposed to spoilers due to unannounced updates, and it meant they were spared from manually refreshing the host website sporadically in the hopes that something new had arrived. It was quite possibly the use of this notifier that caused *Homestuck* readers to crash Newgrounds, a well-established website at the time, in under two minutes after the posting of the “Cascade” video to the site on 25 October 2011 due to the volume of traffic (Min). Readers then went through other resources to access the video, most notably the powerful (now defunct) filesharing host Megaupload, along with *Homestuck*’s own website and forums, all of which crashed (Min). The call of the upd8 was a powerful one to *Homestuck*’s dedicated fanbase, one that at times exceeded the capacity of web hosts.

But there was another way for fans to know about updates: the MSPA Prophet. The MSPA Prophet was a symptom of both *Homestuck*’s upd8 culture and, it turned out, Andrew Hussie’s unusual decisions regarding site design. Originally at the now defunct [updateiscoming.tumblr.com](http://updateiscoming.tumblr.com), the so-called MSPA Prophet would simply post “update is coming” before the website had even posted the pages. It gained a reputation for being somehow able to predict updates in advance. Long after the fact, the MSPA Prophet posted the story of how they did it: courtesy of another reader, they came across an odd PHP Bulletin Board (phpBB) forum in the depths of [andrewhussie.com](http://andrewhussie.com), and they noticed the similarity between the post count and page numbers on the website. Soon, they

realized that Hussie was posting new pages to the forum, then converting these posts to the necessary format for updating the website (MSPAProphet). The Prophet kept this information secret, but from then on, they were able to notify readers in advance of an update, preparing them to catch the new posts fresh off the metaphorical presses. Thus, the readership had tools both to know when an update had happened and when an update was *going* to happen, and the avid fanbase used both to keep up with the serialized narrative. Thus, the serial updates were not consistent, but they *were* detectable thanks to tools developed by fans.

The Prophet would not exist if it were not for Hussie's unusual update methods, but neither would it exist, at least not with such popularity as it once had, without the reading culture that had developed around the erratic and inconsistent serialization used for *Homestuck*. The lack of a predictable schedule and the absence of any announcements from the creator demanded a solution for monitoring developments, particularly for a readership as active and quick to spoil as the *Homestuck* fandom. *Homestuck*, then, as a serial production, stands in relation to its predecessors dating back to the Victorian era as inheritor of all the anticipation, scheduling issues, and mass readership of the print periodical publication, yet also as something distinct by virtue of the flexibility and freedom of its host, the Internet.

There is a sense in which the *Homestuck* books are also serial publications, in so far as the Victorian three-volume novel or a popular Dickens serialization could be called a serial publication. Six volumes have been published as of 17 June 2021, and doubtless there are many more to come; in that sense, *Homestuck* continues to be serialized.

However, while the author commentary is (presumably) still being written, all other

content has already been written and published. We can say that the books are serial publications, but they are not especially serial *productions*: they are being published over time, but the primary content itself 1) already exists as a whole and is unlikely to be revised (although it will certainly be adapted) for publication and 2) exists online in its archival form,<sup>79</sup> easily accessible as a whole unit. The commentary may be serial, but the overall content of the comic is complete and accessible. For the sake of our exploration of the working of republication, it is enough to say that *Homestuck* was published serially from 2009–2016 and that the books published by VIZ are republications of the *Homestuck* archive, serially printed.

#### 4.4.1 Adversarial Author–Audience–Work Relations

A tension between audience and author, caused by the interaction enabled by serialization's gaps, has always been present in serial fiction, as traced by Rob Allen in readerly petitions to Dickens in the Victorian era (40) and Jennifer Hayward in her reminder that consumers of serial fiction, such as soap opera watchers, are active agents that interpret, predict, rewrite, and attempt to influence what they consume (4).

*Homestuck* is much like any other serialization in this respect. Indeed, webcomics, like other digital serial productions, may be even more susceptible to the intensity of these

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<sup>79</sup> Strictly speaking, homestuck.com hosts *Homestuck*; it does not archive it. However, in contrasting the website's hosting of the content against serial production, I describe the website as archival because the website also hosts a record of a serial production that is no longer active. It is the sense in which a collection of Bentley's Miscellany ranging from February 1837 to April 1839 is both a host of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and an archival record of its publication—or, perhaps more appropriate technologically, the way the Twitter account of a United States President can, after retirement, be considered an archive of that person's presidential Tweets. Thus, the website hosts (and, so much as any publication can be said to be any work, is) *Homestuck* while also acting as an archive in preserving something that is no longer actively being produced.

interactions. Alessio Antonini et al. argue that the webcomic model's rapid lifecycle, the lack of publishers as intermediaries, and the many opportunities for interaction between creators and audiences often lead to the development of parasocial relationships between authors and readers that affect the work (289). Romaguera similarly highlights how webcomics allow for a more direct relationship between audience and author than many other forms of publishing (4). And this increase in proximity and interaction between author and audience may intensify that traditional serial tension between reader demands and author compliance, which may, as Antonini et al. put it, "manifest ... itself in the nature and form of interactions resulting from that tension" (290).

This audience–author–work relationship is at its most overt form in *Homestuck*'s earliest segments. As noted earlier, *Homestuck*, like other works in the mspaintadventures catalogue (notably *Jailbreak* and *Problem Sleuth*), models itself after a text-based adventure game, in which players input commands that are parsed by the game and are given prewritten text in response. In these games, the text input must be something that the game has been programmed to understand and respond to, or the game cannot answer. Readers of mspaintadventures had the advantage of "playing" with a human rather than a computer, making absurd or stupid commands not only possible but often encouraged. Thus, the response to the very first option of the game, ">Enter Name" (1 [website]), was taken from responses from the suggestion boxes on the forums. That response was "Zoosmell Pooplord" (2)—precisely the kind of silliness expected from anyone asking the Internet for input. Yet the immediate response of the game is to answer in red letters, "TRY AGAIN, SMARTASS" (2) and input a more reasonable (also audience-sourced) name. This demonstrates each element of the underlying audience–author–work tension

of the narrative: on one hand, Hussie sought audience input, allowing the story to develop unexpectedly and growing the readership, but on the other hand, audiences gave jokey, unfocused, absurd suggestions that may not make for very good storytelling, driving Hussie to use discretion over the readers' suggestions.

Indeed, over time, Hussie changed the handling of this tension in *Homestuck*, eventually determining that readers could no longer be allowed to “play” the webcomic if the story was move anywhere. While initially, Hussie posted content, readers speculated on it in the forums and then actively made suggestions on how the story might progress, and the content that followed responded to these suggestions before beginning the cycle anew, the process of accepting direct reader input on the narrative decreased and then eventually stopped. Roughly in the middle of Act 4, on 6 March 2010, Hussie announced that there would be no more suggestions accepted from the suggestion box until 13 April of that year, before revising to announce that suggestions were closed until further notice (Hussie, “Suggestion Boxes”). The last reader-inputted command, Hussie reveals in an author note, was “Dave: Use a punched GameBro Magazine card” (134 [book]). The “playing” of *Homestuck* that had any direct influence over its course had come to an end, altering the relation between audience, author, and work in serialization.

The decision to end direct reader input actively shaped key elements of the text as well. Eventually, reader commands to the text came to be associated with characters in the texts, the Exiles, who had access to command ports that allowed them to speak to and thus suggest directions to the characters of the game. This idea is something Hussie described as a “conceit” to “take control away from the gnashing horde of wackadoos clamoring for ... John to eat his shoes” (111 [book]). This narrative choice actively



revises the history of the serialized text, even as it is being serialized: no longer was “ZOOSMELL POOPLORD” the suggestion of a forum user but instead was the input of the Exile commanding John, WV. At this point, not only is the story not a game being played by the reader, it retroactively has never been such a thing. Hussie states in the book notes that the entire idea of the Exiles as the characters behind the reader inputs “comes from the basic acknowledgement that readers really shouldn’t have any input on the things they are reading at all” (111 [book])—quite a reversal of framing for a series of comics that initially began as text-based adventures on a forum. In this, the reader’s active “playing” of *Homestuck* during serialization is over and retroactively erased; the author has taken total control.

Only, in serializing *Homestuck*, Hussie could not escape responding to (and thus ceding a form of control to) its audience. The episodocity that Hagedorn notes as key to the serial is also the source of the endemic disruption of the serial narrative. Allen sees this as the gap that enables audiences to become communities of readers that “discuss, debate, and judge possibilities of what might come next” (35). The pauses between releases that characterize serialization demand a sense of ongoing-ness, a “now” to play in, and that makes a space for audience input, whether an author likes it or not. And so, despite the best efforts of its creator to avoid reader input, *Homestuck* as a serial remained responsive to its readers—but not always in a positive way. This is most overt in the introduction of the Dancestors in the Openbound sequence of walkarounds (5263, 5308, 5398 [website]). Each of the Dancestors—characters who had been originally introduced as figures of lore and who became wildly popular with the fandom—introduced in this walkaround is a parody of a portion of the fanbase, as dated to the moment of the segments’ releases (31

August 2012, 24 September 2012, and 22 October 2012). These characters respond to then-contemporary trends in *Homestuck*'s fandom: “social justice warriors” are parodied by Kankri, “otherkin” are represented by Cronus, “weeaboo” are parodied by Rufioh, and so on. Hussie claimed that readers ought not have input on what they are reading, but even when the closed suggestion box was announced, Hussie said, “I’ll still be harvesting input through the forum community in more subtle and unpredictable ways” (Hussie, “Suggestion Boxes”). The serial pause leaves room for response from the audience, and an author who notices these responses cannot completely escape responding to them in turn, whether negatively or positively. Thus, the tension between authorial direction and audience input is almost impossible to erase; audience response is too deeply embedded into the temporal aspects of the production of serial fiction. It continued shaping the course of *Homestuck* even after Hussie deliberately wrested control away from the readership.

Disruption’s inescapability is another serial element embedded into *Homestuck*'s narrative structure in the form of constant delays and fake outs. As noted above, the whimsical author avatar AH at times threatens delays and interruptions. With the erratic but frequent schedule of early *Homestuck*, this combination of frenetic activity and ever-spiralling plots certainly encourages Allen’s conception of “readerly desire,” where resolution is offered as an eventuality not yet given (40)—every update would seem to promise it, and every update denies it as well. In *Homestuck*, the denial of closure is part of the narrative, as the metafictional characters repeatedly hijack the story and delay conclusions in a manner that spites the reader, and perhaps the author as well. For example, Doc Scratch steals the narrative from AH, becoming the vector of the plot and

forcing AH to wrest control back (3764–4082 [website]). Later, after engaging in conversation with AH via the narrative boxes and actively resisting AH’s narrative control, Caliborn takes over the story, reskinning the site skin accordingly (A6A6A1–5, but not the A6A6 Intermissions). This second case shows a metafictional reversal in structure: before, the “main” narrative of *Homestuck* would take place in segments called Acts, and the larger elements of lore, worldbuilding, and backstory were explored through Intermissions. These Intermissions were, in some ways, agonizing delays of the progression of the main act (which would often end on cliffhangers, such as John appearing in the middle of a strange planet for the first time [1150 (website)] or Jane being caught in an explosion [4284]). Once Caliborn, who formerly existed in the Act 6 Intermissions, takes control of the narrative, his portion of the story then becomes an Act, usurping the main narrative and forcing it into the margins of the Intermission segments. The constant denials of progression as characters hijack and derail the story express the tendencies of seriality to delay and detour and are depicted as the story escaping the author avatar AH. *Homestuck* seems to suggest that the closure-denying tendencies of serialization spite authors as much as readers.

The structure of Act 6 also contains a stunning example of disruptive bloating from the ever-expanding, perpetually resolution-delaying plots key to serialization: Act 6 repeatedly splinters into sub-acts, with Act 6 containing first four sub-Act and sub-Intermission alterations, then a fifth sub-Act that containing sub-sub Acts 1, 2, and 1x2 and a fifth sub-Intermission containing in itself six sub-Intermissions, before finally Act 6 Act 6, where Caliborn has taken over the main Act sections, plays out in the form of five sub-sub Intermissions and 6 sub-sub Acts. Serialization’s endemic structural force of

disruption thus escalates to the point of disrupting the act structures of the narrative. At the level of interface, the story shows this with Caliborn violently taking over (and at one point knocking around) the narrative prompt that Hussie had wrestled away from the reader through the Exiles (5780 [website]). While Hussie began with psyche-outs conducted from the position of the author to tease the audience with endings and disruptions (1931–3), by the end of *Homestuck*, this tendency of a serial to disrupt and delay is instead depicted as something that the author-character AH is victim to and unable to control. One might debate the disingenuousness of such a pose, as one might in any case of metafictional disavowal of control from an author—in the end, the author is always in control of the story of which they depict themselves the victim—but the disruptive elements that define serialized fiction are so key to the form of *Homestuck* that they strongly define the metafiction of the narrative itself.

#### 4.4.2 Post-Serialization: Author Notes

In the context of a story that is now complete, and where all those elements have finally been played out, available for any reader who cares to examine the archive of the *Homestuck* website, the disruptive component that developed the audience–author–work relation is impossible to replicate in the form of the book. When John dies for the first time (1640 [website]), the reader of the *Homestuck Book 3: Act 4* is only on page 192 of 469 (book). Even if that reader managed to be unaware of the plot twists that would follow or had not read the archive, they could not help but be aware that there are plenty of pages left marked by the blue of John’s point of view; there is no cliff hanger. Similarly, the end of Act 4 psyche-out on page 414 is on the verso page, meaning that a

reader doesn't even need to turn the page to know that there is more, as Hussie's author notes observe:

Psyche-outs were effective tools in the real-time delivery of these pages online. Anything could happen. You just never knew, and all you could really do was wait a while for the next update to come, to see if you were getting played. Here in a book though, this doesn't work at all, does it. You just coast on through the fakeout. In fact, you can see the next page over on the right before you can even process the fact that this was supposed to be a fakeout. (414 [book])

This is the temporal restructuring that Allen notes when exploring the different experience of a command to “pause” in the case of *Great Expectations*: a reader of a serial work is forced to pause by serialization when the narrative tells them to, unable to move on to the next element until it is released, but the reader of a volume can gloss past this temporal reckoning with ease (39). The words and images have not been altered, but the process of republication turns disruption into even-paced sequentially, and so it is no longer part of the audience–author–work tension created through disruption and delay.

Even elements of disruption possible for a print publication, such as withheld information or large bodies of text used to delay progression, are not used to create delayed gratification in readers in the *Homestuck* books. One such piece of information withheld, the identity of the powerful weapon hidden in PM's box, is pronounced to the print reader via author notes (132 [book], referring to 1556 [website]) well before the point in the story where an Internet reader learns what it is (1961 [website]). Similarly, the large, full-page summary of the events of the story thus-far are condensed into one page in the book

(253 [book]) with increasingly small text, to the point where one cannot read it, allowing any reader to know that it is not worth their time. This contrasts to the very disruptive use of the summary as a full page that one is forced to scroll through on the website (1674 [website]). As a full page on the website, this text gave no clear signals that it might not be pertinent to read. It is another form of delay or disruption—or, as Hussie puts it, “playing” the reader—that would do nothing for someone who has already read *Homestuck* and thus knows what is in the box and that the summary does not need reading. Thus, not only is it impossible for a book publication of a complete serial fiction to replicate serial disruption, the structure of and author notes in the book actively undermine forms of delay of resolution available in a print work. In some ways, between these refusals of its own serial techniques and moments such as those where the author notes comment on static panels of the game as more “whatever the hell it is ... if we hadn’t already experienced the game as a series of static panels which had to be presented that way for the sake of printing this book” (66), the author notes of the *Homestuck* books meditate on moments where *Homestuck* cannot be adapted due to its new medium and its archival status changing the relationship between audience, author, and work. They seem to assume that the reader of the book publication has already experienced the Internet publication.

Yet, although the book republication cannot create the same audience–author–work dynamic through *Homestuck* itself, the author notes *do* create a dynamic of serial disruption and delay. Serial disruptions function on the promise that an answer will come, eventually: all secrets will be revealed, and all plots will be resolved, even if they must be parcelled out, piece by piece. This, too, is the promise of delayed authorial commentary.

In the final note of *Book 3: Act 4*, while discussing the various books to be released in the future, Hussie declares, “But the most important thing we both agree on is that you will definitely own [all the books]. For until you have read each and every one of my precious Author Notes, you will never be able to claim to truly ‘understand *Homestuck*,’ and therefore you will not know peace in this lifetime or beyond” (469 [book]). The tone might be ironic, but as far as irony goes, one character in the story claims, “The upper echelons of irony should always include measures of sincerity” (4258 [website]), and the irony also has its own truth. These notes declare the function of the *Homestuck* books to be centred entirely around the notes, something also indicated earlier: “To be perfectly honest, I’m not sure why you even need me down here. Just kidding, these notes are why you bought the book, and I know you’re hanging on each and every word I write” (215 [book]). Both ironically and with a measure of sincerity, the notes promise answers and understanding, solutions to mysteries not concluded in the main body of the story itself. They also promise *resolution*: “you will not know peace,” they declare, as if there is no closure to be had until all the secrets are unveiled through these notes.

Answers and closure, tantalizingly held out of reach, but offered in bits and pieces as a consumer makes one purchase after another until at last the story is complete: the author notes, while meditating on how *Homestuck* cannot replicate its audience–author–work relationship in the form of a book, are also a form of audience–author–work relationship. They are the content that creates its own consumer, that hallmark of serialization. And, set into the bottom margins of a print medium, they are also the most one-sided version of an audience–author–work relationship seen in *Homestuck*, with little space for feedback. As the notes are an expression of Hussie’s thoughts and intentions *as author*,

there is no role for an audience to take on except perhaps of having specific inquiries. Moreover, the work is complete. While the relationship cannot be entirely escaped—the whole thing is, after all, an address *to* the audience *about* the work—it is in these notes that it is most authorially controlled and contained. The disruptions of serialization are still handed to the reader, but these gaps that allow for response are minimized. The reader—and the work—both at last have little to say.

#### 4.4.3 RetJohn: Revision in Serialization

The RetJohn—the retroactive editing of panels to reflect an in-universe metafictional rewriting of the narrative course of events—occurs after the GAME OVER where nearly every single important main character is permanently killed. The power of rewriting panels had been introduced earlier in the story when John put his arm through the “juju” (magical device of paradoxical power) that enabled it, shaped like *Homestuck*’s logo (6094 [website]); as a result, John’s arm appeared on fifty-two panels located earlier in the comic. What is notable in terms of serialization is that his arm was then edited *into* these panels. Before 5 April 2013, these panels did not contain John’s arm; afterwards, although the dating on the website’s posting log did not change, the panels had been revised with the arm. Later, Dave confirms that John is not just changing the timelines in the sense that a Time player might (ensuring the perpetuation of the Alpha Timeline), but actively changing what the Alpha Timeline is and should be (6404). To put it another way, a Time player ensures that the plot of *Homestuck* goes where it should (the Alpha Timeline), but the power of RetJohn changes what the plot of *Homestuck* is. Thus, John is described as gaining “final mastery over his confining reality” (7092). The “confining



reality,” here, is the canon of *Homestuck*. His power is not limited by the rules of paradoxes or internal logic that control normal use of temporal mechanics (he causes several paradoxical contradictions through interference) because he is not rewriting time: he is rewriting *Homestuck*. John gains power over the metafiction.

When GAME OVER strikes and John is sent through the story to prevent the disaster, seven past pages of *Homestuck* are revised to include two links: one to the next page that was originally posted and a second to a password-protected “[??????]” link. Readers of *Homestuck* are required to input a password given to John by another character to access the new sequence of events, which then rewrites key plot elements in the setup for the final arc of *Homestuck*. This essentially creates two alternate readerly experiences of *Homestuck*: the first, available to those who had already read these panels prior to 10 December 2014, was a clean, linear experience of the course of events; the second, available to those who first experienced these panels after that date, is one where either the reader knows about these revisions and understands why they are there or one where the reader, ignorant of the RetJohn, is puzzling over (and potentially able to accidentally break the passwords on) the second links. John Egbert does indeed rewrite the very comic he is in, to such an extent that new readers will never be able to read the same comic as the one that existed before.

Of course, the panels edited out by RetJohn still exist. The passwords on the new panels clearly indicate that a reader is expected to read the original, now “edited out” panels first before experiencing the rewritten version of *Homestuck*. But it is this rewriting of the comic that is central to the RetJohn as a tool of revision in the context of serialization.

Serialization, in its traditional form of “narrative text [presented] to consumers in isolated, materially independent units available at different but predictable times” (Hagedorn 27–8), does not allow for revision within the serial product itself. Serialized production of a work means that a segment of the work is written and released to the public, and then a new segment is produced that follows on what came earlier. With earlier segments having already had a public reception, later segments require a form of continuity with these earlier portions to form a coherent narrative. If a character died in last month’s release, the next month’s release cannot act as if they had never died at all, no matter how popular the character or how impassioned the readerly petition (thus, the miraculous soap opera twist of “unkilling” a character through the reveal of a secret twin, magic resurrection, or other trick, also prevalent in other predominantly serial genres like superhero comics). While a work is serialized, revision can be done for a current or future segment, but it cannot be enacted backwards on previously published segments, as these “materially independent units” have already been released.<sup>80</sup> For the most part, revision of serial work has been kept for its volume releases after the fact. Or so, at least, has been the case in mediums such as television and print comics. The Internet allows for different situation: each time a webpage is accessed, it is incarnated anew on the user’s screen, barring caches. Because of this, the units of a work serialized on the Internet remain within the control of whoever controls the website; they are no longer “materially independent” and out of the author’s hands after release.

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<sup>80</sup> The restriction is not absolute: revision still occurs nonetheless, such as when later print runs are released with errors corrected and when later television broadcasts have had offensive sections edited out. The technical and financial barriers for such revisions have, however, traditionally been greater than those on the Internet, although changing technology has made revision easier and cheaper in these mediums as well.

In *Homestuck*, such edits have occurred in the interests of maintaining the intended “araciality” of the characters. The sprites used for the human characters are all literally white, as in hex code #ffffff, but early on, one character was referred to as a “white rapper” by another. Because this was used in the fanbase to argue for certain racial backgrounds for characters, Hussie later made this text illegible (Hussie, “Íaeü ë€Å”) before finally changing it to “a white guy who is a rapper” (386 [book]), presumably with “white guy” here being intended entirely literally rather than as an expression of race. Similarly, in Trickster Mode, characters are depicted with fully coloured sprites, which means that their skin colour is “filled in” as a peach colour that generally parses to Western audiences as racially white; Hussie said in a tweet that “all characters in trickster mode are Canonically Caucasian” (@andrewhussie). Thus, Jane originally declares that she is feeling “CAUCASIAN” in Trickster mode, but the line was then revised to say “PEACHY,” as it still does now (5723 [website]), presumably for the same reasons behind the edits to the description above.

While these are minor revisions and ultimately trivial to the larger structure of *Homestuck*, they show both the unique flexibility offered by the Internet and the inherent limitations of serialization that remain. On one hand, because the author continues to have access to past pages, these pages can be revised to be in line with any changes that an author might wish to adhere to later in the narrative, such as insisting on textual araciality for the characters. On the other, a serially released work has still already been received by a reading public. The Internet often allows for the archiving of older versions of pages, and even when that is not the case, those who have already read it are likely to remember. Because of these two contrasting facets of Internet serialization, *Homestuck*

can be revised for consistency while still in serialization with an ease unavailable to print or television serials in the past—but the past cannot be completely overwritten.

Thus, we return to the mechanic of the RetJohn, where one character is given the ability to escape the bounds of the narrative’s continuity and edit pages—and therefore events—previously published. John travels back not three years but roughly three thousand pages to change not history but canon; in doing so, he undoes a major character death, changes which characters got romantically entangled with one another, prevents a character’s sight from being restored, and, of course, stops almost everyone from dying in GAME OVER.

What we see is a tool of revision for a digital serial production that takes advantage of a website’s infrastructure. An author of a serial work wrote the narrative into a dead end—GAME OVER indeed—and then proceeded to loop back and undo the death of one of the most popular characters with events taking a different course. Plot threads that led to the heroes being defeated are now completely dropped; character arcs sent down one path are reversed and then guided down another. The act of revision becomes part of the serial process itself, incorporated into the segmented release of narrative chunks as a metafictional revision of comic-as-reality.

But what about in print? A print publication cannot be revised when future volumes reach the RetJohn. Thus, a decision had to be made: include John’s arm, or don’t? Given that the website now has John’s arm in perpetuity, it is not surprising that in the print publication, the panels where John’s arm appear are already present (e.g., *Homestuck* 52 [book]). The volumes where the “[????????]” links appear have yet to be published, so it is

not clear what decision will be made there, but whatever choice is made, it will likely be static, and it seems highly unlikely that the later volumes will tell a reader to first flip back to an earlier volume and then read a chunk of story that they were not meant to access before. Instead of a recursive turning in on itself within the site layout itself, the more practical and therefore likely solution for a print publication is to simply print the changed portions in a linear fashion rather than inserting them back in the work. This comes at some cost to the metafictional component of John's power, as a linear forward movement through the different volumes lacks the structural component of a character coming unstuck from canon and moving back into it. It also alters the RetJohn from an act of revision of a serial-in-process to an event that will be foreshadowed to readers from the very start. In a sense, it means that John no longer edits *Homestuck* as a comic but simply plays the hand fate dealt him, as with any paradoxical loop. The RetJohn in print no longer functions as revision of a serial from within the process of serialization, nor does it "escape" the canon to rewrite it; it merely rewrites history as any other temporal loop would.

## 4.5 Conclusion

*Homestuck* was in many ways built for the Internet, but where there is a market, there is a way, and so adaptations between versions have been made as needed. On the Internet, *Homestuck*'s interface remediated different types of games, and its walkaround games created a link between the pointless choice of gameplay that cannot change events and the pointlessness of choice in Paradox Space. In print, lacking these dimensions of interactivity, *Homestuck* instead turns to the structuring of panels and text in new formats

and boxes to create interrelations and employs indices of character and event to enable a freer form of navigation than what is available on its website. It shifts from emphasizing resonance with text-based adventures, an electronic form, to resonating with the print-born form of the four-panel comic. It cannot replicate gameplay interactivity, so it does not try to; it instead remediates *Let's Plays*, a different part of gaming culture.

Republication and adaptation occurred together as some elements had to be adapted in medium, others in form, and others still were merely reorganized in terms of bibliographic code.

The ported *Homestuck*, the version of *Homestuck* that stands at present, also both adapted and republished its narrative, and this has had the strongest effect on the modes by which the reader engages with the metafictional elements of the story. Changes in page URLs and videos alter the resonances on metafictionally based events like the Death of the Author and GAME OVER, and changes in embedded content alter the framing of sequences that move between site skins: these are changes from showing to telling. Further changes in interactivity alter the force of impact of metafiction-heavy sections such as the Trickster arc by no longer making readers subject to and involved in them: interacting becomes showing. The ported *Homestuck* is not greatly altered in raw content from earlier Internet versions of *Homestuck*, but in what has been altered, this version of *Homestuck* is doing different work: its explicit purpose is to enable *Homestuck* to be more accessible and enduring.

Archivally, too, whether in print or on the Internet, *Homestuck* is no longer a truly serial production with respect to its major content, and the print version does not try to replicate the tension of seriality created by gaps that were so vital to *Homestuck's* development

and structure. *Homestuck* at the height of its “upd8” culture uses gaps and disruptions alongside its erratic narrative to create hunger in the consumer it feeds. Audience input is key to the serial structure of *Homestuck*—even when input is taken away from the audience and retroactively turned into the actions of characters, the influence remains. The tension between audience and author over the work, created by the disruption that allows room for audience feedback between installments, opens space in *Homestuck* for responses to the audience. But in an archival form, that gap is no longer there; the audience to be teased and tormented, mocked and “psyched out,” no longer exists, for the reader of archival *Homestuck* has access to the entire work and offers no feedback between instalments without any serial disruption at which to speak it. The tension of seriality is flattened out here; there is nothing to be done for it.

Instead, the author notes of the print version of *Homestuck* do similar work to serial publication by parcelling information out over the serialization of the volumes, promising answers and secrets yet to be revealed. The author notes promise closure and threaten the denial of peace to encourage the readership to continue to be that consumer that grows ever hungrier as it consumes. Here, where the content is complete and the audience has little room for response, the author at last has the greatest control in the tense relationship, reducing the disruptive splintering of the work or responsiveness of the audience. Although the replacement of serial story with serial commentary revives some of that promise of closure, the pull of both work and audience that shaped *Homestuck* in its production are at their most reduced in the print republication of the story.

Print, as well, cannot replicate the form of serial revision that was enabled by *Homestuck*'s home on the Internet. The RetJohn, as the metafictional power to change the

actual narrative itself, presents a kind of revision that is rare in serialization—a revision that quite literally goes back into the serial work and changes that which has already been published. This in-serial revision changes the readerly experience in literally altering panels earlier in the text, bifurcating the serialized experience *Homestuck* into pre- and post-RetJohn versions. This is a form of revision enabled by the technology of the Internet, allowing what has already come out to be altered and disseminated anew with minimal cost and effort, and it cannot truly be replicated in print. Thus the print version of *Homestuck* has had to make a choice to have the RetJohn arm panels already present, and in the future, it will need to determine whether or not it will make the highly impractical choice of inserting the RetJohn portions into the text thousands of pages before they have meaning, with no method of password locking them from readers not yet at that point, or to reduce the metafictional expression of the RetJohn by putting the changes in linearly, making for a clearer reading experience but no longer sending John literally backwards into the comic. As serial revision in action, the impact of the RetJohn is reduced in archival format on the Internet, but it is nearly impossible to produce in print, such that the metafictional resonances of it weaken in print publication. Once more, print asks accessibility and survival to take precedence.

And what of the earlier *Homestuck*? *Homestuck* as it was from 13 April 2009 to 1 April 2017 is gone, remnant only in archival records such as the Wayback Machine, Bailey’s offline archive from readmspa.org, and Bambosh’s downloadable browser.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Bambosh’s downloadable browser and Bailey’s archival version of *Homestuck* may be

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<sup>81</sup> Bambosh’s downloadable browser aims to preserve the Flash components of *Homestuck* while allowing “enhancement” to, for example, elevate the sound content to 2020 levels rather than mid-2000s midi levels.



the closest record of what *Homestuck* once was, as both try to recreate the experience of the RetJohn with flags that keep its changes hidden until the reader reaches a key point. Both provide an experience of *Homestuck* that was only otherwise available to those reading along live as the RetJohnned happened. Even before porting, it is an element that could not be preserved in *Homestuck* and fits well with Bambosh's mandate to "preserve Homestuck's one-of-a-kind presentation and flair, for both returning readers and those new to the story" (Bambosh).

Other changes, like the change from "CAUCASION" to "PEACHY" and from "white rapper" to "Áaeü ë€Å" to "white guy who is a rapper," remain lost to everything but archival records and reader memory. That is the cost of doing revisionary business on the Internet: due to the technology that produces content on screens, adjustments can always be made, splintering new versions of a work into existence for as long as someone still has access to the webpages. There is often some trace or record of the earlier version, but it is easy to lose track of when the new version takes precedence. Even now, the resonances of *Homestuck* can easily be altered as it continues to adapt to survive, its content and modes restructured to do different work and overwrite the version preceding. Whatever *Homestuck* was or is—"the first great work of Internet fiction," "Ulysses of the Internet," or merely a serial adventure that embraced all the tricks at its disposal—it can always be RetJohnned anew.

*Homestuck* is neither the first nor last of its kind. Digital-native works will continue to be produced for print publication, and anything on the Internet will continue to need to be ported to survive as the Internet's technological underpinnings change. This form of republication will, in some cases, require full adaptation. We must be attendant to the

specifics of these changes, where major components of the narrative must be transformed in a way that heavily affects how its readers are asked to engage with it, and where the resultant change affects the meaning derived from that materiality. By giving this attention, we can better understand the implications and consequences as works are published and republished again. This is particularly important for digital-native works, where the electronic nature of their existence means that records of prior versions may be erased with the release of the new. Where digital-native works are concerned, attention to these differences allows us to know exactly what a republication gains and loses in the name of survival.

## Conclusion

To compose *Don Quixote* at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable, necessary and perhaps inevitable undertaking; at the beginning of the twentieth century it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have passed, charged with the most complex happenings—among them, to mention only one, that same *Don Quixote*. (Borges 51)

In *The Great*, Hulu's 2020 self-described "anti-historical" (Hersko) television series that extremely loosely adapts the political rise of Catherine the Great, Empress of All Russia,<sup>82</sup> Catherine is troubled by the court spreading rumours that she had had sex with a horse. Regarding the spread of this rumour far outside Russia, a fellow (completely fictional) queen, Agnes, warns Catherine, "The first lie wins" ("Meatballs at the Dacha" 30:10). By this, Agnes means that the first story to get out and circulate will be the one that persists through history, while any attempts at corrections will fail to have an effect. Given that the rumour about Catherine the Great having sex with a horse circulates to this day, Agnes would seem to have a point.

Yet in the question of republication, it is very rarely the first "lie"—that is to say, the first version of a work—that circulates into the future. Indeed, literally speaking, it cannot; eventually, if a work is to continue being circulated as technology changes, at the very least a new printing must be made. In this dissertation, I have looked at four different case studies, the earliest of which was from the 1890s, the latest of which was from the

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<sup>82</sup> It adapts the story so loosely that the title insert calls it an "occasionally true story."

2010s. In each of these cases, it is generally a republication, not a first publication, that becomes the basis of later republications, and so it is this iteration perpetuated and circulated—the second, or third, or fourth, or fifth lie.

For Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is the 1891 version that is primarily taught, republished, and made the basis of adaptations (as evidenced by the presence of James Vane), despite films often needing to cut material and so likely having less to cut if they adapted the 1890 version. Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* presents a mixed case; the 1945 Little, Brown and Company version is more broadly circulated in the United States, but in Waugh's home country, the 1960 uniform edition is the basis for current republications. Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* is a key text in feminist, queer, and African American theories, while *The Black Scholar* versions of her essays go generally unmentioned and her "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" essay circulates with little comment on other presentations at that conference. And as for *Homestuck*, the simple truth is this: the old *Homestuck* is gone. It can be emulated with Bailey's archive or Bambosh's unofficial collection, but officially speaking, with Flash obsolete, the new website and print versions are likely to form the basis of any future productions and adaptations, and its serialization has ended. There is no defeating the forward march of time and technology.

So it seems that the second lie, not the first, wins. When we ask, "What does republication do?" we can give a simple answer: it ensures the survival of a work by perpetuating it, and because it always enacts change, it perpetuates a *new* version of the work with new resonances to be republished even further, while the old and *its* resonances are left behind. In our case studies, these new versions' resonances often

renegotiated relationships with the reviews, peer comments, conversational contexts, and the material and technical conditions (impermanence and obsolescence) that arose from earlier publications.

This would seem to invite the Darwinian metaphor: survival through republication, with the newer replacing the old, destined to die out. But as popular as this metaphor might be, I have bones to pick with the way natural selection is framed when applied to cultural transmission:

1. First, the Darwinian narrative (as it is framed in such cases) ignores that survival is often not determined just by physical properties of some works against others nor by impersonal external conditions: it is human selection. When Robert Ross chose the 1891 version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for a collected works for Wilde, that individual man's *choice* made the 1891 version the basis for all further republications, not the specific material elements or subjective qualities of either publication. Framing republication in the language of natural selection ignores that it is not the invisible hand of natural selection that decides what cultural works are perpetuated and what form: it is the tangible choices of human beings who have the power and inclination to choose the survivors. That is descent through modification, but it is not natural selection.
2. Second, the Darwinian model of survival proposed in these discussions ignores that while (at least in our cases) it is often the later version that is perpetuated in terms of serving as the basis for future republications, the earlier version often creates the *legacy* that surrounds the new version of the work. The legends around *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s reception history are primarily rooted in its

first reception, not the second version that most modern readers now consume alongside that legacy. *Brideshead Revisited*'s reputation for nostalgia is much more pronounced in its earlier version and was extensively commented on in relation to *that* version, with later reviewers ignoring differences, and it was the earlier version that created the work's mass popularity, particularly in the United States. Audre Lorde's speeches and periodical publications in conversation with others produced the reputation that led to her publishing a collection of essays on theory despite being, by choice and main form of production, a poet. And *Homestuck*'s legacy developed in no small part from the metafictional narrative developed in its original form, alongside the passionate fanbase that formed out of its strange serialization patterns.

This version of a Darwinian narrative does not quite fit. Republication does not merely determine that a "more fit" version of a narrative survives; this does not align with the facts either of circulation numbers (sometimes republications sell more than earlier publications, sometimes they sell less) or of the historical record. So we ask again: What does republication do?

Republication *creates* and *changes* a work's resonances with other publications of itself, subjects and interpretations, social contexts, and material and technological realities.

While this answer is seemingly a simple one, our four case studies show that a full exploration of these resonances is often more complex.

In this dissertation, I developed a syncretic textual studies approach that was suited to my subject of republication. This approach attended to the materials and methods of the

authorial, social, materialist, and genetic orientations towards textual studies, using each in turn as was appropriate for the different cases discussed. I defined republication as a relationship that forms through 1) two or more releases of a work to the public, where 2) they are indeed versions of the same work, and 3) there is a new publication event. To discuss the relations that develop from republication, I developed the term *resonance* as an expression of the way publications can be more or less “in tune” with different subjects and social contexts. By focusing only on post-publication elements of a work’s history, I tackled an area that is under-addressed in textual studies. I attended to the importance of accessible methodologies, not often discussed in textual studies, and proposed a theorization for the highly undertheorized domain of the lives of works post-publication. I then put this methodology and theorization into practice by exploring four case studies of works that were drawn from a broad period, 1890 to the present. The choice of case studies rather than a general survey allowed for an exploration of the nuances of resonances that develop from a work that might be glossed over in larger surveys. The works chosen all described different forms of republication in terms of materiality and context, which allowed me to explore various components of republication’s resonances.

In my first chapter, I looked at the magazine-to-novel print republication of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890 and 1891). I undertook a quantitative analysis of 1890 reviews and comments on the magazine publication in terms of common themes and subjects as well as moral and aesthetic judgements, which showed that our current understanding of the work’s reception history is misleading. Then, I analyzed differences in the text and bibliographical codes of the two publications. I found that degeneration

themes and the element of the moral parable, both strongly associated with positive moral judgements in the reviews of the 1890 version, increased in resonance for the 1891 version. These differences in resonances seemed to partly but not completely align with reviews of the 1891 version, which were more positive towards the story in terms of its moral and tended to focus more on aesthetic rather than moral debates. But while these resonances changed, the legacy of the first reception remained, such that this reception intertwined with the later version and bibliographic prestige of the 1890 version in later republications.

In my second chapter, I examined the book-to-uniform-edition republication of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945 and 1960). Examining the major themes of the novel, nostalgia and the path towards faith, I showed that revisions between republication affected the exact tone of each. Nostalgia became refigured as less indulgent and philosophical, and instead more direct, and this also affected the way Charles's path towards Catholicism was framed. The shifted resonances of these revisions, I argued, mirrored Waugh's position as a doubly nostalgic subject now revisiting his work, with the additional distance in time changing how nostalgia itself was viewed and providing Waugh with a chance to enter these changes into the record of posterity.

My third chapter explored Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984) as a collection of essays and conference presentations that had been published or given earlier (1977–1984). Examining an essay published in *The Black Scholar* ("The Great American Disease," 1979) and a presentation made at a conference ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House," 1979), I contextualized each in their original moment of reception by discussing the surrounding material. These works first appeared as part of



larger conversations, where Lorde's voice was often secondary to or even dismissed by other works published alongside her own. I showed how revisions to the material prior to republication decreased resonances with these conversations and that they, along with essay placement in the collected volume, increased connections between Lorde's essays. The change in resonances, both the purely textual and those derived from the change in extratextual material, resulted in a republication that preserved these works from the potential ephemeral nature of their earlier republications and also helped create a unified concept of Lorde as a theorist.

In my final chapter, I looked at two complex cases of republication that also contained instances of adaptation: Andrew Hussie's *Homestuck*'s (2009–2016) transition from a serialized webcomic to, in one case, a printed graphic novel (2018–Present), and in another, to a ported version of the website (2018) to avoid Flash's imminent obsolescence. This chapter complicated our understanding of republication by showing how adaptation and republication can occur together when the material of a publication changes, whether that change is from digital to print or from digital to a different kind of digital. Because the metafictional narrative of *Homestuck* is so strongly expressed through the original website's interactive interface and remediation of gameplay, I explored how the demands of material changes in republication affected that metafictional narrative. I argued that the printed codex remediated the webcomic in a manner more appropriate to its form and presented new potential paths of interaction through the unique "interface" of a codex. However, both printing and porting affected the metafictional resonances of the interfaces by adaptations of "mode," where interaction at times became showing and showing at times became telling, decreasing the

power of metafictional characters to affect reader experiences through their power over interfaces and gameplay. I also explored the consequences of serialization, arguing that the author–audience–work dynamic that informs serial works is strongly expressed in *Homestuck* and that the author notes in the printed version remediate a version of this relationship, but with much more control given to the author, and I discussed how *Homestuck* enacts through the RetJohn a kind of revision to a serialized work only available digitally. Digital technology, and its tendency towards obsolescence, requires that we approach republication with reference to adaptation and bibliographic codes as key to how resonances in works *must* change if digital-born works are to survive.

These individual cases allowed us to see in detail how republication can lead to altered resonances that often relate to the material elements of the publication, the publication processes, and reception. We saw how resonances with themes, modes, and social context were altered, but nothing was ever overwritten. Rather, the process of changing resonances in republication is one that refigures a multitude of relations without erasing any. It is not in radical difference but in smaller shifts that the truth of republication rests.

However, there is further work to be done. As an examination of case studies, this dissertation could dive deeply into specific cases, but I was unable to study republication in the wide variety of forms it takes, nor was I able to expand my study to the full range of time periods in which we might say republication exists. To develop a full theory of republication, a broad, systematic survey of a variety of cases over time is necessary.

Particularly, other kinds of collections, such as anthologies and fix-up novels, should be examined as republications for their effects on their resonances with author identity and cultural moments. Cases of “fuzzy” republication, such as when a work is released as a

“coterie” publication, then republished for a broader audience, should also be studied to determine whether republication functions differently in these cases.

In addition, this dissertation was focused on conceptualizing republication through more dramatic cases: cases of republication that also involved revision of the work. However, most of the time, republication involves much less dramatic cases of difference. Much of the time, when a work is republished, the only differences between an earlier and a later publication are bibliographic and temporal. For example, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* has been republished in relatively constant textual forms for several hundred years now. The only differences between versions are when it was published, the cover, and perhaps the textual apparatuses. In textual studies, we would not even call them different versions. However, each instance of republication should, in theory, be doing *something* with *Pride and Prejudice*, to a greater or lesser degree. At the very least, we can imagine these republications are 1) guarding *Pride and Prejudice* against cultural and physical destruction by keeping it in circulation and producing new copies and 2) making an argument about what *Pride and Prejudice* is, culturally, by selling it to specific audiences as a specific kind of work. In theory, the sum of these arguments about *Pride and Prejudice* create and recreate, over time, the cultural conception of the work. A study of cases such as these, where there is little to no textual variation between publications, would allow us to see how republication may affect resonances through purely material and social (rather than textual) mechanisms. Such an extension is necessary to develop broader claims about republication.

Republished versions, with all their changed resonances, survive because of the choices made by human actors. Every time a work is republished, this new version can become

the dominant line of transmission—in some cases, by acting as the textual basis of future publications of the work, and in others, by spreading its argument about this particular publication (as expressed in bibliographic codes and other materials) to the humans who consume it. But works often get republished because of earlier publications, which influence the shapes they take in their next publications and the social contexts that then receive them. This dissertation has shown how these afterlives continue to affect the way we receive works today.

The first lie wins. So too do the lies that come after. The notes they strike, great or small, resonate with one another to create something new, again and again.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Reviews of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

#### 1890 British Reviews

##### Publisher's Copy

*In multiple publications, the following copy is printed, which is cited by "A London Editor" in his June 28, 1890, letter to St James's Gazette:*

Mr. Oscar Wilde [will contribute/contributes] to the July number of Lippincott's Magazine a complete novel, entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which, as the first venture in fiction of one of the most prominent personalities and artistic influences of the day, will be everywhere read with wide interest and curiosity. But the story is in itself so strong and strange, and so picturesque and powerful in style, that it must inevitably have created a sensation in the literary world, even if published without Mr. Wilde's name on the title page. Viewed merely as a romance, it is—from the opening paragraph down to the tragic and ghastly climax—full of strong and sustained interest; as a study in psychology it is phenomenal; judged even purely as a piece of literary workmanship it is one of the most brilliant and remarkable productions of the year.

*This also appeared in a shorter form as follows:*

Mr. Oscar Wilde [will contribute/contributes] to the July number of Lippincott's Magazine a complete novel, entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray." The story is full of strong and sustained interest; as a study in psychology it is phenomenal, and judged even purely as a piece of literary workmanship it is one of the most brilliant and remarkable productions of the year.

*Several key phrases used in this advertisement also appear in Julian Hawthorne's September review of the novel for Lippincott's Monthly Magazine.*

*Pall Mall Gazette. 20 June 1890. P3. "Mr. Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray."*

MR. OSCAR WILDE'S new novelette (it fills a hundred large pages of Lippincott's Magazine) is compounded of three elements in equal proportions. It is one part Stevenson, one part Huysmans, one part Wilde. But for "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" it would probably not have been written. We do not mean that Mr. Wilde has imitated Mr. Stevenson in such a way as to impair his claim to originality. There is a certain inverted analogy between the "strange cases" of Dr. Jekyll and Dorian Gray, but the one might have been, and probably was, conceived without any reference to the other. What Mr. Wilde has borrowed from Mr. Stevenson is simply the idea of infusing a moral lesson into a fantastic tale. Had not Mr. Stevenson brought the sensational apologue (if we may call it so) into fashion, it is doubtful whether Mr. Wilde would have had the courage to be moral. One never knows; Mr. Wilde is so enamoured of the Unexpected that he might even have taken, of his own motive, to narrative sermon-writing; indeed his charming fairy tales might be regarded as preliminary studies to that end. But on the whole it seems probably that, had not Mr. Stevenson led the way, Mr. Wilde would not have ventured along a path which skirts so perilously near the verge of literary vulgarity.

"Dorian Gray," then, is to be classed with "Dr. Jekyll" as a moral tale; that is no doubt why the Editor of Lippincott's Magazine holds himself justified in presenting it to his confiding readers. But its morality is only skin deep, or rather it is a mere conventional garment designed to secure Mr. Wilde's fantasy an entrance into decent Anglo-American society. The true source of the writer's inspiration is not the half-emancipated Puritanism of Mr. Stevenson but the aesthetic paganism of the French "Decadents." It is the picturesque, not the ethical, aspects of virtue and vice that interest Mr. Wilde. Purity has its artistic value, if only as a contrast to its opposite; corruption is scintillant, iridescent, full of alluring effects. To dally with beauty and horror, luxury and cruelty; to peer into the Unholy of Unholies in human nature, and bring back vaguely sinister yet fascinating reports of the gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire that there inhabit; to pass languid hours in the hothouse of over-civilization, amid exotic and perverted forms, intoxicating colours, and steamy aromas, now luscious now acidulous; these are the true objects which Mr. Wilde has proposed to himself. He has set forth on a timid tour of exploration "près de ces confins où séjournent les aberrations et les maladies, le tétanos mystique, la fièvre chaude de la luxure, les typhoïdes et les vomitos du crime." From the very outset

he plunges us in a sickly atmosphere. The way in which Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward talk of, and to, Dorian Gray in the opening scene convinced us, for the moment, that the beautiful Dorian must be a woman in male attire. We were wrong; Dorian Gray with his “finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes and his crisp golden hair,” is of the same sex as his admirers; but that does not make their worship of him, and the forms of its expression, seem any less the nauseous. And the atmosphere does not freshen as the story proceeds. The very vagueness of Mr. Wilde’s allusions to his hero’s vices is exceedingly effective from the Baudelarian point of view. We are conscious of a penetrating poison in the air, yet cannot see clearly whence it proceeds. The literature of perversion in France is apt to repel by its brutality; Mr Wilde, governed rather by the necessities of the market than by artistic choice, makes it subtle and insinuating. But his story is none the less an essay in the said literature of perversion. He does not even take the trouble to make his moral logically cohere with his subject-matter. The magic picture has in reality nothing whatever to do with the corruption of Dorian Gray. On the contrary the first change which he notes in it is on the point of driving him, panic-stricken, into the path of self-renunciation, and nothing but a fatal chance defeats this better impulse. In other words the apparent moral is not a moral at all—it is meaningless. Mr. Wilde may perhaps take refuge in denying that he makes any pretense at morality; but why, then, drag in the supernatural? In such a tale as this, the supernatural has no right of entrance except in the guise of symbolism; and Mr. Wilde’s symbolism symbolizes nothing.

It is in the copious stream of paradox which flows through the dialogue that we recognize most clearly the genuine Oscar—the Oscar fin de siècle, whom we know. Some of his paradoxes are ingenious, some mechanical and even trite—if a trite paradox be not to paradoxical expression. We give a few specimens of both classes:—

[Lord Henry Quotes]

Who can doubt, after this, that paradox may be trite, and even threadbare?

*The Globe. 24 June 1890. P6.*

It is a species of shocker, plus the affectations of the superfine school. The main idea recalls both “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” and “Master of His Fate.” Dorian Gray is a wealthy young man, endowed with the fatal gift of beauty, who has his portrait painted by Basil Hallward, a somewhat impressionable artist. He further makes the acquaintance of Lord Henry Wotton, a sort of present-day Mephistopheles, with a pretty turn for easy cynicism. The portrait makes Dorian vain, and the cynicism (turned upon him at remorseless length) renders him callous. He goes from bad to worse—is the cause of a beautiful young actress committing suicide, and slays (in a particularly repulsive manner) the painter who has been so fascinated by his physical charm. Moreover, he gives way to sundry vague excess; and all the evil that he does, while it leaves his beauty unimpaired, has a ghastly effect upon the portrait, in which the gradual deterioration of Dorian’s character is marked, in some mode, day by day. The picture is, in fact, the Mr. Hyde to Dorian’s Dr. Jekyll. Incidentally, the episode of the actress whose knowledge of what love really is renders her suddenly incapable of realizing feigned love upon the stage, suggests a notable passage in Mr. William Black’s “In Silk Attire.” Mr Wilde’s attempt at the amalgamation of “sensation” with persiflage cannot, indeed, be said to be wholly successful. The two commodities do not go well together. “The Picture of Dorian Gray” is an ingenious, but by no means an artistic, piece of work. It has cleverness, but it is without form, a few of its pages being of the most unmitigated “padding.” Mr. Wilde is happiest in the utterances he puts in the mouth of the afore-said Mephistopheles. These utterances are often too long; in truth, Lord Henry Wotton must have been something of a bore even to the receptive Dorian. Certain it is that Mr Wilde makes him talk by the yard after this fashion. [Lord Henry Quotes] All this is very smart, no doubt; but it is a smartness which becomes tedious after a time.

*Lancashire Evening Post. 27 June 1890. P2. “From Our London Correspondent. London, Thursday Evening.”*

As for Oscar’s new story, “Dorian Gray,” in “Lippincott’s Magazine,” I wonder how many of the would-be smart sayings will be claimed by the insatiable Whistler. There is a vendetta between these two masters. Mr Whistler claims to have inspired everything

Oscar ever wrote. The question is whether it is worth inspiring, or whether there is anything in Mr. Whistler's wit, has not occurred to that genius.

*Newcastle Daily Chronicle. 30 June 1890. P4.*

Mr. Oscar Wilde has been falling foul of a critic who has been writing in condemnation of Mr Wilde's new story, "The Picture of Dorian Gray." There are many reasons for letting critics alone, even when they say things calculated to wound the most tender feelings of susceptible authors. THACKERAY, to be sure, once gave an unfortunate gentleman on the Times a severe wiggling; and in later years repeated the experiment by a successful onslaught on a second critic, the "my young friend of Grub Street," who figures in the pages of "The Virginians." All writers, however, are not THACKERAY. This is nevertheless pre-eminently an advertising age; and as "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is being freely talked about, Mr. Oscar Wilde is perhaps wise in his generation.

*Watford Observer. 28 June 1890. P4. "En Passant."*

...Do you care to interview the lilies and langours of vice? to feel as if you had no moral backbone, no power to see the wrong and do it, in fact to know that little better than criminal unchanged though you are, you are merely a sort of Dissenter in Morals, and that for all your ["incrossness"?] you are but indeed a dissidence? Then read Oscar Wilde's new novel (for he pleases to call it) The Picture of Dorian Gray in Lippincott's Magazine. Here we have beautiful boys and maidenly blushful young men and ninnies in trousers. Here may be seen schoolgirls in swallow tails and pupil teacheresses who have received an artistic education. And they are all vicious; they are all so naughty—in a school-girl sort of way; and they worship beauty, the dears, in the shape of silver Hermeses and Ivory Fauns, and they make moues, the dispetticoated minxes, and they babble about Art, and they grow weary of their sins, and they wax hysterical and they cry out upon Time the ravisher of roses from the raser-stroked cheek, and they are Pagans and they do murder, and talk bosh and act like unmitigated young cads and still the world goes round. One wonders that anyone ever thought Oscar Wilde was clever.

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No, Mr. Wilde, if you had read your Byron and your Bible, if you knew the Elizabethan dramatist and the Greek, if you had some knowledge of the gallant and good Dumas, of brave old Sir Walter, if you had sinned out your sins and cast contemplation behind your back with repentance, if you had avoided the French decadents—for I note the influence on Dorian Gray of M.E. Bod, whose book you once denounced in private as too introspective—and if you must have crime, if you had tickled Barbery D’Aurevilly and were fed fat upon his manly sensibility—then Dorian Gray might have been a book. In the case of sin as a subject, contemplations and repentance are the two horns of a dilemma: that is to say that the inspection of sin, the vapouring over it, the boasting (or blaming) it—these weary the reader equally. I have remarked before that sin is the salt of romance; you know what comes from too much salt. Besides, we don’t want sin dandied like a pet baby or puffed up like a prize pig. We want passion rather than vice; we want action more than philosophy, and we want jolly and free and gallant men and women a thousand times rather than these sinners above the Gallileans. ...

*Liverpool Mercury. 2 July 1890. P7. “Magazines for July.”*

Readers will naturally turn with curiosity to the promised complete story by Mr. Oscar Wilde. The promise is realised and the curiosity is satisfied. “The Picture of Dorian Gray” is the attractive title, and the aesthetic novelist has, faithful to his exaggerations of mind and manner, produced a story which, in its way, is one of the most remarkable ever dignified by print. Mr. Wilde may not be a great novelist, but he is certainly unique in that line, and capable of saying some pretty things in a pretty way.

*Sheffield Daily Telegraph. 4 July 1890. P7. “The July Magazines.”*

...The space might have been much more profitably employed. It is all about a man who is described as a Narcissus—so beautiful that another man is infatuated and gets very foolish over him. The story strikes us as unhealthy in sentiment and undoubtedly supercilious and cynical in style. [Quotes, primarily from Lord Henry] This may be “art,” but it does not seem to us to be very nice art.

*Gloucester Journal. 5 July 1890. P6. “Fresh from the Press.”*

...This apostle of culture has waxed so terribly wroth with a contemporary for daring to suggest that the story and its treatment did not please him, that we prefer to say nothing of it for fear we should have to break lances with the author. We therefore leave it to the reader to decide for himself, and the author to the “immortality” he thinks the story deserves. It may be mentioned that whatever opinion others may have of his work, Oscar Wilde himself holds it in no small esteem.

*Pall Mall Gazette. 5 July 1890. P1. “Literary Notes, News, and Echoes.”*

The magic motive in Mr. Oscar Wilde’s story in Lippincott’s Magazine, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” has been spoken of by the reviewers as resembling the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. But surely Nathaniel Hawthorne, rather than Mr. Stevenson, is the spiritual progenitor of Mr. Wilde’s story. “The Picture of Dorian Gray” is a “Twice-Told Tale,” showing a curiously close analogy to Hawthorne’s “Prophetic Pictures.” The inverted resemblance between the two stories is most startling; but Hawthorne’s moral is less mixed than Mr Wilde’s:—

Is there not a deep moral in the tale? (Says Hawthorne). Could the result of one, or all our deeds, be shadowed forth and set before us, some would call it Fate, and hurry onward, others be swept along by their passionate desires, and none be turned aside by the PROPHETIC PICTURES.

*Western Daily Press. 5 July 1890. P7. “The July Magazines.”*

...The conception of the story is good, but the cynical utterances of one of the characters are sure to raise up adverse critics. The moral taught is excellent, but still there is, so to speak, a certain amount of wading in muddy water before land is reached. Many will not see in this to cause objection; others will. The writer in the course of his story gives evidence of the love he has for decorative art, and his research for information as to jewels, musical instruments, and tapestries could not have been superficial.

*The Speaker. 5 July 1890. “Profuse and Perfervid.” P25–26. The Speaker vol 2.*

By a stroke of good fortune, singular at this season the two stories which we have taken up to review this week turn out to be—each in its way—of no slight interest. Of Mr. Wilde's work this was to be expected. Let it be granted, to begin with, that the conception of the story is exceedingly strong. A young man of remarkable beauty, perfect in body, but undeveloped—or rather, lacking altogether—in soul, becomes the dear friend of a painter of genius. The artist, under the spell of this friendship, is painting the youth's portrait. Enter to them the spirit of evil, in the shape of Lord Henry Wotton, an extremely fin de siècle gentleman, who, by a few inspiring words, supplies, or calls into life, the boy's missing soul—and it is an evil one. Henceforward, the tale develops the growth of this evil soul, side by side with this mystery—that while vice and debauchery write no wrinkle on the boy's face, but pass from it as a breath off a pane and leave it perennially innocent and lovely, every vile action scores its mark upon the portrait, which keeps accurate record of a loathsome life.

It has been insinuated that this story should be suppressed in the interest of morality. Mr. Wilde has answered that art and ethics have nothing to do with each other. His boldness in resting his defence on the general proposition is the more exemplary, as he might fairly have insisted on the particular proposition—that the teaching of the book is conspicuously right in morality. If we have correctly interpreted the book's motive—and we are at a loss to conceive what other can be devised—this position is unassailable. There is, perhaps, a passage or so in the description of Dorian's decline that were better omitted. But this is a matter of taste.

The motive of the tale, then, is strong. It is in his treatment of it that Mr. Wilde has failed, and his mistakes are easy of detection. Whether they can be as readily corrected is doubtful. To begin with, the author has a style as striking as his matter; but he has entirely missed reconciling the two. There is an amateurish lack of precision in the descriptive passages. They are laboured, finicking, overlaid with paint: and, therefore, they want vigour. "The Picture of Dorian Gray," has been compared very naturally with "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and we would invite Mr. Wilde to take up that story, and consider the bold, sharply defined strokes with which its atmosphere and milieu are put in. Such brevity as Mr. Stevenson's comes from sureness of knowledge, not want of care,



and is the first sign of mastery. Nor is Mr. Wilde too wordy alone: he is too paradoxical. Only the cook who has yet to learn will run riot in truffles, We will admit at once that Lord Henry's epigrams are admirable examples, taken separately; but a story demands simplicity and proportion, and here we have neither; it demands restraint, and here we find profusion only; it demands point, and here the point is too often obscured by mere cleverness. Lord Henry's mission in the book is to lead Dorian Gray to destruction; and he does so, if you please, at the end of a string of epigrams.

In fact, we should doubt that Mr. Wilde possessed the true story teller's temperament were it not for some half a dozen passages. Here is one where, Dorian tells of his engagement to Sibyl Vane, the actress:—

“Lips,” he says, “that Shakespeare taught to speak have whispered their secret in my ear. I have had the arms of Rosalind around me, and kissed Juliet on the mouth.”

“Have you seen her to-day?” said Lord Henry.

Dorian Gray shook his head. “I left her in the forest of Arden, I shall find her in an orchard in Verona.”

Lord Henry sipped his champagne in a meditative manner. “At what particular point did you mention the word marriage, Dorian? and what did she say in answer? Perhaps you forgot all about it.”

“My dear Harry, I did not treat it as a business transaction, and I did not make any formal proposal. I told her that I loved her, and she said she was not worthy to be my wife. Not worthy! Why, the whole world is nothing to me compared to her.”

“Women are wonderfully practical,” murmured Lord Henry: “much more practical than we are. In situations of this kind we often forget to say anything about marriage, and they always remind us.”

The last chapter of the tale is good story-telling throughout, in style and matter—as good as Chapter IX. is bad. And when Mr. Wilde thoroughly sees why two particular sentences in that last chapter—

“The Park is quite lovely now. I don’t think there have been such lilacs since the year I met you—”

though trivial in themselves are full of significance and beauty in their setting he will be far on the road to eminence in fiction. He has given us a work of serious art, strong and fascinating, in spite of its blemishes. Will he insist on being taken seriously, and go on to give us a better?

*Weekly Dispatch (London). 6 July 1890. P6. “Literature.”*

Lippincott’s complete novel, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” is provided by Mr. Oscar Wilde. The tenor and tone of the story are repulsive, and the style is affected.

*The Weekly Dispatch. 6 July 1890. P9. “Waifs and Strays.”*

It was Mr. Oscar Wilde who once informed the world that he was quite neutral in matters of religion. “I am neither for God nor for his enemies,” he said. This profound thinker has now discovered that what is commonly called sin is better than virtue because it confers inestimable blessings on posterity. From the same authority we learn that a story called “Dorian Gray” is perfect art, though its morals may be “poisonous.” As posterity is not in the least likely to hear of this production, there seems to be a flaw in Oscar’s philosophy.

*The Islington Gazette. 7 July 1890. P3.*

Lippincott’s Magazine for the present month contains a complete novel by Oscar Wilde, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” which reveals the depths of depravity to which humanity may descend by simple self-development. Dorian Gray, a youth of uncommon beauty, had been virtuously trained. A cynical man of the world, Lord Henry Wotton, instils certain maxims into his mind which arouse the sleeping devil in him, and so he begins by breaking the heart of an actress, runs into sensuality, becoming so foul that his friends “cut” him, murders his best friend at midnight, causes the suicide of another friend, and

finally ends his horrid career by self-destruction. A weird element is introduced by the author in the shape of a portrait of Dorian, which changes mysteriously as he progresses in vice, the picture becoming a revelation of his inner self. The policy of this class of stories is much to be questioned; and, indeed, they are to be condemned as exerting a deteriorating rather than an elevating influence on the reader.

*York Herald. 7 July 1890. P6.*

“LIPPINCOTT’S” contains Mr. Oscar Wilde’s story, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” and since this has been so fortunate as to offend certain purist critics it will no doubt be widely read.

*Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser. 8 July 1890. P4. “Magazines, &c, For July.”*

...The eccentric aesthete has made a pretty good beginning. The plot is well conceived, and the style of description is somewhat after the manner of Ouida, but contains more paradoxes and epigrams. Indeed, these have been laid on so thick that we fear Oscar Wilde has seriously drawn upon his conversational stock, and he certainly will not have so large a repertoire to draw from when he writes his next novel. Although there are things in the story which some people might say are highly improper—such, for example, as the conversation of Lord Henry—the author aims at teaching a moral. The idea of Dorian Gray’s sins showing themselves not upon his own features but upon the portrait painted by his artist friend until the face of this counterfeit presentment becomes hideous and the hands bloody is decidedly good. After all, we think Mr Wilde capable of writing a very good novel, but his descriptions of Nature require improvement, and must not be dragged in for the mere sack of padding out.

*Eastern Morning News. 9 July 1890. P2. “The July Magazines (Second Notice).”*

...It has been much discussed, and in its central idea is original enough to be worth discussing. It is in parts powerful, in parts clever, and in parts offensive. Its atmosphere and tone are generally disagreeable, and, though we are willing to believe (on Mr Oscar Wilde’s word) that it has a moral aim, it will not for the ordinary reader have a wholesome effect. In execution Mr Wilde’s story is tediously clever—if the paradox may

in this connection be forgiven. There is no repose about the style, and the flow of the story is checked by epigrams. The central idea is so good that we should like to see the whole thing rewritten, with more regard to what artists call the masses, and a keener eye for the general effect. If Mr Oscar Wilde could remember the words of the French critic who declared that the first qualification of a writer was to know how to reject his own thoughts, and if he would recall what another great Frenchman said about writing all one ought and not all one can, his great abilities would produce their proper effect.

*The Banbury Advertiser. 10 July 1890. P8. "Reviews."*

The May number of this magazine contained the best novel (its special feature) it has yet produced, but this month's contains the one we like least. "The Picture of Dorian Gray," by Mr. Oscar Wilde, is the title of this month's production. Dorian Gray prays that a portrait of himself may grow old instead of the original, and this happens by some supernatural agency. It is a story calculated to do more harm than good, though the author says it has a moral.

*The Bath Chronicle. 10 July 1890. P6 "Magazines for July."*

The story is rather obscure, nor is it a pleasant one; it is morbid in tone and characterized by the introspective probings which play a conspicuous part in modern fiction.

*The Carlisle Journal. 11 July 1890. P6. "July Magazines."*

....The leader of the aesthetic school is a remarkable man, and "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a remarkable story. It has attracted much attention, and has been dealt with by the critics with an amount of care that is not usually bestowed on magazine tales. The verdict pronounced upon it seems to differ according to the estimate which the different critics have formed of the personality of the author: but there is a general agreement that it is a clever production; and although most readers will find pages of startling paradoxes and affectations of the "Lothair" type, but of rather "broader" character, somewhat dreary after a while, the story itself is deeply interesting. It is that of a beautiful youth, endowed with abundance of sentiment, but without either soul or feeling, who has among his many admirers a painter of genius who exercises all his art in the production of his portrait, to

which a supernatural quality belongs. Under the cynical influence of a friend of title all that is vile in the youth's nature is developed, and he gives way, secretly, to a course of profligacy, vice, and debauchery. Through it all the beautiful physical characteristics of the Adonis never change; but those of the portrait do, every new transgression of the moral code leaving upon the canvas indelible traces that finally convert into a hideous monster that which was once divinely fair and sweet. The portrait becomes a very Frankenstein to the original, over whom, however, it exercises such a fascinating influence that he can neither destroy it nor part with it, and the tale culminates in tragedy. The plot is striking, but scarcely original, as we have the same idea in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and perhaps also in one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's early romances. Some critics have questioned its moral; but scarcely with good reason. The character of Dorian Gray is not one for imitation, and vice meets with due punishment in the end.

*Supplement to the Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle. 12 July 1890. P12. "July Magazines."*

...The chief feature in the July issue of this magazine is, of course, the much-talked-of story by Oscar Wilde, entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Whatever objection may be taken to its moral tone, it cannot be denied that the whilom leader of the aesthetic school has written a striking, although altogether unnatural story.

*The Graphic. 12 July 1890. P43. "Magazines."*

...The plot is the most powerful and original that has been written for some time; but Mr. Wilde is hardly strong enough to do it justice. The twaddle of his emasculate men, and an uncertainty as to the uses of "will" and "shall" are blots on the work.

*Lancaster Gazette. 12 July 1890. P7.*

—Lippincott's Magazine" [sic] contains an interesting and well written novel from the pen of Oscar Wilde entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray."

*Light. 12 July 1890. "The Picture of Dorian Gray.' A Spiritualistic Review. By 'Nizida.'" P331–333 in Light vol. 10 (1890).*

Mr. Oscar Wilde has created a new character in fiction, one likely to absorb public attention with a similar weird fascination to that produced by the renowned Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; and with a more lasting and beneficial moral effect than had Mr. Stevenson's surprising creation. A deeply conceived psychological study, upon entirely new lines, enriched by the stored wealth of a mind which has spared no pains in the pursuit of sensuous beauty, and which has, to all appearance, revelled in deepest draughts from that sparkling and alluring fountain. But what a spiritual lesson has he drawn therefrom—a lesson graphically and powerfully set forth in the fascinating pages which present to us the life of Dorian Gray. A modern Narcissus, enamoured of his own beauty, which proves a lure to draw him down into the deepest hells of sensual indulgence, from whence he sinks into a still deeper abyss of crime.

Introduced as an innocent, rather effeminate youth of extraordinary and fascinating beauty, Dorian Gray has his eyes opened to the fact that he possesses beauty, and his slumbering vanity and egotism, awakened by the insidious flatteries of a hardened cynic, spring at once into activity, and from that moment begins the downward course. Skilfully the author depicts the budding and gradual unfolding of this baleful life-blossom of the animal soul, seeking only the selfish gratification of the senses, refined indeed by education and artistic culture, but, notwithstanding, purely animal—nay, at times, bestial. By degrees, the still, small voice—the voice of the higher self which spiritually overshadows the unsophisticated youth—is deadened in the soul. All the humane, merciful, spiritually beautiful sentiments and emotions of the better nature, are strangled in their infancy, for Dorian Gray drinks so deeply of the intoxicating cup of sensuous gratification, that his nature becomes transformed to that of a demon—beautiful outwardly, but within hideous. All this is depicted with a master hand; the underlying lesson, for those who can find it, being the danger to the soul which lies in an egotistic love and idolatrous cherishing of one's own personal beauty—for male or female equally perilous. But the author by an ingenious device presents to us an objective image of the subjective transformation gradually going on in Dorian Gray's soul, which, for startling vividness and horror, surpasses the effects usually produced by the novelist's art.

Dorian Gray, whilst retaining the youthfulness, vigorous health, and unimpaired beauty of his external form, at the same time witnesses the objective presentment of his soul's growing, loathsome hideousness; and its falling into diseased decrepitude, into an ugliness beyond conception. At first horrified by this, he becomes at length accustomed to it, and at certain stages of his downward course, after the commission of new excesses, he repairs to this silent recorder of his deeds, and unveiling it, seeks for fresh indication of the gradual decay and corruption which are unfailingly represented on this physical side of his being. As time went on—"He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and often with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead, or crawled around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible, the signs of sins or the signs of age. He would place his white hands beside the coarse bloated hands of the picture, and smile. He mocked the misshapen body and the failing limbs." Never does he feel a moment of repentance. The disgusting image, however, haunts him with a terror of discovery, drawing him back from distant places to assure himself of its hidden security, and to contemplate it with a hideous fascination. The loathsome horror never departs from his consciousness. From its veiled seclusion it exerts over him a spell of diabolical enchantment, and he knows that it is he himself; but his mirror presents to his gaze the personal beauty he cherishes, and the world continues to be fascinated by his charm. Many become fascinated to their serious moral and spiritual injury. His victims are numerous; innocent women and upright young men, who, but for him, would have led virtuous, useful lives. With his beautiful body—cared for as one would care for some rare, exotic blossom—going about the world with a charming appearance of harmlessness and even innocence, he murdered souls in secret, as completely as if with his slender, white, taper fingers he might have clutched their throats and strangled the life out of their bodies.

And all this rottenness, all this corruption, had been proximately caused by a seed dropped into a soil prepared for it—the soul left doubtless from the Karma of some previous life. A seed dropped from the flattering tongue of Lord Henry Wotton, tended and skilfully fostered into a surprising precociousness by his insidious, worthless

cynicisms, and oracular sophistries. A man out of whose life had departed every wholesome savour, who poisoned the lives of others, and led them to sin, whilst, apparently, he sinned not himself. As a friend once said to him, “You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose.” His whole life was, however, a sin, concealed behind a mask of bonhommie, a fashionable cheerfulness and pleasantness of manner; a hollow cadavre full of the dust and ashes of a burnt-out life. One of Lord Henry Wotton’s specious sophistries was this: “The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.” As well wrap oneself confidingly in the folds of a boa-constrictor, hoping to save one’s life thereby. Lord Henry’s apt pupil, Dorian Gray, followed this advice scrupulously, only to increase the power of temptation, which never after found him unwilling, until at last all of his higher nature was suffocated. The author skilfully depicts the insidious, baleful influence of Lord Henry Wotton, but attributes the corruption of Dorian Gray’s soul to a book which Lord Henry loaned him. He says: “The Renaissance knew of strange manners of poisoning—poisoning by a helmet, and a lighted torch, by an embroidered glove, and a jewelled fan, by a gilded pomander, and by an amber chain. Dorian Gray was poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful.”

Dorian Gray had conceived the idea that his life was the product of many preceding lives. The author causes him to make the following reflections: “He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him, man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead. He loved to stroll through the gaunt cold picture-gallery of his country house and look at the various portraits of those whose blood flowed in his veins. Here was Philip Herbert, described by Francis Osborne in his *Memoirs on the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James*, as one who was “caressed by the Court for his handsome face, which kept him not long company.” Was it young Herbert’s life that he sometimes led? Had some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own? Was it some dim sense of that ruined grace that had made him so suddenly, and almost



without cause, give utterance, in Basil Hallward's studio, to that mad prayer which had so changed his life? Here in gold embroidered red doublet, jewelled surcoat, and gilt edged ruff and wrist-bands, stood Sir Anthony Sherard, with his silver and black armour piled at his feet. What had this man's legacy been? Had the lover of Giovanna of Naples bequeathed him some inheritance of sins and shame? Were his own actions merely the dreams that the dead man had not dared to realise? Here, from the fading canvas smiled Lady Elizabeth Devereux, in her gauze hood, pearled stomacher, and pink slashed sleeves. A flower was in her right hand, and her left clasped an enamelled collar of white and damask roses. On a table by her side lay a mandolin and an apple. There were large green rosettes upon her little pointed shoes. He knew her life, and the strange stories that were told about her lovers. Had he something of her temperament in him? Those oval heavy-lidded eyes seemed to look curiously at him. What of George Willoughby, with his powdered hair and fantastic patches? How evil he looked! The face was saturnine and swarthy, and the sensual lips seemed to be twisted with disdain. Delicate lace ruffles fell over the lean yellow hands that were so overladen with rings. He had been a macaroni of the eighteenth century, and the friend, in his youth, of Lord Ferrars. What of the second Lord Sherard, the companion of the Prince Regent in his wildest days, and one of the witnesses of the secret marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert? How proud and handsome he was, with his chestnut curls and insolent pose! What passions had he bequeathed? The world had looked upon him as infamous. He had led the orgies at Carlton House. The Star of the Garter glittered upon his breast. Beside him hung the portrait of his wife, a pallid, thin-lipped woman in black. Her blood also stirred within him. How curious it all seemed!"

What a pity Dorian did not see that the sole reason for a plurality of lives was that very thirst of the animal soul for the sensual pleasures of the material life in which he so wildly indulged, and yet with a diabolical, smooth, and easy method in his madness, seeking ever the externally beautiful. Beauty fled indeed before the gaunt ugliness of crime; but when this happened to Dorian, he coolly turned his back and went in search of new sensations. "And in his search for sensations that would be at once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness that is so essential to romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought that he knew to be really alien to his nature,

abandon himself to their subtle influences, and then, having, as it were, caught their colour and satisfied his intellectual curiosity, leave them with that curious indifference that is not incompatible with a real ardour of temperament, and that, indeed, according to certain modern psychologists, is often a condition of it.”

Veil it as he would, his extreme moral corruption became known, crept out from behind skilful concealments, and was borne by the breath of gossip and scandal—whispering of its enormities. He was black-balled in a West End Club, “and when brought by a friend into a smoking-room of the Carlton, the Duke of Berwick and another gentleman got up in a marked manner and went out. Curious stories became current about him after he had passed his twenty-fifth year. . . . Men would whisper to each other in corners, or pass him with a sneer, or look at him with cold, searching eyes. Of such insolences and attempted slights, he, of course, took no notice; and in the opinion of most people his frank manner, his charming, boyish smile, and the infinite grace of that wonderful youth that seemed never to leave him were in themselves a sufficient answer to the calumnies (for so they called them) that were circulated about him.”

The life at length culminates in the commission of a crime of the most cruel, treacherous, and dastardly character. It is successfully concealed. The extraordinary coolness, even peace of mind, which Dorian experiences after this deed of horror is powerfully depicted. But he does feel a few momentary, weak qualms of conscience. He spares one of his victims, and he thinks of beginning a new life. Then imagining himself becoming purified he longs to see how his silent recorder looks. He expects to find some wonderful improvement in the aspect of the loathsome hidden self he has created. So he repairs to its hiding place. It is more loathsome than ever, and presents new aspects of ugliness. In a moment of supreme disgust and aversion he seizes a knife to destroy it. By so doing he ends his physical life.

The only occult explanation of the catastrophe which befalls him is, that he commits astral suicide by the murderous attack he ignorantly makes upon that which represented to him his own soul. The blow reverts to his physical body, and he falls dead.

There is in this book a wonderful spiritual insight into the inner life of the human being. Arising, in all probability from that intuition we all more or less possess; a sort of flash of truth upon the mind, which is not known at the moment to be really true, but is supposed to be the mere weaving of a graceful prolific fancy. A similar power lay at the back of Mr. R. Stevenson's creation of Dr. Jekyll, casting upon the tale so powerful a spiritual light, that all readers were held by the spell of its enchantment. The same feeling of being under a spell fills the reader of "The Picture of Dorian Gray." The same subtle, spiritual effect of the aura of evil flows out from the book—especially at those moments when Dorian is contemplating the image of his soul's corruption, not, in this instance, that the evil so powerfully felt poisons the mind as poor Dorian was poisoned for life by his French novel; but one gets a feeling of painful horror, and sickening disgust, it is not easy to shake off. One seems to have glanced momentarily into the deepest abysses of hell, and to have drawn back totally sickened by a subtle effluvium. This singular power possessed by both these writers reveals a certain growth or development in them of the spiritual nature, which need not necessarily, as yet, convert either of these gentlemen into saints, or angels, although doubtless they are both very good men.

The lesson taught by Mr. Oscar Wilde's powerful story is of the highest spiritual import; and if it can be, not believed merely, but accepted as a literal fact, a mysterious verity in the life of a human being, that the invisible soul within the body, that alone which lives after death, is deformed, bestialised, and even murdered by a life of persistent evil, it ought to have the most beneficial effect upon society.

Let him depict the soul as he may, however, except in the case of Basil Hallward, Mr. Wilde never rises above the animal soul in man. It is the animal soul alone, dominated by a refined but perverted intellect, seeking an animal gratification in sensuous beauty, which he puts before us. Dorian Gray suffocated in its infancy the only germ of spiritual soul he possessed.

*The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 12 July 1890. P10. "The Magazines. Second Notice."*

[Abbreviated version of *The Daily Chronicle* review]

As contrast to the preceding, we have Lippincott's for this month, characterized by dullness and dirt. There is the story of the "Picture of Dorian Gray," by Mr. Oscar Wilde. It is a tale full of the worst elements of the literature of the French *Décadents*, offering as a substitute for real cleverness the daub of aestheticism and the tawdry show of cheap scholarship. Mr. Wilde evidently believes that man is half angel and half ape; and that, when you are in danger of becoming too angelic—this can never have been his own experience—you can't do better than to rush out and make a beast of yourself.

*Aberdeen Press and Journal. 14 July 1890. P2. "Magazines."*

If the aim of fiction is to delight and amuse, this venture by the erstwhile apostle of aestheticism must be written down a failure. Characters more fantastical and repulsive than those of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton were surely never drawn, and their impious and brutal selfishness, their worship of the senses, and their scornful defiance of restraint and are almost wholly unrelieved, the other actors in the story, with the exception of an artist besotted with the physical beauty of Dorian, being mere puppets. Neither a pretty turn for aphorism, of which it must be allowed that the author gives sufficient evidence, nor a minute acquaintance with the extravagances of fashionable life in all ages, is sufficient sock-in-trade for the writing of a good novel. A healthy imagination is also requisite. "The Picture of Dorian Gray" leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and the supersensitive, cultured creatures of Mr Wilde's imagination are beings whom no one would wish to meet in the flesh.

*Northampton Mercury. 18 July 1890. P2. "Literary Notices."*

The feature of LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE for July (War Lock and Co.—1s.) is a very readable complete story by Oscar Wilde—"The Picture of Dorian Gray." It occupies no less than 100 of the 162 pages of the magazine. The story is written in Oscar Wilde's brightest style, and the interest of the reader is maintained on every page right up to the hundredth. Moreover there is throughout just sufficient dash of Oscar Wilde's aestheticism to give real piquancy to the story.

*The South Wales Times and Star of Gwent. 18 July 1890. P9. "Publications."*

Hostile criticism is [illegible] a good advertisement, and the comments in some of the London papers upon "The Picture of Dorian Gray," a tale by Oscar Wilde, which takes the first place in this month's number, is likely to create a great demand for it. There are some harrowing passages in it, but we fail to see that it is deserving of the scathing condemnation it has received in some quarters.

*"The Baron de Book-Worms." Punch. 19 July 1890. "Our Booking Office." P25 in Punch V. 98-99 (1891).*

The Baron has read Oscar Wilde's wildest and Oscarest work, called "Dorian Gray," a weird sensational romance, complete in one number of Lippincott's Magazine. The Baron recommends any body who revels in diablerie, to begin it about half-past ten, and to finish it at one sitting up; but those who do not so revel he advises either not to read it at all, or to choose the daytime, and take it in homoeopathic doses.

The portrait represents the soul of the beautiful Ganymede-like Dorian Gray, whose youth and beauty last to the end, while his soul, like John Brown's, "goes marching on," into the Wilderness of Sin. It becomes at last a devilled soul. And then Dorian sticks a knife into it, as any ordinary mortal might do, and a fork also, and next morning

"Lifeless but 'hideous,' he lay,"

while the portrait has recovered the perfect beauty which it possessed when it first left the artist's easel. If Oscar intended an allegory, the finish is dreadfully wrong. Does he mean that, by sacrificing his earthly life, Dorian Gray atones for his infernal sins, and so purifies his soul by suicide? "Heavens! I am no preacher," says the Baron, "and perhaps Oscar didn't mean anything at all, except to give us a sensation, to show how like Bulwer Lytton's old-world style he could make his descriptions and his dialogue, and what an easy thing it is to frighten the respectable Mrs. Grundy with a Bogie." The style is decidedly Lyttonerary. His aphorisms are Wilde, yet forced. Mr. Oscar Wilde says of his story, "it is poisonous if you like, but you cannot deny that it is also perfect, and perfection is what we artists aim at." Perhaps, but "we artists" do not always hit what we aim at, and despite his confident claim to unerring marksmanship, one must hazard the

opinion, that in this case Mr. Wilde has “shot wide.” There is indeed more of “poison” than of “perfection” in *Dorian Gray*. The central idea is an excellent, if not exactly a novel, one; and a finer art, say that of Nathaniel Hawthorne, would have made a striking and satisfying story of it. *Dorian Gray* is striking enough, in a sense, but it is not “satisfying” artistically, any more than it is so ethically. Mr. Wilde has preferred the sensuous and hyperdecorative manner of “*Mademoiselle de Maupin*,” and without Gautier’s power, has spoilt a promising conception by clumsy unideal treatment. His “decoration” (upon which he plumes himself) is indeed “laid on with a trowel.” The luxuriously elaborate details of his “artistic hedonism,” are too suggestive of South Kensington Museum and aesthetic Encyclopaedias. A truer art would have avoided both the glittering conceits, which bedeck the body of the story, and the unsavoury suggestiveness which lurks in its spirit. Poisonous! Yes. But the loathly “leprous distilment” taints and spoils, without in any way subserving “perfection,” artistic or otherwise. If Mrs. Grundy doesn’t read it, the younger Grundies do; that is, the Grundies who belong to Clubs, and who care to shine in certain sets wherein this story will be much discussed. “I have read it, and, except for the ingenious idea, I wish to forget it,” says the Baron.

*Eastern Daily Press. 22 July 1890. P5. “Our London Letter.”*

“It may be poisonous; but it is perfect,” says Oscar Wilde modestly of his story in Lippincott’s Magazine. I have read “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*” with a good deal of interest. Pleasure there is none. The subject is revolting, and the people in the story are offensive. But there is some power in the writing, overloaded as it is with verbal frippery and sham paradox. The main idea, whether original or not, is impressively treated. Mr. Oscar Wilde is not a Robert Louis Stevenson nor an Edgar Allan Poe. But he has studied the methods of both to some purpose, and especially “*Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.” *Dorian Gray* remains the Jekyll and his picture becomes the Hyde.

*Glasgow Evening Post. 5 August 1890. P1. “The Lorgnette.”*

In the first venture in fiction made by Oscar Wilde are many curious aphorisms that strike the reader as remarkable precepts. The characteristics of “*Dorian Gray*,” the hero of the

story, are also in keeping with the traits expected to be portrayed by such a prominent personality and artistic influence as the author undoubtedly is. Dorian Gray is an exquisite dandy of marvellous beauty, living amidst “the rich odour of roses, the heavy scent of lilac, the delicate perfume of the pink, and the honey-coloured blossoms of the laburnum,” courted by fashion’s highest circles, and sought after by poet, artist, and scholar; and yet he is a vile creature, callously indulging in all the worst sins of the world, regardless of the shame, disgrace, and ruin he brings on others. Vice, murders, and suicides are not pretty reading. Here are some of the curious phrases in the novel: [Lord Henry Quotes.]

*Truth. 21 August 1890. P370-71 in Truth vol. 28*

Mr. Oscar Wilde thinks “it is a pity that Goethe never had an opportunity of reading ‘Dorian Gray’”—the story which he (Mr. W.) recently wrote in an American magazine—and he goes on to “hope that some ghostly publisher is even now distributing shadowy copies”—of his novelette—“in the Elysian fields.” But a moment’s reflection ought to be sufficient to crush Mr. O Wilde’s characteristic aspiration; for it is surely contrary to precedent that those who dwell in Elysium should have inflicted upon them what might appropriately form one of the punishments of Tartarus!

*Canterbury Journal and Farmers’ Gazette. 13 September 1890. P5.*

... Since then, however, one has come to hand, and we have waded through “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” In many respects it is a remarkable story, but wholly impossible and by no means enjoyable, except indeed to those who have a taste for the highly sensational and the Rider Haggard style of romance. As a literary work it is, no doubt, meritorious—there is descriptive power and clever writing; the characters are well drawn and the incidents skillfully narrated. It is a novel that will create a sensation—has, in fact, done so, and will be long talked about. But the utter impossibility of the story destroys, to our thinking, any appreciation one may have of its literary merit. Those who have not yet perused it will find in the September number of Lippincott’s two short essays dealing with it, one being by Julian Hawthorne, and we would commend these to anyone who,

having heard of “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” has had his interest excited and feels a desire to make acquaintance with the novel.

*Pall Mall Gazette. 23 September 1890. P2. “Occasional Notes.”*

Mr. Oscar Wilde writes to us about “the Genesis of Dorian Gray”:—“Allow me to clear up the mystery. The genesis of ‘Dorian Gray’ is as follows:—In December, 1887, I gave a sitting to a Canadian artist who was staying with some friends of hers and mine in South Kensington. When the sitting was over, and I had looked at the portrait, I said in jest, ‘What a tragic thing it is. This portrait will never grow older and I shall. If only it was the other way!’ The moment I had said this it occurred to me what a capital plot the idea would make for a story. The result is ‘Dorian Gray.’ As for M. Huysmans’ study of aestheticism, it is a clever chronicle and a clever caricature, but the suggestion that I was influenced by it when I wrote the ninth chapter of my story is quite absurd. M. Huysmans was indebted to aestheticism for his subject-matter and his type, the latter being partly suggested by a brilliant fantastic young man well known in French society; but for the literary rendering of an aesthetic temperament I need hardly say I had not to go to M. Huysmans. I am afraid the critics have put the cart before the horse. They should look at the date of M. Huysmans’ book.”

*The Whirlwind. 27 September 1890. “Brouhaha.” P4 in The Whirlwind vol. 2 (Sept. 27–Dec 27 1890).*

THE NEMESIS OF EXPLANATION.—After a long lapse of silence, and much rearrangement, the unhappy author of the quite forgotten plagiarism in “Lippincott’s Magazine,” unexpectedly reappears, and takes up again his tedious and desperate parable of explanation:—

“Allow me,” he says, “to clear up the mystery, the genesis of ‘Dorian Gray’ is as follows:—In December, 1887, I gave a sitting to a Canadian artist who was staying with some friends of hers and mine in South Kensington. When the sitting was over, and I had looked at the portrait, I said in jest, ‘What a tragic thing it is. This portrait will never grow older and I shall. If only it was the other way!’ The moment I had said this it



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That is exactly what they have done, and hinc illa lachrymal. The confession of the “sitting to a Canadian artist”—even though she “stayed with friends of hers and mine in South Kensington,”—is surely an obscure family fact, fastened to a date hitherto hidden between the covers of the inevitable diary, with which no compiler ever fails to convict himself. The “tragic thing” itself resulting from that fatuous sitting, in no way accounts for Huysmans’ gems in the “ninth chapter” of the fatal adaptation, whose dulness indeed might yet have been original.

Huysmans’ Hawthorne, and for the matter of that Wordsworth too, we fancy are now invented by our old friend the Cockney Irishman. Enfin ce n’est pas une excuse—mais c’est un explication.

1890: St. James’s Gazette

*The main exchange over the novel (or “novelette,” as the St. James’s Gazette would have it) were conducted over a few days, but the newspaper continued to criticize and condemn the novel in passing long after.*

*Samuel Henry Jeyes. “A Study in Puppydom.” St. James’s Gazette. 24 June 1890. P3–4.*

Time was (it was in the ‘70’s) when we talked about Mr. Oscar Wilde; time came (it was in the ‘80’s) when he tried to write poetry and, more adventurous, we tried to read it; time is when we had forgotten him, or only remember him as the late editor of the Woman’s World—a part for which he was singularly unfitted, if we are to judge him by the work which he has been allowed to publish in Lippincott’s Magazine, and which Messrs.

Ward, Lock and Co., have not been ashamed to circulate in Great Britain. Not being curious in ordure, and not wishing to offend the nostrils of decent persons, we do not propose to analyse “The Picture of Dorian Gray”: that would be to advertise the developments of an esoteric prurience. Whether the Treasury or the Vigilance Society will think it worth while to prosecute Mr. Oscar Wilde or Messrs. Ward, Lock and Co., we do not know; but on the whole we hope they will not.

The puzzle is that a young man of decent parts, who enjoyed (when he was at Oxford), the opportunity of associating with gentlemen, should put his name (such as it is) to so stupid and vulgar a piece of work. Let nobody read it in the hope of finding witty paradox or racy wickedness. The writer airs his cheap research among the garbage of the French *Décadents* like any drivelling pedant, and he bores you unmercifully with his prosy rigmaroles about the beauty of the Body and the corruption of the Soul. The grammar is better than Ouida’s; the erudition equal: but in every other respect we prefer the talented lady who broke off with “pious aposiopesis” when she touched upon “the horrors which are described in the pages of Suetonius and Livy”—not to mention the yet worse infamies believed by many scholars to be accurately portrayed in the lost works of Plutarch, Venus, and Nicodemus, especially Nicodemus.

Let us take one peep at the young men in Mr. Oscar Wilde’s story. Puppy No. 1 is the painter of the picture of Dorian Gray; Puppy No. 2 is the critic (a courtesy lord, skilled in all the knowledge of the Egyptians and a-weary of all the sins and pleasures of London); Puppy No. 3 is the original, cultivated by Puppy No. 1 with a “romantic friendship.” The Puppies fall a-talking: Puppy No. 1 about his art, Puppy No. 2 about his sins and pleasures and the pleasures of sin, and Puppy No. 3 about himself—always about himself, and generally about his face, which is “brainless and beautiful.” The Puppies appear to fill up the intervals of talk by plucking daisies and playing with them, and sometimes by drinking “something with strawberry in it.” The youngest Puppy is told that he is charming; but he mustn’t sit in the sun for fear of spoiling his complexion. When he is rebuked for being a naughty, wilful boy, he makes a pretty moue—this man of twenty! This is how he is addressed by the Blasé Puppy at their first meeting:

“Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away.... When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you.... Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly.”

Why, bless our souls! haven't we read something of this kind somewhere in the classics? Yes, of course we have! But in what recondite author? Ah—yes—no—yes, it was in Horace! What an advantage it is to have received a classical education! And how it will astonish the Yankees! But we must not forget our Puppies, who have probably occupied their time in lapping “something with strawberry in it.” Puppy No. 1 (the Art Puppy) has been telling Puppy No. 3 (the Doll Puppy) how much he admires him. What is the answer? “I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose! I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything... I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose? ... Oh, if it was only the other way! If the picture could only change, and I could be always what I am now!”

No sooner said than done! The picture does change: the original doesn't. Here's a situation for you! Théophile Gautier could have made it romantic, entrancing, beautiful. Mr. Stevenson could have made it convincing, humorous, pathetic. Mr. Anstey could have made it screamingly funny. It has been reserved for Mr. Oscar Wilde to make it dull and nasty. The promising youth plunges into every kind of mean depravity, and ends in being “cut” by fast women and vicious men. He finishes with murder: the New Voluptuousness always leads up to blood-shedding—that is part of the cant. The gore and gashes wherein Mr. Rider Haggard takes a chaste delight are the natural diet for a cultivated palate which is tired of mere licentiousness. And every wickedness of filthiness committed by Dorian Gray is faithfully registered upon his face in the picture; but his living features are undisturbed and unmarred by his inward vileness. This is the story which Mr. Oscar Wilde has tried to tell; a very lame story it is, and very lamely it is told.

Why has he told it? There are two explanations; and, so far as we can see, not more than two. Not to give pleasure to his readers: the thing is too clumsy, too tedious, and—alas! that we should say it—too stupid. Perhaps it was to shock his readers, in order that they might cry Fie! upon him and talk about him, much as Mr. Grant Allen recently tried in the *Universal Review* to arouse, by a licentious theory of the sexual relations, an attention which is refused to his popular chatter about other men's science. Are we then to suppose that Mr. Oscar Wilde has yielded to the craving for a notoriety which he once earned by talking fiddle faddle about other men's art, and sees his only chance of recalling it by making himself obvious at the cost of being obnoxious, and by attracting the notice which the olfactory sense cannot refuse to the presence of certain self-asserting organisms. That is an uncharitable hypothesis, and we would gladly abandon it. It may be suggested (but is it more charitable?) that he derives pleasure from treating a subject merely because it is disgusting. The phenomenon is not unknown in recent literature; and it takes two forms, in appearance widely separate—in fact, two branches from the same root, a root which draws its life from malodorous putrefaction. One development is found in the Puritan prurience which produced Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata" and Mr. Stead's famous outbursts. That is odious enough and mischievous enough, and it is rightly execrated, because it is tainted with an hypocrisy not the less culpable because charitable persons may believe it to be unconscious. But is it more odious or more mischievous than the "frank Paganism" (that is the word, is it not?) which delights in dirtiness and confesses its delight? Still they are both chips from the same block—"The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" and "The Picture of Dorian Gray"—and both of them ought to be chucked into the fire. Not so much because they are dangerous and corrupt (they are corrupt but not dangerous) as because they are incurably silly, written by simple poseurs (whether they call themselves Puritan or Pagan) who know nothing about the life which they affect to have explored, and because they are mere catch penny revelations of the non-existent, which, if they reveal anything at all, are revelations only of the singularly unpleasant minds from which they emerge.

*Oscar Wilde. St. James's Gazette. 26 June 1890. P4. "Mr. Oscar Wilde's 'Bad Case.'"*

To the Editor of the St James's Gazette.

Sir,—I have read your criticism of my story, “The Picture of Dorian Gray;” and I need hardly say that I do not propose to discuss its merits and demerits, its personalities or its lack of personality. England is a free country, and ordinary English criticism is perfectly free and easy. Besides, I must admit that, either from temperament or taste, or from both, I am quite incapable of understanding how any work of art can be criticised from a moral standpoint. The sphere of art and the sphere of ethics are absolutely distinct and separate; and it is to the confusion between the two that we owe the appearance of Mrs. Grundy, that amusing old lady who represents the only original form of humour that the middle classes of this country have been able to produce. What I do object to most strongly is that you should have placarded the town with posters on which was printed in large letters:— MR. OSCAR WILDE’S LATEST ADVERTISEMENT: A BAD CASE.

Whether the expression “A Bad Case” refers to my book or to the present position of the Government, I cannot tell. What was silly and unnecessary was the use of the term “advertisement.”

I think I may say without vanity—though I do not wish to appear to run vanity down—that of all men in England I am the one who requires least advertisement. I am tired to death of being advertised. I feel no thrill when I see my name in a paper. The chronicler does not interest me any more. I wrote this book entirely for my own pleasure, and it gave me very great pleasure to write it. Whether it becomes popular or not is a matter of absolute indifference to me. I am afraid, Sir, that the real advertisement is your cleverly written article. The English public, as a mass, takes no interest in a work of art until it is told that the work in question is immoral, and your réclame will, I have no doubt, largely increase the sale of the magazine; in which sale, I may mention, with some regret, I have no pecuniary interest.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, Oscar Wilde.

16, Tite Street, Chelsea, June 25th.

*Samuel Henry Jeyes. St. James’s Gazette. 26 June 1890. P4. “Notes.”*

In the preceding column will be found the best reply which Mr. Oscar Wilde can make to our recent criticism of his mawkish and nauseous story, “The Picture of Dorian Gray.”

Mr. Wilde tells us that he is constitutionally unable to understand how any work of art can be criticised from a moral standpoint. We were quite aware that ethics and aesthetics are different matters, and that is why the greater part of our criticism was devoted not so much to the nastiness of "The Picture of Dorian Gray," but to its dulness and stupidity. Mr. Wilde pretends that we have advertised it. So we have, if any readers are attracted to a book which, we have warned them, will bore them insufferably. That the story is corrupt cannot be denied; but we added, and assuredly believe, that it is not dangerous, because, as we said, it is tedious and stupid. Mr. Wilde tells us that he wrote the story for his own pleasure, and found great pleasure in writing it. We congratulate him. There is no triumph more precious to your aesthete than the discovery of a delight which outsiders cannot share or even understand. The author of "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is the only person likely to find pleasure in it.

*Samuel Henry Jeyes. St. James's Gazette. 27 June 1890. P4. "Notes."*

Mr. Oscar Wilde may perhaps be excused for being angry at the remarks which we allowed ourselves to make concerning the "moral tale" of the Three Puppies and the Magic Picture; but he should not misrepresent us. He says we suggested that his novel was a "wicked book which should be coerced and suppressed by a Tory Government." We did nothing of the kind. The authors of books of much less questionable character have been proceeded against by the Treasury or the Vigilance Society; but we expressly said that we hoped Mr. Wilde's masterpiece would be left alone. Then, Mr. Wilde (like any young lady who has published her first novel "at the request of numerous friends") falls back on the theory of the critic's "personal malice." This is unworthy of so experienced a literary gentleman. We can assure Mr. Wilde that the writer of that article had, and has, no "personal malice" or personal feeling towards him. We can surely censure a work which we believe to be silly, and know to be offensive, without the imputation of malice—especially when that book is written by one who is so clearly capable of better things.

As for the critical question, Mr. Wilde is beating the air when he defends idealism and "romantic art" in literature. In the words of Mrs. Harris to Mrs. Gamp, "Who's a-

deniging of it?" Heaven forbid that we should refuse to an author "the supreme pleasure of realising the non-existent"; or that we should judge the "aesthetic" from the purely "ethical" standpoint. No; our criticism starts from lower ground. Mr. Wilde says that his story is a moral tale, because the wicked persons in it come to a bad end. We will not be so rude as to quote a certain remark about morality which one Mr. Charles Surface made to Mr. Joseph Surface. We simply say that every critic has the right to point out that a work of art or literature is dull and incompetent in its treatment—as "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is; and that its dulness and incompetence are not redeemed because it constantly hints, not obscurely, at disgusting sins and abominable crimes—as "The Picture of Dorian Gray" does.

*Oscar Wilde. St. James's Gazette. 27 June 1890. P5. "Mr. Oscar Wilde Again."*

Mr. Oscar Wilde continues to carry on the defence of his novelette, "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Writing to us under yesterday's date, he says:—

In your issue of to-day you state that my brief letter published in your columns is the "best reply" I can make to your article upon "Dorian Gray." This is not so. I do not propose to discuss fully the matter here, but I feel bound to say that your article contains the most unjustifiable attack that has been made upon any man of letters for many years. The writer of it, who is quite incapable of concealing his personal malice, and so in some measure destroys the effect he wishes to produce, seems not to have the slightest idea of the temper in which a work of art should be approached. To say that such a book as mine should be "chucked into the fire" is silly. That is what one does with newspapers.

Of the value of pseudo ethical criticism in dealing with artistic work I have spoken already. But as your writer has ventured into the perilous grounds of literary criticism, I ask you to allow me, in fairness not merely to myself, but to all men to whom literature is a fine art, to say a few words about his critical method.

He begins by assailing me with much ridiculous virulence because the chief personages in my story are "puppies." They are puppies. Does he think that literature went to the dogs when Thackeray wrote about puppydom? I think that puppies are extremely

interesting from an artistic as well as from a psychological point of view. They seem to me to be certainly far more interesting than prigs; and I am of opinion that Lord Henry Wotton is an excellent corrective of the tedious ideal shadowed forth in the semi theological novels of our age.

He then makes vague and fearful insinuations about my grammar and my erudition. Now, as regards grammar, I hold that, in prose at any rate, correctness should always be subordinate to artistic effect and musical cadence; and any peculiarities of syntax that may occur in "Dorian Gray" are deliberately intended, and are introduced to show the value of the artistic theory in question. Your writer gives no instance of any such peculiarity. This I regret, because I do not think that any such instances occur.

As regards erudition, it is always difficult, even for the most modest of us, to remember that other people do not know quite as much as one does oneself. I myself frankly admit I cannot imagine how a casual reference to Suetonius and Petronius Arbiter can be construed into evidence of a desire to impress an unoffending and ill-educated public by an assumption of superior knowledge. I should fancy that the most ordinary of scholars is perfectly well acquainted with the "Lives of the Caesars" and with the "Satyricon." "The Lives of the Caesars," at any rate, forms part of the ordinary curriculum at Oxford for those who take the Honour School of "Literae Humaniores"; and as for the "Satyricon," it is popular even among passmen, though I suppose they are obliged to read it in translations.

The writer of the article then suggests that I, in common with that great and noble artist Count Tolstoi, take pleasure in a subject because it is dangerous. About such a suggestion there is this to be said. Romantic art deals with the exception and with the individual. Good people, belonging as they do to the normal, and so commonplace, type, are artistically uninteresting. Bad people are, from the point of view of art, fascinating studies. They represent colour, variety, and strangeness. Good people exasperate one's reason; bad people stir one's imagination. Your critic, if I must give him so honourable a title, states that the people in any story have no counterpart in life; that they are, to use his vigorous if somewhat vulgar phrase, "mere catchpenny revelations of the non-existent."



Quite so. If they existed they would not be worth writing about. The function of the artist is to invent, not to chronicle. There are no such people. If there were, I would not write about them. Life by its realism is always spoiling the subject-matter of art. The superior pleasure in literature is to realise the non-existent.

And, finally, let me say this. You have reproduced, in a journalistic form, the comedy of “Much Ado about Nothing” and have, of course, spoilt it in your reproduction. The poor public, hearing from an authority so high as your own, that this is a wicked book that should be coerced and suppressed by a Tory Government, will, no doubt, rush to it and read it. But, alas, they will find that it is a story with a moral. And the moral is this: All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment. The painter, Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much, as most painters do, dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. “Dorian Gray,” having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it. Yes; there is a terrible moral in “Dorian Gray”—a moral which the prurient will not be able to find in it, but it will be revealed to all whose minds are healthy. Is this an artistic error? I fear it is. It is the only error in the book.

*Samuel Henry Jeyes. St. James's Gazette. 28 June 1890. P4. "Notes."*

Mr. Oscar Wilde makes his third and, we presume, his final reply to the criticism which we published on “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” Somewhat grudgingly, but in sufficiently explicit terms, he withdraws the charge of “personal malice” which he brought against the critic, and which, we may again assure him, is absolutely unfounded. But he adheres to the other charge of critical incapacity. Mr. Wilde assures us that his book, so far from being dull and tedious, is full of interest; an opinion which is shared (see the letter we print on page 5 to-day) by his publishers’ advertising agent-in-advance. Well, we can only repeat that we disagree with Mr. Wilde and his publishers’ paragraphist. Quite apart from “ethical” considerations the book seems to us a feeble and ineffective attempt at a

kind of allegory which, in the hands of abler writers (writers like Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Anstey, for instance) can be made striking or amusing.

Mr. Wilde also says that we suggested that the author and publishers of "The Picture of Dorian Gray" ought to be prosecuted by the "Tory Government," by which we presume he means the Treasury. No; we consider that such prosecutions are ill-advised, and expressly suggested that such action ought not to be taken against a book which we believed to be rendered innocuous by the tedious and stupid qualities which the critic discovered and explained. Secondly, Mr. Wilde hints that the "rights of literature" include a right to say what it pleases, how it pleases, and where it pleases. That is a right not only not recognized by the law of the land, but expressly denied by penalties which have been repeatedly enforced. Then what does Mr. Oscar Wilde mean by talking about the "rights of literature"? We will not insult an artist, who is by his own account un-moral or supra-moral by suggesting that he means "moral rights." But he tells us that limitations may be set on action but ought not to be set on art. Quite so. But art becomes action when the work of art is published. It is offensive publications that we object to, not the offensive imaginings of such minds as find their pleasure therein.

*Oscar Wilde. St. James's Gazette. 28 June 1890. P5. "Mr. Oscar Wilde's Defence."*

To the Editor of the St. James's Gazette.

Sir,—As you still keep up, though in a somewhat milder form than before, your attacks on me and my book, you not only confer upon me the right, but you impose on me the duty, of reply.

You state, in your issue of to-day, that I misrepresented you when I said that you suggested that a book so wicked as mine should be "suppressed and coerced by a Tory Government." Now you did not propose this, but you did suggest it. When you declare that you do not know whether or not the Government will take action about my book, and remark that the authors of books much less wicked have been proceeded against in law, the suggestion is quite obvious. In your complaint of misrepresentation you seem to me, Sir, to have been not quite candid. However, as far as I am concerned, this suggestion is

of no importance. What is of importance is that the editor of a paper like yours should appear to countenance the monstrous theory that the Government of a country should exercise a censorship over imaginative literature. This is a theory against which I, and all men of letters of my acquaintance, protest most strongly; and any critic who admits the reasonableness of such a theory shows at once that he is quite incapable of understanding what literature is, and what are the rights that literature possesses. A Government might just as well try to teach painters how to paint, or sculptors how to model, as attempt to interfere with the style, treatment, and subject-matter of the literary artist; and no writer, however eminent or obscure, should ever give his sanction to a theory that would degrade literature far more than any didactic or so-called immoral book could possibly do.

You then express your surprise that “so experienced a literary gentleman” as myself should imagine that your critic was animated by any feeling of personal malice towards him. The phrase “literary gentleman” is a vile phrase; but let that pass. I accept quite readily your assurance that your critic was simply criticising a work of art in the best way that he could; but I feel that I was fully justified in forming the opinion of him that I did. He opened his article by a gross personal attack on myself. This, I need hardly say, was an absolutely unpardonable error of critical taste. There is no excuse for it, except personal malice; and you, Sir, should not have sanctioned it. A critic should be taught to criticise a work of art without making any reference to the personality of the author. This, in fact, is the beginning of criticism. However, it was not merely his personal attack on me that made me imagine that he was actuated by malice. What really confirmed me in my first impression was his reiterated assertion that my book was tedious and dull. Now, if I were criticising my book, which I have some thoughts of doing, I think I would consider it my duty to point out that it is far too crowded with sensational incident, and far too paradoxical in style, as far, at any rate, as the dialogue goes. I feel that from a standpoint of art there are true defects in the book. But tedious and dull the book is not. Your critic has cleared himself of the charge of personal malice, his denial and yours being quite sufficient in the matter; but he has done so only by a tacit admission that he has really no critical instinct about literature and literary work, which, in one who writes about literature is, I need hardly say, a much graver fault than malice of any kind.

Finally, Sir, allow me to say this. Such an article as you have published really makes me despair of the possibility of any general culture in England. Were I a French author, and my book brought out in Paris, there is not a single literary critic in France, on any paper of high standing, who would think for a moment of criticising it from an ethical standpoint. If he did so he would stultify himself, not merely in the eyes of all men of letters, but in the eyes of the majority of the public. You have yourself often spoken against Puritanism. Believe me, Sir, Puritanism is never so offensive and destructive as when it deals with art matters. It is there that its influence is radically wrong. It is this Puritanism, to which your critic has given expression, that is always marring the artistic instinct of the English. So far from encouraging it, you should set yourself against it, and should try to teach your critics to recognise the essential difference between art and life. The gentleman who criticised my book is in a perfectly hopeless confusion about it, and your attempt to help him out by proposing that the subject-matter of art should be limited does not mend matters. It is proper that limitation should be placed on action. It is not proper that limitation should be placed on art. To art belong all things that are and all things that are not, and even the editor of a London paper has no right to restrain the freedom of art in the selection of subject-matter.

I now trust, Sir, that these attacks on me and my book will cease. There are forms of advertisement that are unwarranted and unwarrantable.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oscar Wilde.

16, Tite Street, S.W., June 27th.

*“A London Editor.” St. James’s Gazette. 28 June 1890. P5.*

To the Editor of the St. James’s Gazette.

Sir,—If Mr. Oscar Wilde is the last man in England (according to his own account) who requires advertisement, his friends and publishers do not seem to be of the same opinion. Otherwise it is difficult to account for the following audacious puff-positive which has been sent through the halfpenny post to newspaper editors and others:—

Mr. Oscar Wilde will contribute to the July number of Lippincott's Magazine a complete novel, entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which, as the first venture in fiction of one of the most prominent personalities and artistic influences of the day, will be everywhere read with wide interest and curiosity. But the story is in itself so strong and strange, and so picturesque and powerful in style, that it must inevitably have created a sensation in the literary world, even if published without Mr. Wilde's name on the title page. Viewed merely as a romance, it is—from the opening paragraph down to the tragic and ghastly climax—full of strong and sustained interest; as a study in psychology it is phenomenal; judged even purely as a piece of literary workmanship it is one of the most brilliant and remarkable productions of the year.

Such, Sir, is the estimate of Mr. Wilde's publishers or paragraph-writer. Note the adjectival exuberance of the puffer—complete, strong, strange, picturesque, powerful, tragic, ghastly, sustained, phenomenal, brilliant, and remarkable! For a man who does not want advertisement this is not bad.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A London Editor

June 27th.

*St. James's Gazette. 30 June 1890. P4. "Notes."*

We should be sorry to deny the ex-editor of the Woman's World the feminine privilege of "the last word" for which he pleads to-day. At the same time we cannot admit that we force upon Mr. Oscar Wilde the burden of a newspaper controversy by "daily attacks." Mr. Wilde published a book, and (presumably) submitted it to criticism; we exercised our rights as critics of contemporary literature by pointing out that we thought the book feeble and offensive. Mr. Wilde replies, defending his book against our unfavourable criticism; and we have again the right to point out that we do not consider that he has satisfactorily met our arguments and our objections. For the rest, we are quite willing to leave "The Picture of Dorian Gray" to the "immortality it deserves." We must add one word. We congratulate Mr. Wilde on his emphatic disavowal of the ridiculous puff preliminary which his publishers had chosen to circulate.

*Oscar Wilde. St. James's Gazette. 30 June 1890. P5. "Mr. Oscar Wilde's Defence."*

To the Editor of the St. James's Gazette.

Sir,—In your issue of this evening you publish a letter from "A London Editor" which clearly insinuates in the last paragraph that I have in some way sanctioned the circulation of an expression of opinion, on the part of the proprietors of Lippincott's Magazine, of the literary and artistic value of my story of the "Picture of Dorian Gray."

Allow me, Sir, to state that there are no grounds for this insinuation. I was not aware that any such document was being circulated; and I have written to the agents, Messrs. Ward and Lock—who cannot, I feel sure, be primarily responsible for its appearance—to ask them to withdraw it at once. No publisher should ever express an opinion of the value of what he publishes. That is a matter entirely for the literary critic to decide. I must admit, as one to whom contemporary literature is constantly submitted for criticism, that the only thing that ever prejudices me against a book is the lack of literary style; but I can quite understand how any ordinary critic would be strongly prejudiced against a work that was accompanied by a premature and unnecessary panegyric from the publisher. A publisher is simply a useful middle-man. It is not for him to anticipate the verdict of criticism.

I may, however, while expressing my thanks to the "London Editor" for drawing my attention to this, I trust, purely American method of procedure, venture to differ from him in one of his criticisms. He states that he regards the expression "complete" as applied to a story, as a specimen of the "adjectival exuberance of the puffer." Here, it seems to me, he sadly exaggerates. What my story is, is an interesting problem. What my story is not is a "novelette"—a term which you have more than once applied to it. There is no such word in the English language as novelette. It should not be used. It is merely part of the slang of Fleet Street.

In another part of your paper, Sir, you state that I received your assurance of the lack of malice in your critic "somewhat grudgingly." This is not so. I frankly said that I accepted that assurance "quite readily," and that your own denial and that of your critic were

“sufficient.” Nothing more generous could have been said. What I did feel was that you saved your critic from the charge of malice by convicting him of the unpardonable crime of lack of literary instinct. I still feel that. To call my book an ineffective attempt at allegory that, in the hands of Mr. Anstey, might have been made striking, is absurd. Mr. Anstey’s sphere in literature and my sphere are different—very widely different.

You then gravely ask me what rights I imagine literature possesses. That is really an extraordinary question for the editor of a newspaper such as yours to ask. The rights of literature, Sir, are the rights of intellect.

I remember once hearing M. Renan say that he would sooner live under a military despotism than under the despotism of the Church, because the former merely limited the freedom of action, while the latter limited the freedom of mind. You say that a work of art is a form of action: It is not. It is the highest mode of thought.

In conclusion, Sir, let me ask you not to force on me this continued correspondence by daily attacks. It is a trouble and a nuisance. As you assailed me first, I have a right to the last word. Let that last word be the present letter, and leave my book, I beg you, to the immortality that it deserves.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant, Oscar Wilde.

16, Tite Street, S.W., June 28th.

*St. James’s Gazette. 6 September 1890. P9. “Not Even Original.”*

The Annexation of “Dorian Gray.”

A correspondent of the Scots Observer, signing himself “G,” points out that in writing “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” Mr. Oscar Wilde has, like his own hero, been unable to free himself from the memory of certain books. He goes on to say— The resemblances between The Picture of Dorian Gray and J.K. Huysmans’ *A Rebours* are so many and so striking, that it is impossible to entertain the theory of accidental coincidence. Floressas de Esseintes and Dorian Gray indulge in the same vices and cultivate the same tastes. The object of the one, as of the other, is to create around him an unreal world and to live in an

atmosphere of strange and ever-shifting sensation. Not only is their object the same, but they employ similar methods to attain it.

[What follows is a reprinting of most of the 6 September 1980 Scots Observer article.]

*St. James's Gazette. 24 September 1890. P4. "Notes."*

Mr. Oscar Wilde has explained. We know now how "Dorian Gray" came to be written. In 1887, about the genial season of Christmas, a Canadian lady artist yearned to transfer to the glowing canvas the classic features of Mr. Oscar Wilde. Mr. Wilde gave her a sitting. When the sitting was over and Mr. Wilde had looked at the portrait, it occurred to him that a thing of beauty, when it takes the form of a middle-aged gentleman, is unhappily not a joy forever. "What a tragic thing it is," he exclaimed. "This portrait will never grow older, and I shall. If," he added, "if it was only the other way." Then the passion of his soul sought refuge in prose composition, and the result was "Dorian Gray." [sic] No wonder Mr. Wilde didn't like it when we hinted that this great work was a study of puppydom, and its hero himself a puppy of an unpleasant kind.

#### 1890: The Daily Chronicle

*I was not able to access the Daily Chronicle directly or in volume form. This is therefore the exchange recorded in Stuart Mason's Art and Morality.*

*The Daily Chronicle. 30 June 1890. Quoted in Stuart Mason, Art and Morality, as "The Daily Chronicle"\* on 'Dorian Gray.'" P55–57.*

Dulness and dirt are the chief features of Lippincott's this month. The element in it that is unclean, though undeniably amusing, is furnished by Mr. Oscar Wilde's story of "The Picture of Dorian Gray." It is a tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French Décadents—a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction—a gloating study of the mental and physical corruption of a fresh, fair and golden youth, which might be horrible and fascinating but for its effeminate frivolity, its studied insincerity, its theatrical cynicism, its tawdry mysticism, its flippant philosophisings and the contaminating trail of garish vulgarity



which is over all Mr. Wilde's elaborate Wardour-street aestheticism and obtrusively cheap scholarship.

Mr. Wilde says his book has "a moral." The "moral," so far as we can collect it, is that man's chief end is to develop his nature to the fullest by "always searching for new sensations," that when the soul gets sick the way to cure it is to deny the senses nothing, for "nothing," says one of Mr. Wilde's characters, Lord Henry Wotton, "can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul." Man is half angel and half ape, and Mr. Wilde's book has no real use if it be not to inculcate the "moral" that when you feel yourself becoming too angelic you cannot do better than rush out and make a beast of yourself. There is not a single good and holy impulse of human nature, scarcely a fine feeling or instinct that civilization, art and religion have developed throughout the ages as part of the barriers between Humanity and Animalism that is not held up to ridicule and contempt in "Dorian Gray," if, indeed, such strong words can be fitly applied to the actual effect of Mr. Wilde's airy levity and fluent impudence. His desperate effort to vamp up a "moral" for the book at the end is, artistically speaking, coarse and crude, because the whole incident of Dorian Gray's death is, as they say on the stage, "out of the picture." Dorian's only regret is that unbridled indulgence in every form of secret and unspeakable vice, every resource of luxury and art, and sometimes still more piquant to the jaded young man of fashion, whose lives "Dorian Gray" pretends to sketch, by every abomination of vulgarity and squalor is—what? Why, that it will leave traces of premature age and loathsomeness on his pretty face, rosy with the loveliness that endeared youth of his odious type to the paralytic patricians of the Lower Empire.

Dorian Gray prays that a portrait of himself which an artist (who raves about him as young men do about the women they love not wisely but too well) has painted may grow old instead of the original. This is what happens by some supernatural agency, the introduction of which seems purely farcical, so that Dorian goes on enjoying unfading youth year after year, and might go on for ever using his senses with impunity "to cure his soul," defiling English society with the moral pestilence which is incarnate in him, but for one thing. That is his sudden impulse not merely to murder the painter—which might be artistically defended on the plea that it is only a fresh development of his scheme for

realizing every phase of life-experience—but to rip up the canvas in a rage, merely because, though he had permitted himself to do one good action, it had not made his portrait less hideous. But all this is inconsistent with Dorian Gray’s cool, calculating, conscienceless character, evolved logically enough by Mr Wilde’s “New Hedonism.”

Then Mr. Wilde finishes his story by saying that on hearing a heavy fall Dorian Gray’s servants rushed in, found the portrait on the wall as youthful looking as ever, its senile ugliness being transferred to the foul profligate himself, who is lying on the floor stabbed to the heart. This is a sham moral, as indeed everything in the book is a sham, except the one element in the book which will taint every young mind that comes in contact with it. That element is shockingly real, and it is the plausibly insinuated defence of the creed that appeals to the senses “to cure the soul” whenever the spiritual nature of man suffers from too much purity and self-denial.

The rest of this number of Lippincott consists of articles of harmless padding.

*Oscar Wilde. The Daily Chronicle. 2 July 1890. Quoted in Stuart Mason, Art and Morality, as “Oscar Wilde’s Reply. ‘Dorian Gray.’” P59–61.*

To the Editor of the Daily Chronicle.

Sir,—Will you allow me to correct some errors into which your critic has fallen in his review of my story, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” published in to-day’s issue of your paper?

Your critic states, to begin with, that I make desperate attempts to “vamp up” a moral in my story. Now I must candidly confess that I do not know what “vamping” is. I see, from time to time, mysterious advertisements in the newspapers about “How to Vamp,” but what vamping really means remains a mystery to me—a mystery that, like all other mysteries, I hope some day to explore.

However, I do not propose to discuss the absurd terms used by modern journalism. What I want to say is that, so far from wishing to emphasise any moral in my story, the real

trouble I experienced in writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect.

When I first conceived the idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth—an idea that is old in the history of literature, but to which I have given new form—I felt that, from an aesthetic point of view, it would be difficult to keep the moral in its proper secondary place; and even now I do not feel quite sure that I have been able to do so. I think the moral too apparent. When the book is published in a volume I hope to correct this defect.

As for what the moral is, your critic states that it is this—that when a man feels himself becoming “too angelic” he should rush out and make a “beast of himself.” I cannot say that I consider this a moral. The real moral of the story is that all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its punishment, and this moral is so far artistically and deliberately suppressed that it does not enunciate its law as a general principle, but realises itself purely in the lives of individuals, and so becomes simply a dramatic element in a work of art, and not the object of the work of art itself.

Your critic also falls into error when he says that Dorian Gray, having a “cool, calculating, conscienceless character,” was inconsistent when he destroyed the picture of his own soul, on the ground that the picture did not become less hideous after he had done what, in his vanity, he had considered his first good action. Dorian Gray has not got a cool, calculating, conscienceless character at all. On the contrary, he is extremely impulsive, absurdly romantic, and is haunted all through his life by an exaggerated sense of conscience which mars his pleasures for him and warns him that youth and enjoyment are not everything in the world. It is finally to get rid of the conscience that had dogged his steps from year to year that he destroys the picture; and thus in his attempt to kill conscience Dorian Gray kills himself.

Your critic then talks about “obtrusively cheap scholarship.” Now, whatever a scholar writes is sure to display scholarship in the distinction of style and the fine use of language; but my story contains no learned or pseudo-learned discussions, and the only literary books that it alludes to are books that any fairly educated reader may be supposed

to be acquainted with, such as the “Satyricon” of Petronius Arbiter, or Gautier’s “Emaux et Camées.” Such books as Le Conso’s “Clericalis Disciplina” belong not to culture, but to curiosity. Anybody may be excused for not knowing them.

Finally, let me say this—the aesthetic movement produced certain curious colours, subtle in their loveliness and fascinating in their almost mystical tone. They were, and are, our reaction against the crude primaries of a doubtless more respectable but certainly less cultivated age. My story is an essay on decorative art. It re-acts against the crude brutality of plain realism. It is poisonous, if you like, but you cannot deny that it is also perfect, and perfection is what we artists aim at.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oscar Wilde.

16, Tite Street, June 30th.

1890: The Scots Observer

*While there was an initial comment and response, the longer debate in The Scots Observer was part of a larger discussion that, while it discussed Wilde, was not entirely focused on him. Those most relevant to Wilde and Dorian were included here (or, if only part of it seemed relevant, were excerpted).*

*The Scots Observer. 5 July 1890. “Reviews and Magazines.” P181 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Why go grubbing in muck-heaps? The world is fair, and the proportion of healthy-minded men and honest women to those that are foul, fallen, or unnatural is great. Mr. Oscar Wilde has again been writing stuff that were better unwritten; and while The Picture of Dorian Gray, which he contributes to Lippincott, is ingenious, interesting, full of cleverness, and plainly the work of a man of letters, it is false art—for its interest is medico-legal; it is false to human nature—for its hero is a devil; it is false to morality—for it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity. The story—which deals with matters

only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a hearing in camera—is discreditable alike to author and editor. Mr. Wilde has brains, and art, and style; but if he can write for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph-boys, the sooner he takes to tailoring (or some other decent trade) the better for his own reputation and the public morals.

*Oscar Wilde. The Scots Observer. 12 July 1890. "Mr. Wilde's Rejoinder." P201 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

[To the Editor of The Scots Observer.]

16 Tite Street, Chelsea, London, 9th July, 1890.

Sir,—You have published a review of my story, "The Picture of Dorian Gray." As this review is grossly unjust to me as an artist, I ask you to allow me to exercise in your columns my right of reply.

Your reviewer, Sir, while admitting that the story in question is 'plainly the work of a man of letters,' the work of one who has 'brains, and art, and style,' yet suggests, and apparently in all seriousness, that I have written it in order that it should be read by the most depraved members of the criminal and illiterate classes. Now, sir, I do not suppose that the criminal and illiterate classes ever read anything except newspapers. They are certainly not likely to be able to understand anything of mine. So let them pass, and on the broad question of why a man of letters writes at all let me say this. The pleasure that one has in creating a work of art is a purely personal pleasure, and it is for the sake of this pleasure that one creates. The artist works with his eye on the object. Nothing else interests him. What people are likely to say does not even occur to him. He is fascinated by what he has in hand. He is indifferent to others. I write because it gives me the greatest possible artistic pleasure to write. If my work pleases the few, I am gratified. If it does not, it causes me no pain. As for the mob, I have no desire to be a popular novelist. It is far too easy.

Your critic then, Sir, commits the absolutely unpardonable crime of trying to confuse the artist with his subject-matter. For this, sir, there is no excuse at all. Of one who is the

greatest figure in the world's literature since Greek days Keats remarked that he had as much pleasure in conceiving the evil as he had in conceiving the good. Let your reviewer, sir, consider the bearings of Keats' criticism, for it is under these conditions that every artist works. One stands remote from one's subject-matter. One creates it, and one contemplates it. The further away the subject-matter is, the more freely can the artist work. Your reviewer suggests that I do not make it sufficiently clear whether I prefer virtue to wickedness or wickedness to virtue. An artist, sir, has no ethical sympathies at all. Virtue and wickedness are to him simply what the colours on his palette are to the painter. They are no more, and they are no less. He sees that by their means a certain artistic effect can be produced and he produces it. Iago may be morally horrible and Imogen stainlessly pure. Shakespeare, as Keats said, had as much delight in creating the one as he had in creating the other.

It was necessary, sir, for the dramatic development of this story, to surround Dorian Gray with an atmosphere of moral corruption. Otherwise the story would have had no meaning and the plot no issue. To keep this atmosphere vague and indeterminate and wonderful was the aim of the artist who wrote the story. I claim, sir, that he has succeeded. 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.

In conclusion, sir, let me say how really deeply I regret that you should have permitted such a notice, as the one I feel constrained to write on, to have appeared in your paper. That the editor of the St. James's Gazette should have employed Caliban as his art-critic was possibly natural. The editor of The Scots Observer should not have allowed Thersites to make mows in his reviews. It is unworthy of so distinguished a man of letters.

—I am, etc., Oscar Wilde.

[Note.—It was not to be expected that Mr. Wilde would agree with his reviewer as to the artistic merits of his booklet. Let it be conceded to him that he has succeeded in surrounding his hero with such an atmosphere as he describes. That is his reward. It is none the less legitimate for a critic to hold and to express the opinion that no treatment, however skilful, can make the atmosphere tolerable to his readers. That is his

punishment. No doubt, it is the artist's privilege to be nasty; but he must exercise that privilege at his peril.]

*Charles Whibley. The Scots Observer. 19 July 1890. "Art and Morality." P227 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

[Within a larger letter on art and morality, touching on multiple works]

...Art then is un-moral. If this theory have any secure basis your criticism on Dorian Gray seems to me more than fair in its applause and less than just in its condemnation. You find in it art and no morals; I detect in its pages lots of morality and no art. From beginning to end Mr. Wilde has permitted his love of paradox to obscure his sense of proportion. If I may parody the conversational style of Sir Henry Wotton—surely one of the dullest characters in fiction—there is nothing in life so tedious as an epigram. And a novel which is made up of inverted commonplaces and idle phrases developed παρά προσδοκίαν has no more claim to be called artistic than has a picture composed entirely of dazzling spots. Does an artist break the march of his story with tedious dissertations upon jewels and wearisome catalogues of furniture? And does he not, when dealing with an avowedly delicate topic, refrain, as Marlowe refrains in *Edward II.*, from superfluous detail and exotic sentimentality? Mr. Wilde has proved that he lacks the tact and restrained to give us an artistic representation of a hero who is half Jack-the-Ripper, half Gaveston, and the reception which has been accorded his story must be peculiarly painful to him. He himself claims an artistic triumph, and he has been hailed by at least one religious print as a moral reformer. Was there ever so happy an apotheosis?—I am, etc.,

Charles Whibley.

*"Thersites." The Scots Observer. 26 July 1890. "Art and Morality." P253 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Sir,—Mr. Charles Whibley traverses my criticism of Mr. Oscar Wilde's story, and after pronouncing decree of divorce between morality and art he sums up his condemnation of *Dorian Gray* in one of these epigrams he affects to despise by saying that he finds in it 'morality and no art.' It was formerly held, and some old-fashioned persons still do hold,

that no act of man can be without moral effect and moral significance. Possibly, however, it is wiser for critics nowadays to accept the new doctrine and to believe that there is neither art nor morality in the world. There is much to be said for this thesis.—I am, etc.,  
Thersites.

*Oscar Wilde. The Scots Observer. 2 August 1890. "Art and Morality." P279 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Sir,—In a letter, dealing with the relations of art to morals, published in your columns—a letter which I may say seems to me in many respects admirable, especially in its insistence on the right of the artist to select his own subject-matter—Mr. Charles Whibley suggests that it must be peculiarly painful to me to find that the ethical import of Dorian Gray has been so strongly recognised by the foremost Christian papers of England and America that I have been greeted by more than one of them as a moral reformer.

Allow me, sir, to reassure on this point not merely Mr. Charles Whibley himself but also your no doubt anxious readers. I have no hesitation in saying that I regard such criticisms as a very gratifying tribute to my story. For if a work of art is rich, and vital, and complete, those who have artistic instincts will see its beauty, and those to whom ethics appeal more strongly than aesthetics will see its moral lesson. It will fill the cowardly with terror, and the unclean will see in it their own shame. It will be to each man what he is himself. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

And so in the case of Dorian Gray, the purely literary critic, as in *The Speaker* and elsewhere, regards it as a 'serious and fascinating work of art': the critic who deals with art in its relation to conduct, as *The Christian Leader* and *The Christian World*, regards it as an ethical parable: *Light*, which I am told is the organ of the English mystics, regards it as 'a work of high spiritual import': the *St. James's Gazette*, which is seeking apparently to be the organ of the prurient, sees or pretends to see in it all kinds of dreadful things, and hints at Treasury prosecutions; and your Mr. Charles Whibley genially says that he discovers in it 'lots of morality.' It is quite true that he goes on to say that he detects no art in it. But I do not think that it is fair to expect a critic to be able to see a work of art from every point of view. Even Gautier had his limitations just as much as Diderot had,



and in modern England Goethes are rare. I can only assure Mr. Charles Whibley that no moral apotheosis to which he has added the most modest contribution could possibly be a source of unhappiness to an artist.—I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

Oscar Wilde

*Charles Whibley. The Scots Observer. 9 August 1890. "Art and Morality." P303 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Edinburgh, 7th August 1890.

Sir,—It is little more than a month ago that Mr. Oscar Wilde informed the readers of The St. James's Gazette that 'either from temperament or taste, or from both, he was quite incapable of understanding how any work of art could be criticised from a moral standpoint.' 'The sphere of art and the sphere of ethics,' he wrote, 'are absolutely distinct and separate.' His story has now won the approval of several professionally pious journals, and he accepts the criticisms of his new allies as 'a very gratifying tribute.' If his pronouncement in The St. James's Gazette were sincere, then he should resent the judgement of 'the critic who deals with art in its relation to conduct' as a meaningless impertinence. For has he not declared that no 'work of art can be criticised from a moral standpoint'? The 'taste and temperament' of the 'artist' are notoriously wayward, but they might be expected to survive unchanged a few short weeks. The Christian World pours forth its unctuous flattery and straightway Mr. Wilde surrenders his darling principles, and confounds ethics and aesthetics with a reckless irrelevance worthy of Mrs. Grundy herself. If the end of every artist's desire is to be set upon a pedestal, side by side with the gifted author of *We Two*, for the admiration of all those who love improving literature, then has Mr. Wilde won an incontestable triumph. But the success of his performance may be questioned by those who do not believe that an obtrusive moral is indispensable to every work of art.

In order to fittingly appraise the merits of *Dorian Gray*, it seems that the 'purely literary critic' must conspire with him 'who deals with art in its relation to conduct.' Neither Gautier nor Diderot could be trusted to perform the office without the collaboration of

Light or The Christian World. And Goethe is dead and never knew Dorian Gray! I know not which deserves the greater pity, the German critic or the British moralist. But Mr. Wilde has made the best of the untoward circumstances. With no Goethe to applaud him, he has been indefatigable in the public appreciation of his own work—I am, etc.,  
Charles Whibley.

*T.E. Brown. The Scots Observer. 9 August 1890. "Art and Morality." P304 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Clifton, 5th August 1890.

Sir,—The correspondence in which Mr. Whibley and Mr. Oscar Wilde had been taking part is very interesting. May I say a word?

First, I would ask whether an artist has, like other men, a moral sense? Again, does the moral sense in him work as it does in other men, and answer the same purpose? To these questions, I suppose, the answer will be Yes. Then the artist deliberately prefers, nor can he help doing so; this is the essential act of a moral being. Now, there is an almost infinite field of selection: suppose he selects dirt—what then? There is some reason for his doing this. Either he is Rabelaisian, and has the honest, sturdy, humourous liking for nastiness; or he is a morbid person, and has a sickly affinity for nastiness; or he is Swiftian—that is, Rabelaisian with a trick of mental rottenness. Must we find a place for Mr. Wilde under one of these standards? Rabelaisian?—inconceivable! Swiftian?—two such Irishmen would be a very large order. The simply morbid—that is, indeed, nasty person?—excessively unfair to Mr. Wilde. Is there no other category open? Let us see: will the Zola category do? I rather think it will. The dirt differs, but both deliberately select dirt. Let us take the case of Zola. Zola selects dirt, why? because he likes it? Well, no: of course, what seems to fit you so well you are likely to return to and hum over, very little disturbed by the wayfarers to whom you are perhaps a nuisance on the Queen's highway. You are, in fact, a literary dung-fly. But this I take to be a mere accident of the artistic energy about which we are inquiring. Zola is more than a literary dung-fly; so is Mr. Wilde, if, indeed, he is at all stercoraceous. Cloacinal they certainly are, both of them; that is, they look after the cloaca. Do these writers, then, attain to the function of literary

night-men? Such a function involves more deliberate preference, and indeed implies a subsidiary moral purpose. The taste is astounding, but how about the purpose? What is Zola's purpose? to regale beasts with beastliness? A thousand times no. You and I would rather not be night-men, though we see the utility if not the splendour of the office. Zola rises far above that; so does Mr. Wilde. I feel it is rather hard upon Mr. Wilde to Zolaize him in this way, but I dare say he will not object; Zola is a great artist. Take the passionate element in human life: are there not two ways of treating it? the ideal, the real? Or is there a third: the monastic, the method of the confessional?

Say there are two, the ideal and the real. The Greek poets followed the former; Zola and Co. have taken to the latter. The modern treatment is perfectly legitimate. The object is the purgation of the passions. The Greek tragedy effected this by taking a man right through a course of some particular passion, not to warn him, but that he might have it out with this passion. It was done in an evening. These 'aëry burgomasters' went home from the theatre sane men, got up next morning fit as possible, sound as a bell, and ready for the practical work of life. We take the thing more sadly: we have not the light Hellenic fibre that could shiver off into space the thrill of emotion, and resume life where it had left off. We drag doggedly at our passions, we are heavily realistic, we want a strong purge. What is to be done for us? Dr. Zola appears, he is the Pasteur of this rabies, and our base mechanical age is probable incapable of any other cure. It seems going back rather; the Greek method was more civilised. But we have to deal with the sad northern temperament. I suppose it is no use reminding either M. Zola or Mr. Wilde that a mode of treatment has been propounded by the Christian religion which some of us believe to be the best of all. We must take these authors on their own ground. Zola's method is to show you what all this passion is in reality, to show its meanness, its common root of plain lust. The Greek would have had you sympathise with the emotion represented, good or evil, rung along with it and exhaust it. Not so Zola; he is a stern moralist, as stern as Hogarth. But Hogarth lived before art has conceived the affectation of moral indifference, or had claimed to be the general heel-balling of everything. Zola is a moralist, whether he will have it or not, of the Hogarthian type. For myself, I find that this morality is often very much of a bore, and I could wish it far enough. But Zola is steeped in it, saturated with it. The fault may be that, diffing down to the root, he does not look up to the transmuted

beauty of the flower. What he does is this; he destroys sentimentalism, the noxious weed of romance, he scatters very thin the rear of namby-pamby. To the snug bourgeois with his plastron and his falsetto he introduces the beast of La Terre, the naked savage of the esprit something plusquam-gaulois. How the 'loves' flutter! how the 'cherished objects' shrink and flee appalled! and Lamartine, ay and de Musset, and even poor old Béranger with his necessary Lisette, have to pack off bag and baggage! And this work of Zola's is good, sound, and sanatory. Can this be said of Mr. Wilde's?

I am sure he means well: he is quite as moral as Zola; in fact, one of your correspondents has, I think, maintained that morality is Mr. Wilde's strong point, and I unhesitatingly adhere to this judgement. Morality is his strong point: I don't think art is. Here Zola strides ahead mightily. Zola is a strong man, Mr. Wilde is not. Zola is capable of the stuff: is Mr. Wilde? Men should examine themselves, or submit to be examined, as thus. Are you Rabelaisian? Then laugh the big, broad laugh at all this, and Go b' w' you! Are you Swiftian? Can you dance that tremendous tight-rope without a bad fall now and then? Are you realistic, Zolaesque? A man of Zola's build can lie down with his peasants in the merest swill of Priapeian abomination, and rise like a giant. It does not soak into him. But weaker men, flabbier men, zoppier, soakier men—is it safe for them to attempt anything like this? Artists must take care of themselves: the artist has a moral sense, and he must cherish it, and the more daintily the better, if he is not one of the supreme few.—I am, etc.,

T.E. Brown.

*Oscar Wilde. The Scots Observer. 16 August 1890. "Art and Morality." P332-3 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Sir,—I am afraid I cannot enter into any newspaper discussion on the subject of art with Mr. Whibley, partly because the writing of letters is always a trouble to me, and partly because I regret to say that I do not know what qualifications Mr. Whibley possesses for the discussion of so important a topic. I merely noticed his letter because (I am sure without in any way intending it) he made a suggestion about myself personally that was quite inaccurate. His suggestion was that it must have been painful to me to find that a

certain section of the public, as represented by himself and the critics of some religious publications, had insisted on finding what he calls 'lots of morality' in my story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Being naturally desirous of setting your readers right on a question of such vital interest to the historian, I took the opportunity of pointing out in your columns that I regarded all such criticisms as a very gratifying tribute to the ethical beauty of the story, and I added that I was quite ready to recognise that it was not really fair to ask of any ordinary critic that he should be able to appreciate a work of art from every point of view. I still hold this opinion. If a man sees the artistic beauty of a thing he will probably care very little for its ethical import. If his temperament is more susceptible to ethical than to aesthetic influences he will be blind to questions of style, treatment, and the like. It takes a Goethe to see a work of art fully, completely, and perfectly, and I thoroughly agree with Mr. Whibley when he says that it is a pity that Goethe never had an opportunity of reading *Dorian Gray*. I feel quite certain that he would have been delighted by it, and I only hope that some ghostly publisher is even now distributing shadowy copies in the Elysian fields, and that the cover of Goethe's copy is powdered with gilt asphodels.

You may ask me, sir, why I should care to have the ethical beauty of my story recognised. I answer—simply because it exists, because the thing is there. The chief merit of *Madame Bovary* is not the moral lesson that can be found in it, any more than the chief merit of *Salammbô* is its archaeology; but Flaubert was perfectly right in exposing the ignorance of those who called the one immoral and the other inaccurate; and not merely was he right in the ordinary sense of the word, but he was artistically right, which is everything. The critic has to educate the public; the artist has to educate the critic.

Allow me to make one more correction, sir, and I will have done with Mr. Whibley. He ends his letter with the statement that I have been indefatigable in my public appreciation of my own work. I have no doubt that in saying this he means to pay me a compliment, but he really over-rates my capacity, as well as my inclination for work. I must frankly confess that, by nature and by choice, I am extremely indolent. Cultivated idleness seems to me to be the proper occupation for men. I dislike newspaper controversies of any kind,

and of the two hundred and sixteen criticisms of Dorian Gray that have passed from my library table into the waste-paper basket I have taken public notice of only three. One was that which appeared in *The Scots Observer*. I noticed it because it made a suggestion, about the intention of the author in writing the book, which needed correction. The second was an article in the *St. James's Gazette*. It was offensively and vulgarly written, and seemed to me to require immediate and caustic censure. The tone of the article was an impertinence to any man of letters. The third was a meek attack in a paper called *The Daily Chronicle*. I think my writing to *The Daily Chronicle* was an act of pure wilfulness. In fact, I feel sure it was. I quite forget what they said. I believe they said that Dorian Gray was poisonous, and I thought that, on alliterative grounds, it would be kind to remind them that, however that may be, it is at any rate perfect. That was all. Of the other two hundred and thirteen criticisms I have taken no notice. Indeed, I have not read more than half of them. It is a sad thing, but one wearies even of praise.

As regards Mr. Brown's letter, it is interesting only in so far as it exemplifies the truth of what I have said above on the question of the two obvious schools of critics. Mr. Brown says frankly that he considers morality to be the 'strong point' of my story. Mr. Brown means well, and has got hold of a half-truth, but when he proceeds to deal with the book from the artistic standpoint, he, of course, goes sadly astray. To class *Dorian Gray* with M. Zola's *La Terre* is as silly as if one were to class Masset's *Fortunio* with one of the Adelphi melodramas. Mr. Brown should be content with ethical appreciations. There he is impregnable.

Mr. Cobham opens badly by describing my letter, setting Mr. Whibley right on a matter of fact, as an 'impudent paradox.' The term 'impudent' is meaningless, and the word 'paradox' is misplaced. I am afraid that writing to newspapers has a deteriorating influence on style. People get violent and abusive and lose all sense of proportion when they enter that curious journalistic arena in which the race is always to the noisiest. 'Impudent paradox' is neither violent nor abusive, but it is not an expression that should have been used about my letter. However, Mr. Cobham makes full atonement afterwards for what was, no doubt, a mere error of manner, by adopting the impudent paradox in question as his own, and pointing out that, as I had previously said, the artist will always

look at the work of art from the standpoint of beauty of style and beauty of treatment, and that those who have not got the sense of beauty, or whose sense of beauty is dominated by ethical considerations, will always turn their attention to the subject-matter and make its moral import the test and touchstone of the poem, or novel, or picture, that is presented to them, while the newspaper critic will sometimes take one side and sometimes the other, according as he is cultured or uncultured. In fact, Mr. Cobham converts the impudent paradox into a tedious truism, and, I dare say, in doing so does good service. The English public likes tediousness, and likes things to be explained to it in a tedious way. Mr. Cobham has, I have no doubt, already repented of the unfortunate expression with which he has made his *début*, so I will say no more about it. As far as I am concerned he is quite forgiven.

And finally, sir, in taking leave of *The Scots Observer*, I feel bound to make a candid confession to you. It has been suggested to me by a great friend of mine, who is a charming and distinguished man of letters and not unknown to you personally, that there have been really only two people engaged in this terrible controversy, and that those two people are the editor of *The Scots Observer* and the author of *Dorian Gray*. At dinner this evening, over some excellent Chianti, my friend insisted that under assumed and mysterious names you had simply given dramatic expression to the views of some of the semi-educated classes of our community, and that the letters signed 'H.' were your own skilful, if somewhat bitter, caricature of the Philistine as drawn by himself. I admit that something of the kind had occurred to me when I read 'H.'s' first letter—the one in which he proposed that the test of art should be the political opinions of the artist, and that if one differed from the artist on the question of the best way of misgoverning Ireland, one should always abuse his work. Still, there are such infinite varieties of Philistines, and North Britain is so renowned for seriousness, that I dismissed the idea as unworthy of the editor of a Scotch paper. I now fear that I was wrong, and that you have been amusing yourself all the time by inventing little puppets and teaching them how to use big words. Well, sir, if it be so—and my friend is strong on the point—allow me to congratulate you most sincerely on the cleverness with which you have reproduced the lack of literary style which is, I am told, essential for any dramatic and life-like characterisation. I confess that I was completely taken in; but I bear no malice; and as

you have, no doubt, been laughing at me up your sleeve, let me join openly in the laugh, though it be a little against myself. A comedy ends when the secret is out. Drop your curtain and put your dolls to bed. I love Don Quixote, but I do not wish to fight any longer with marionettes, however cunning may be the master-hand that works their wires. Let them go, sir, on the shelf. The shelf is the proper place for them. On some future occasion you can re-label them and bring them out for amusement. They are an excellent company, and go well through their tricks, and if they are a little unreal I am not the one to object to unreality in art. The jest was really a good one. The only thing that I cannot understand is why you gave the marionettes such extraordinary and improbable names.— I remain, sir, your obedient servant,      Oscar Wilde.

*Walter Whyte. The Scots Observer. 23 August 1890. "Art and Morality." P356–7 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Edinburgh, 19th August 1890

Sir,—I have read with considerable interest the letter in which Mr. Oscar Wilde exhibits his detestation of ‘newspaper discussion’ in rather more than two columns of the smallest type which you can misallot him. One would have thought that Mr. Wilde’s determination not to engage in newspaper controversy with any of his critics (and especially not with Mr. Whibley) might have been revealed without making such an impressive encroachment on your space. Nevertheless Mr. Wilde’s jabber about the genius he has detected in himself is so amusing that I for one do not greatly begrudge him the page he has devoted to the doing of what one usually leaves one’s critics to do for one. But there are some things in this manifesto which I do not quite understand. I do not, for example, know where to find Fortunio among the works of Alfred de Musset. I thought it was Gautier who had written a story called Fortunio. However, Mr. Oscar Wilde wishes to have it otherwise. And I do not see why a man should be ‘blind to questions of style, treatment, and the like’ because ‘his temperament is more susceptible to ethical than aesthetic influences.’ More am I sure that ‘if a man sees the artistic beauty of a thing, he will probably care very little for its ethical import.’ I do not know that the author of the Paradise Lost was unspeakably inferior as an artist to the author of Dorian



Gray. And was Milton thoroughly blind to questions of style and treatment and the like? I believe that there are still some among us who consider Milton's verse not unworthy of comparison to Mr. Wilde's. The artist, says Mr. Wilde, has to educate the critic. That (to judge from Mr. Wilde's latest revelation of his own merits) seems to mean that Mr. Wilde is infallible in his eulogies of his own work. And yet—supposing that Goethe had enjoyed the inestimable privilege of wading through *Dorian Gray*—is it certain that the author of *Dorian Gray* (that is, the artist) would have set right the author of *Faust* (that is, the critic) in his views of things aesthetic? Has not Mr. Wilde been carried away somewhat by the ardour of his egotism? Flaubert, says Mr. Wilde, was perfectly right in exposing the ignorance of those who called *Salammbô* inaccurate. How was he right? The dreary book was put forth as an accurate picture of a vanished civilisation, and the people who know most about Carthage tell you that Flaubert was wrong—even ludicrously wrong—in his details.

Again, I think that Mr. Wilde gives us a superfluity of biographic details. He is, he says, by nature and choice extremely indolent. That is intensely interesting (almost as interesting as *Dorian Gray*); but after all, is the future of art inextricably inwoven with Mr. Wilde's indolence? Cultivated idleness, he adds, seems to be the proper occupation of man. Were he content to speak for himself, some of us might agree with him. Yes, one might hazard the conjecture that even uncultivated idleness (how do you cultivate idleness?) were a more merciful waste of one's time than the bestowal of *Dorian Gray* on an ungrateful world. But does not Mr. Wilde generalise somewhat rashly? Indolence may be the least doleful misuse of his own time on this earth that he can achieve; but does that prove conclusively that 'cultivated indolence' is the 'proper occupation' of say a Shakespeare or a Molière? Has not Mr. Wilde's subtlety of insight into his own merits led him somewhat astray here?

As a mere question of style, I should not recommend Mr. Wilde to adhere to the practice of referring to 'a paper called *The Daily Chronicle*.' After all *The Daily Chronicle* is as well known to the public as (say) Mr. Wilde's 'poems.' And I should not say that my work was 'perfect.' The artist's edification of the critic should not necessitate such pitiable self-praise as that, surely. And how did Mr. Cobban misapply the sweet word

‘impudent’? I shall leave Mr. Cobban to speak for himself. Like Mr. Whibley, he is thoroughly able to do so. But I do wish that Mr. Wilde would for once overcome his detestation for newspaper correspondence (which is so convincingly revealed in his letters two columns long), and explain to us the meaninglessness of the epithet ‘impudent’ as applied unto him. The English public, he adds, likes tediousness. Has *Dorian Gray* run into a second edition?—I am, etc.,

Walter Whyte.

*“Statistician.” The Scots Observer. 23 August 1890. “Art and Morality.” P357 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

Sir,—I am particularly taken with Mr. Oscar Wilde’s statistics. He has received two hundred and sixteen (216) ‘notices’ of *Dorian Gray*; he has read not more than half (108) of them; the other half (108) have ‘passed into my wastepaper basket unread’; he has ‘noticed’ only three (3); he has referred with pride to the favourable view of *Dorian Gray* expressed in four (4)—*The Christian Leader* among them; and I for once profess myself exchanged with the information.

But is it knowledge indeed? Is it not this interest in—this respect for—the works of the minor journalist a special characteristic of those ‘semi-educated classes in our community’ to the views of which you are accused—or accuse yourself!—of having given ‘dramatic expression’ under ‘assumed and mysterious names’? And is it not a fact that the letter in your last week’s issue which is signed ‘Oscar Wilde’ is a supercherie of the same pattern and from the same source as these others? Forgive me if I am wrong; and if I am right accept my heartiest congratulations.—I am, etc., Statistician.

P.S.—Another excellent touch—that of ‘making a suggestion about myself,’ Mr. Oscar Wilde, ‘personally’—convinces me that I cannot be mistaken. Thus, and not otherwise—thus does the British burgher feel and express his feelings!

*J. MacLaren Cobban. The Scots Observer. 23 August 1890. “Art and Morality.” P357 in The Scots Observer v. 4 (1890).*

London, 21st August 1890.

Sir,—It has been often suggested to me that ‘Oscar Wilde’ is but the nom de plume of a literary lady, and now I am convinced that if ‘Oscar Wilde’ does not wear petticoats she ought to. In this controversy—(to which ‘Oscar Wilde’ has sent three lengthy specimens of that letter-writing which she professes to abhor)—it has been agreeable to note with how feminine a persuasiveness, with what airs and minaudieres she has insisted upon pretending that only herself and her offspring were under discussion, and with how pretty a disingenuousness she has enlarged or twisted comments touching herself, and has adapted criticisms for the glorification of the bantling she calls Dorian Gray. Who would guess from reading ‘Oscar Wilde’s’ letters alone that the discussion did not arise over Dorian Gray, that it has been conducted with but an allusion now and then to Dorian Gray as an instance in point, that Mr. Whibley did not ‘suggest’ that the ‘ethical import of Dorian Gray’ had been ‘recognised by the foremost Christian papers of England and America,’ and that I did not describe a letter of Dorian Gray’s parent as ‘an impudent paradox’? Mr Whibley’s actual statement was that ‘at least one religious print’ had found Dorian Gray stuffed with morality, and mine was that Dorian Gray’s parent had contributed nothing to the controversy but an ‘impudent paradox.’ Had I bestowed a little more of my tediousness on the parent of the tiresome bantling I should have explicitly pointed to the paradox—‘It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors’; but it seemed to me so obvious that that sentence was all the letter contained of significance in the discussion that I assumed my meaning, put as it was, could not be missed by the intelligence readers of *The Scots Observer*.—I am, etc.,

J. MacLaren Cobban.

“H.” *The Scots Observer*. 30 August 1890. “A Disclaimer.” P357 in *The Scots Observer* v. 4 (1890).

Liverpool, 25th August 1890.

Sir,—The writer of the letter in your issue of the 16th August signed ‘Oscar Wilde’ makes the following statements and suggestions:

- (1) That he has written a story called *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.
- (2) That it is perfect.
- (3) That 216 criticisms of it, mostly favourable, have appeared in different publications.
- (4) That he has not read more than 108 of them.
- (5) That Mr. Oscar Wilde and a 'charming and distinguished man of letters' dined together and had 'some excellent Chianti.'
- (6) That between them they have concluded that two letters signed 'H.' which have recently appeared in your journal under the heading 'Art and Morality' were written by the editor of *The Scots Observer*.
- (7) That the writer of these letters 'proposed that the test of art should be the political opinions of the artist, and that if one differed from him as to the best way of misgoverning Ireland one should always abuse his work.'

With your leave I will answer these assertions seriatim:

- (1) I have not read or seen such a book, but from the little I have heard of it I should judge Mr. Oscar Wilde's statement to be probable enough.
- (2) On this part I am hardly qualified to express an opinion; but if Mr. Oscar Wilde's story is perfect it is curious that Mr. Oscar Wilde should be the person to say so.
- (3) This is possible.
- (4) Really——!
- (5) I cannot understand what these assertions have to do with any of the matters discussed in Mr. Oscar Wilde's letter, or why he should have made them, unless

he wished to insinuate that one of the company had taken too much of the ‘excellent Chianti.’

(6) I wrote the two letters signed ‘H.’ I am not the editor of *The Scots Observer*.

(7) I proposed nothing of the kind. The proposition I did make was that in the hypothetical event of an artist delivering himself with great skill of infamous matter, it might—not ‘always’ but in conceivable circumstances—be the duty of a critic not ‘to abuse his work’ but to refuse to say anything about the manner in which his disgraceful performance was carried out.

It may be as well to add that I do not believe the editor of *The Scots Observer* to have written the letters about ‘Art and Morality’ signed ‘Oscar Wilde.’ In the year 1878 I heard a Newdigate prize poem (on the subject of ‘Ravenna,’ if I recollect right) read in the theatre at Oxford by a gentleman named Oscar O’Flahertie Wilde; and some one I understood to be the same person subsequently published a volume of poems, the most notorious of which was qualified to be described in a bookseller’s catalogue as ‘very curious and disgusting.’ My recollection of this poet and his poems is such that it would not surprise me if he were your correspondent; but it does not matter who Mr. Oscar Wilde is or is not, because his observations require to be contradicted whoever he is.—I am, etc.,

H.

“G.” *The Scots Observer*. 6 September 1890. “*The Long Arm of Coincidence.*” P357 in *The Scots Observer* v. 4 (1890).

London 4th September 1890.

Sir,—In the controversy upon ‘Art and Morality’ which Mr. Wilde with characteristic modesty has converted into a discussion upon himself, one point has hitherto been overlooked. Before your readers subscribe to the certificate of moral character which *The Christian World* has bestowed upon the author of *Dorian Gray*, it is worth while to ask the question, How far is an ‘artist’ justified in borrowing from the works of others? In

one respect Mr. Wilde resembles the hero of his own romance; he has been unable to ‘free himself from the memory’ of certain books. The resemblances between *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and J.K. Huysmans’ *A Rebours* are so many and so striking, that it is impossible to entertain the theory of accidental coincidence [sic]. Floressas de Esseintes and *Dorian Gray* indulge in the same vices and cultivate the same tastes. The object of the one as of the other is to create around him an unreal world and to live in an atmosphere of strange and ever-shifting sensation. Not only is their object the same, but they employ similar methods to attain it. The Roman ritual has a powerful attraction for them both. The one loved ‘the jewelled lantern-shaped monstrance’; ‘the fuming censer, ... tossed into the air like great gilt flowers, had their subtle fascination for him.’ The other, ‘enveloppé dans une atmosphère de couvent, dans un parfum d’encens qui lui grisait la tête, s’était exalté les nerfs’; he felt ‘le charme des calices élancés comes des petunias, des ciboires aux flancs purs.’ But neither submitted to the dogmas of the Church. *Dorian Gray* ‘never fell into the error of arresting his intellectual development by any formal acceptance of creed or system,’ while Des Esseintes ‘avait beau invoquer toutes ces raisons, il ne parvenait pas complètement à se convaincre.’ And they were rival collectors of ecclesiastical vestments and bibelots. When he was tired of religious upholstery, *Dorian Gray* ‘took up the study of jewels’ and ‘le choix des pierres arrêta’ Des Esseintes. Strangely enough, their cabinets contained the same precious stones. The charming *Dorian* counted among his treasures the ‘olive-green chrysoberyl,’ ‘the pistachio-coloured peridot’ and ‘the cymophane with its wire-like line of silver.’ Des Esseintes was never tired of arranging in bouquets ‘les chrysoberyls vert asperge,’ ‘les peridots vert poireau,’ ‘les cymophanes avec des moires azurées.’ But even jewels grew wearisome to these exquisite youths, and perfumes engaged their attention. *Dorian Gray* sought ‘often to elaborate a real psychology of perfumes,’ and herein Des Esseintes did not lag far behind him. ‘Il analysait l’âme de ces fluids; il se complaisait à jouer, pour sa satisfaction personnelle, le rôle d’un psychologue.’ Both turned to the same quarter for their material. The Englishman distilled ‘heavily-scented oils and burning odorous gums from the East.’ The Frenchman discovered that ‘la parfumerie créa des orientales, des selam fulgurants d’épices.’ Des Esseintes was curious concerning ‘le music-tonkin aux éclats terribles’ and ‘la pure essence de spika-nard, si désagréable aux Européens,’ while

Dorian Gray wondered what there was 'in musk that troubled the brain,' and was anxious to estimate the influence of 'spike-nard that sickens.' Both were learned concerning 'hovenie.'

But this is not the end of Mr. Wilde's offending. Sybil Vane's inability to act, when once she has felt the passion it is hers to express, is conveyed from an obscure story of Balzac's entitled *Massimilla Doni*. But what is true of the male animal is not always true of the female, and in changing the sex of the artist Mr. Wilde has done wanton violence to psychological probability. And then he had laid his hands on the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, to whom he owes the incident of the fateful picture. 'How singular a thought, that this beautiful face has been beautiful for above two hundred years! O, if all beauty would endure so well!' So says Walter Ludlow in *The Prophetic Pictures*, and Dorian Gray must have had Walter in his mind when he murmured, 'How sad it is! I shall grow old and horrid and dreadful. But this picture will always remain young.' Walter and Elinor anticipated the gentlemen with the 'finely-curved scarlet lips' in keeping their portraits draped; and while Dorian Gray killed himself, Walter Ludlow aimed to stab his wife, that the destiny of the picture might be fulfilled. And is there not in Dorian Gray something more than a reminiscence of Hawthorne's Edward Randolph, whose picture, 'while hidden behind the cloud of immemorial years, had been all the time acquiring an intenser depth and darkness of expression, till now it gloomed forth again and threw its evil omen over the present hour'?

Mr. Wilde in his last deliverance informed your readers that 'by nature and by choice he is extremely indolent.' This confession is worthy of one of Ouida's scented guardsmen, whose diction Mr. Wilde so accurately reproduces, and is just as credible as the assertions that he is an artist and that Dorian Gray is perfect. His art there is none to champion but himself; his morality may go unquestioned when plagiarism becomes a virtue; but who will deny him industry? Let him at least claim credit for laborious research and untiring investigation. His last production, like some earlier ones, smells of the lamp. But his own stock of paraffin is well-nigh burnt out, and he must needs borrow oil from Husymans, Hawthorne, and the author of *Strathmore*. Not even his assumption of vanity, which if sincere would betoken either the madman or the criminal, has the merit of originality. It

is merely pilfered from Mr. Whistler, who in his own effusions has always redeemed it from contempt by an irresistible touch of good humour.—I am, etc., G.

## 1890 American Reviews

*Several American reviews, quite passionately negative, were cited by Thomas Vranken in his article “‘Oscar Wilde’s Book’: Early American Reviews of The Picture of Dorian Gray,” but none of the archives I accessed could provide all the reviews Vranken referenced. See Vranken’s work for more.*

### Publisher’s Copy

Oscar Wilde contributes the complete novel to the July number of Lippincott’s Magazine. It is entitled “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” and it is a story that everybody will want to read. Not only is Oscar Wilde one of the most interesting figures of the day, but he is a remarkably clever and original writer, as he has shown himself to be in his essays, poems and short stories, and above all in this, his first novel. The story is strikingly original in conception, is strong in interest, and fitted with a dramatic and tragic climax. Wilde is a man of such an original and audacious turn of mind that the commonplace is scarcely possible to him, and so he has produced a novel entirely out of the ordinary ruts. It would be impossible to give in a few words an adequate conception of criticism of this dramatic story, and besides, everyone will want to read and judge it for himself. (Daily Boomerang. June 15 1890. P2)

Rudyard Kipling, Oscar Wilde and Mrs. Alexander have each written a complete novel for Lippincott’s Magazine. Wilde’s novel appears in the July number. It is entitled “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” The story is original in conception, strong in interest and is fitted with a dramatic and tragic climax (Portland Oregonian 29 June 1890, “In the world of books” p14)

Lippincott’s Magazine for July will contain The Picture of Dorian Gray, BY OSCAR WILDE.



As an apostle of aestheticism, as a poet, essayist, and editor, Oscar Wilde has one world-wide fame. This, his first novel, will be watched for with universal interest. It is a dramatic and powerful story, and will undoubtedly become the literary sensation of the day. PRICE, 25 CENTS. (Publishers' Weekly 5 July 1890, p2 in Publishers' Weekly v 38)

*Notes on New Remedies. June 1890. "Books and Pamphlets Received." P10 in Notes on New Remedies v.3 (1890–1891).*

Lippincott's Monthly Magazine for July is a particularly interesting number of this popular monthly. The complete novel, which forms a unique feature of each issue, is by Oscar Wilde, and entitled "The Picture of Dorian Gray;" it is a most charming novelette of 100 pages, and will please American readers, who are too prone too underestimate the author's literary rank because of an oldstanding prejudice of his former ridiculous aestheticism.

*Daily Inter Ocean. 5 July 1890. P10. "Literary."*

The complete novel in Lippincott's for July is by Mr. Oscar Wilde, who has rather dropped out of public notice since he cut his hair and became "an every-day young man." But Mr. Wilde's eccentricity of ten years ago did not obscure the fact that he had real talent; and in "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which is a rather grewsome story, there is much to interest and move the reader, as well as something to repel.

*Chicago Daily Tribune. 6 July 1890. P26. "Oscar Wilde's Romance."*

#### ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST LENGTH STORY BY THE ESTHETE

Effeminacy the Characteristic of a Work Which Is of the Fleshly School and Imitates Greek Thought—A Weak Essay in Psychology—Amusing Attempts to Shock the World by Extravagant Sayings—Punishment Suggested to Fit the Crime.

When Mr. Oscar Wilde was in Chicago a few years ago he was entertained at dinner by certain gentlemen of literary tastes. The conversation grew lively as the wine went round, and bon mots popped like corks. Mr. A. having said something particularly clever, his

envious friend, Mr. B., remarked: "Don't give him credit for that epigram, Mr. Wilde; it was the wine that said it."

"The wine!" exclaimed Oscar. "Then, gentlemen, how pleasant it is to reflect that our epigrams are perhaps now ripening for us on the vine-covered trellis of some sunny slope in France."

Affectation! Yes; but affectation is not wholly blamable when united with cleverness, nor is vanity when found in a pretty woman. The world is always ready to forgive something to those who amuse it—nay, more, to pay a good price for the diversion. If Mr. Wilde was amusing once in his sunflower and knickerbocker days he is not less so now when he writes his first novel and honors America by conferring on Lippincott's Magazine the privilege of publishing it.

The work has all its author's assurance—that beautiful assurance which makes such a contrast with the invincible modesty of genius; it has his posing style, so suggestive of silver buckles and long stockings, and for jewels it has the glittering paste of paradoxes.

First a word as to the nature of the story for those who like to take contemporaneous fiction in homeopathic doses. "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is designed to be the romance of a sin-slain soul. The reader must not be frightened at the author's psychological object, for it would be as impossible for Mr. Wilde to be profound as it would be for him to be stupid. But it is evidently his intention to be "horrid," to use a favorite word of his, to write a book more dreadful than any that has appeared since "Frankenstein," and to shock the world by professing the paganism of old Greece and advocating a new hedonism.

Dorian Gray is giving sittings to Basil Hallward, the artist. Dorian is a beautiful boy of 20—more beautiful, one gathers from Oscar's description, than could be any girl of the same age—and Basil holds him in passionate adoration. Mr. Wilde indeed speaks of his hero with an enthusiasm for his boyish beauty equal to that of Horace for his page, or Socrates for Alcibiades. No wonder that Basil Hallward can paint at his best only when

Dorian is at his side; the boy is an inspiration to him—is, in fact, an incarnated Greek ideal. To such an artist,

Beauty is a form of genius—is higher, indeed than genius, as it needs no explanation ... look absolutely delightful.

#### The Polished Villain

Dorian Gray never would have suffered by the artist's adorations, but Lord Henry Wotton, a Mephistopheles of modern English society, meets him and sees in him not a model but an instrument for the enjoyment of life. Oscar Wilde is not as frank as Mr. Labouchère in writing about the English aristocracy, and one is therefore left in doubt about how bad Lord Henry really is. There is no doubt, however, that he is devoid of all moral sense—that moral sense which according to Oscar has been the bane of all latter-day art. Lord Henry tells Dorian how beautiful he is, and what exquisite pleasures, yet untasted, lie before him in the world. This is the way in which the London Mephistopheles flatters his victim:

The moment I met you ... There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!

And here is the philosophy of the [illegible] pleasure as Lord Henry teaches it to his pupil:

I believe that if one man ... Be afraid of nothing.

#### A Curious Contrast

It is of course improper to credit an author with the sentiments of his character; but Lord Henry's code of morals is a corollary of Mr. Wilde's Hellenism in art, and is, therefore, presumptively a part of his gospel. And what a gospel it is compared with that which Tolstoi has just preached in the "Kreutzer Sonata"! What opposite poles of human thought are touched by these authors and their works. The boyish trifler with his Bacchic paean of the flesh; the grim old Russian lifting the apostolic sword of the spirit! The world will laugh at the former though it will continue secretly to put his doctrines in practice, and it will try to forget that it has heard in the voice of Tolstoi the warning of the

prophets. So wide is the art of fiction that it embraces today our charlatans and our reformers.

But to return to the story under consideration, which is itself marked by digressions, though of rhapsody rather than of moralizing. The picture of Dorian is finished, and the boy standing before it exclaims: "O, that I could remain ever young like that, and it could bear the wrinkles and the stains of time!"

Somewhere in the heaven which arches the world of fiction this prayer is heard and granted.

#### The Love Interest

Dorian falls in love with a pretty actress—a somewhat vulgar expedient on the part of the author, for it associates his hero at once with stage doors, checkered trousers, and cigarettes. But this actress is not like those of the real world. She can play Juliet exquisitely, and she is only 17. Dorian believes her to be a genius, though Lord Henry wisely tells him:

My dear boy, no woman is a genius; ... two of these can't be admitted into decent society.

The poor little actress when she falls in love loses all interest in the mimic world and acts wretchedly. This so irritates Dorian, who has brought his friend to see her play, that he becomes, in her own words, exceedingly "rude" to her; in other words, he casts her off. She commits suicide.

Dorian is distressed, but the death does not prevent him from going that evening to the opera. It strikes him that the girl's action was "very selfish." She might have excised a restraining influence on him—in fact, made him a better man. Like other men it will be seen that Dorian Gray was inclined to look on charming and innocent young women as pleasant reformatory institutions provided by Providence for dissipated young men. Here he was comforted by Lord Henry's worldly observations.

My dear Dorian, the only way a woman can ever reform a man ... They lack individuality.

Shortly afterward the same philosopher unburdens himself of other important observations on Marriage:

“Never marry a woman with straw-colored hair ... both are disappointed.”

### Mystery of the Canvas

After the episode of the young actress, Dorian finds that the expression of his portrait has changed from one of joy to one of cruelty. “It was watching him ... the passion for impossible things.”

But his good resolutions go to fulfilling that huge paving contract which the wicked world made with the infernal regions some time in the distant past. One would think that the ultimate dissipation of a creation of Dorian’s temperament would be a glass of soda-water and a cigarette, for had not his philosopher and friend said to him: “I can’t allow you to smoke cigars.... What more can you want?” What more, indeed? But no; he lives a Jekyll-Hyde life which the author only hints at, as it would be indelicate to describe it. And after every plunge into the pit abysmal he returns to the garret of his house where he gloats over the portrait which shows him in its loathsome corruption the ruin of his soul. And all the time his physical being retains its youth and bloom.

It is hard to treat so bold an idea as this with art which is preservative of illusion. Edgar Poe accomplished it in many of his tales, and Robert Louis Stevenson was superbly successful in his “Markheim.” But Oscar Wilde cares more for his aphorisms than his plot, and his art is that of a phrase-maker, not a story-teller.

His denouement is weak and, like all his situations, spasmodical. One night when he is troubled by Hallward, he leads the painter to the secret garret and there, through sheer wantonness, stabs him. Through the influence he wields over a scientist (the nature of the influence is kept secret) Dorian secures the description of the body.

Was it really true .... Was there no hope for him?

He gazes on the picture which has now grown more loathsome than ever. It moves him to rage, and with the knife which he used on Hallward he stabs the canvas, ripping it from top to bottom.

There was a cry ... who it was.

#### Postscript.

As said before, the crudeness of the tale is atoned for by the cleverness of many of the epigrams and aphorisms. They are for the most part put in the mouth of Lord Henry. Here are a few:

[Quotes, mostly Lord Henry]

The moral of Mr. Wilde's book is meant to be good; at least he deals out to sin its proverbial wages. But the tone is pernicious, and the punishment of the author should be severe. He should be subjected at once to a curtain lecture from his wife.

*Boston Daily Advertiser. 9 July 1890. P5. "Books and Authors."*

The idea of Mr. Oscar Wilde's novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" in Lippincott's for July, is the ingenious and striking one of a man's portrait taking on the worn look of those who lead a life of vice while the man himself remains fresh and innocent of face. It is an idea of which a master—of Poe, say, or Hawthorne—could make effective use, but unfortunately the execution of Mr. Wilde is by no means equal to his invention.

*The North American. 16 July 1890. "Oscar Wilde's Book." P4.*

It Will Doubtless Serve the Purpose for Which It Was Written.

[Special Correspondence.]

NEW YORK, JULY 13.—It is perhaps something of a coincidence that in the current number of Lippincott's Magazine there are contributions from Oscar Wilde and Edward Heron-Allen. The coincidence which brings these men of notoriety together in this magazine is emphasized by the fact that they are probably the only two writers who use

the English language, and very likely the only ones to be found in any other language who have constructed novels the underlying suggestion of which is something not to be spoken of, scarcely to be thought. When Mr. Allen published his piece of fiction it created no other comment than that caused by the belief that he had, with skill and by artful suggestion, caused a tale to turn upon the abnormal.

Oscar Wilde, in the story which is printed in Lippincott's under the title of "The Picture of Dorian Gray," has overmatched the skill of Heron-Allen, and has undoubtedly accomplished the purpose which, in addition to pecuniary consideration, he had in view when he wrote the story. One of the epigrams contained in the novel declares that there is only one thing worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about, and Mr. Wilde, whose maneuvers with the sunflower and knee breeches have long since ceased to make him notorious, will be likely to find in this latest venture of his that he is talked about, and it is probable that will satisfy him, although the chatter which his work creates would be regarded with the utmost dread by most human beings.

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" seems to have been suggested partly by the myth which describes a youth as having fallen in love with his own picture, and which as a classic tale of mythology is a beautiful narration, and it is also inspired by Mr. Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Dorian Gray, an extremely handsome young man, falls in love with his portrait, and it is the desire of his heart that in his own body he shall ever remain as the picture represents him to be, while the process of growing old is transferred from his own body to the portrait. Into the abnormal state of mind thus developed Dorian becomes infatuated with his own personality, and also produces an effect upon other men which causes them to become infatuated with him. He suffers and the utter physical degradation, as well as malformations of intellect and character, which follow this development form the basis of the story.

Of course the seeker after the abnormal and shocking in literature can find nothing beyond the possibilities contained in such a conception as this. A step farther than Mr. Wilde has gone would be sure to cause the arrest of the author and publisher and the suppression of the book. It is of course a story of passion, as "The Quick and the Dead"

was a story of passion, but the latter is natural passion idealized, whereas the former is the passion which, under the statutes of many of our states, is, if followed, punishable with death.

Mr. Wilde writes entertainingly in the lighter passages of the book, but there is a sort of forced brilliancy and a suggestion of worked over epigrams, which, while it gives the work an air of smartness, will hardly cause it to be regarded as a piece of excellent literary workmanship. It is possibly Mr. Wilde's purpose to convey a moral in his story which would be of good effect in certain aristocratic circles in England, but if that was his purpose he has no art in executing it. When Balzac wrote of hideous vices he analyzed and dissected them so that the horror of them was maintained and the awful power of the moralist's pen was made evident. There is no such art in Mr. Wilde's novel, and the suggestion is rather in the direction of sensationalism than of the highest art and morality.

It will probably surprise none of those upon whom Mr. Wilde bestowed his intimacy when he was in this country to know that he has written such a book, for it is written in the manner in which he has occasionally narrated anecdotes to choice and private circles. Although Mr. Wilde came here as an exponent of aestheticism he was not indisposed to view life in all its phases in New York, and of this disposition one public evidence was obtained through the facility with which he was steered by a bunco sharp into one of these notorious games. It is pretty safe to predict that if *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is ever published in book form it will find its way into no home, and will be read in a corner by those who buy it, yet it doubtless will serve the purpose which caused the writing and publication of it, because it will be talked about and thus most widely advertised. E. J. Edwards.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer. 30 July 1890. P5. "Current Literature."*

Lippincott's for July has for its chief attraction a complete novel by Oscar Wilde. The author's personality is so well known that there will be considerable curiosity about his new venture in letters, which he calls "The Picture of Dorian Gray." This interest will be increased by the echoes from London of a phase of crime which it is supposed to suggest.



There is no question about the brightness of the dialogue and the skill with which the narrative is developed. The motive is a peculiar one, not to speak of its approach to the horrible. But readers who like such a book as “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” will doubtless be attracted by “The Picture of Dorian Gray.”

*Yenowine's Illustrated News. 24 August 1890. P4.*

Since Mr. Oscar Wilde has left off posing as “a-foot-in-the-grave-young-man” and betaken himself to literature, he is making a very creditable figure. His story, called “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” is one of the best novelties in many a day, full of epigrammatic wit.

*Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. September 1890. P409–412 in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine vol 46 (July—Dec 1890). “A Revulsion from Realism” by Anne H. Wharton.*

In all ages and climes mankind has found delight in romances based upon the mystic, the improbable, and the impossible, from the days when the Norse poets sang their Sagas through long Northern nights, and the fair Schehérazade, under Southern moon, charmed her bloodthirsty lord by her tales of wonder, to our own day, when Stevenson and Crawford and Haggard hold fancy spellbound by their entirely improbable stories. Scott and Bulwer played with master hands upon the love of the mysterious and supernatural inherent in mankind; Dickens and others have essayed to gratify its demands, but with less daring, and, having an eye always on the moorings of the actual, their success has been less marked. With the elder Hawthorne such romance-writing seemed the natural growth of an exquisitely sensitive and spiritual nature, while among later French writers Théophile Gautier and Edmond About have entered into the domain of the impossible as into the natural heritage of their genius, sporting in its impalpable ether with the tuneful abandon of a fish in the sea, or a bird in the air, hampered by no bond of the actual, weighted by no encumbrance of the material.

It is not strange that the great influx of realistic novels that has flowed in upon the last decade should be followed by a revulsion to the impossible in fiction. Men and women, wearied with meeting the same characters and events in so-called romance that they

encounter in every-day life, or saddened by the depressing, if dramatic, pictures of Tolstoi and the cool vivisection of humanity presented by Ibsen, turn with a sense of rest and refreshment to the guidance of those who, like Robert Louis Stevenson and Rider Haggard, lead them suddenly into the mystic land of wonder, or, like Marion Crawford and Mrs. Oliphant, delight to draw them, by gentle and easy stages, from the midst of a well-appointed setting of every-day life into the shadowy borderland that lies between the real and the unreal. Much of the success of such romance-writing rests upon the rebound, natural to humanity, from intense realism to extreme ideality; more, perhaps, upon the fact that this age which is grossly material is also deeply spiritual. With these two facts well in view, Mr. Oscar Wilde has fallen into line, and entered the lists with some of the most successful masters of fiction. In his novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray," written for the July Lippincott's, Mr. Wilde, like Balzac and the authors of "Faust" and "John Inglesant," presents to us the drama of a human soul, while, like Gautier and About, he surrounds his utterly impossible story with a richness and depth of coloring and a grace and airiness of expression that make the perusal of its pages an artistic delight.

If Mr. Wilde's romance resembles the productions of some of the writers of the French school in its reality and tone, it still more strongly resembles Mr. Stevenson's most powerfully wrought fairy-tale, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," although the moral of the story is brought out even more plainly—as plainly, indeed, as in the drama of "Faust." In both Mr. Stevenson's and Mr. Wilde's stories there is a transformation or substitution. In one the soul of Dr. Jekyll appears under different exteriors; in the other some fine influence passes from the soul of Dorian Gray into his portrait and there works a gradual and subtle change upon the pictured lineaments. Although Mr. Wilde's extravaganza is far less dramatic than that of Mr. Stevenson, it has the advantage of richer coloring, and a more human setting, if we may so express it. The characters in "The Picture of Dorian Gray" enjoy life more than Mr. Stevenson's creations, who seem to have had so dull a time of it at the best that they might have been expected to welcome a tragedy, as a relief to the tedium of their daily lives. Mr. Utterson, we are told, was good but he was evidently not particularly happy, which was the case with the other personages of the drama, with the exception of those who were signally wretched. On the other hand, Mr. Wilde's characters are happy during their little day. Their world is a luxurious, perfumed land of

delight, until sin transforms it, and, even after Lord Henry has corrupted the nature of Dorian Gray with evil books and worldly philosophy, he occasionally drinks of the waters of Lethe and enjoys some fragments of what may be called happiness, while Lord Henry himself seems to derive a certain satisfaction from the practice of his Mephistophelian art and in his entire freedom from the restraints of conscience. In a tale of the impossible it is not required that the writer should be true to life, animate or inanimate, yet in the fact that there are glimpses of light through the clouds that surround his *dramatis personae*, that they inhabit a world in which the laburnum hangs out yellow clusters in June, and the clematis robes itself with purple stars, and the sun sheds gold and the moon silver, despite the tragedy that touches the lives of its inhabitants, is not Mr. Wilde quite as true to nature as to art?

The reader may reasonably question the author's good taste in displaying at such length his knowledge of antique decoration and old-world crime as in Chapter IX., which, besides being somewhat tiresome, clogs the dramatic movement of the story. Yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted that none but an artist and an apostle of the beautiful could have so sympathetically portrayed the glowing hues and perfumes of the garden in which Dorian Gray had first presented to his lips the cup of life, and none other could have so pictured the luxurious surroundings of his home, for whose embellishment the known world had been searched for hangings, ornaments, and bric-à-brac. Amid such an entourage of modern London life, with its Sybaritic indulgence, its keenness of wit, and its subtle intelligence, Mr. Wilde places his characters and works out his miracle.

Viewing his own portrait, just completed by an artist friend, Dorian Gray turns from it filled with envy and dissatisfaction, because it has been whispered in his ear that youth is the supreme possession in life, and that when youth and beauty have fled from his face and form this pictured presentment will live forever, a perpetual mockery of himself, whom withering age has overtaken. Under the influence of his evil genius, Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian Gray utters a prayer that he may always remain young, and the portrait alone reveal the ravages of time, sin, and sorrow. The realization of this idea is the theory of Mr. Wilde's romance, and the air of probability with which he has endowed the absolutely impossible evidences the artistic and dramatic power of the writer. The portrait

of Dorian Gray, painted in days of innocence and loveliness, when his mere presence symbolized to the artist the entire harmony between beauty of body and beauty of soul, changes day by day with the degradation of his nature, while the living Dorian Gray, after years of sin, remorseless cruelty, and corruption of thought and action, preserves all the grace and fairness of his Antinöus-like youth.

Love in this romance is an incident, not its crowning event, although an important incident as a revelation of the character of Dorian Gray. The reader never meets Sybil Vane; he merely sees her on the stage and hears of her from the lips of her lover; yet even thus she appeals to us as an exquisite personation of maidenhood with all its purity and all its tenderness. As shadowy an outline as the fair child whom Bulwer allows to captivate the imagination of Kenelm Chillingly, who caught butterflies, talked philosophy, and died young, yet who in her brief transit across his path realized to his poetic soul all the best possibilities of life, spiritual and material, Sibyl Vane comes to us girt about with ideal charm, to fulfil her widely different mission, which was to reveal to Dorian Gray the sad fact that his soul had passed beyond her sweet and ennobling influence. His artistic and intellectual senses were touched by her beauty and dramatic power, but to the beauty that made her worthy to be loved, his eyes were blind, his heart was insensible. The tragedy of the story, the climax of the situation, is not the death of Sybil Vane, nor even the pitiless murder of the friend who dared to give Dorian Gray good counsel, but the disclosure that Dorian's soul, once open to all good influences, had, by yielding to the malign domination of his evil genius, passed beyond the reach of love, pity, or remorse.

It is needless to say that Dorian Gray is not a very substantial character. The most entertaining, though not the most exemplary, personage of the story is Lord Henry Wotton, who by his preaching and practice of the doctrine of hedonism leads Dorian Gray into all known and unknown evil, until finally his darkling shadow outreaches in depravity the imagination of his tempter. When his victim has sunk so low in sin that the world shuns him, Lord Henry still enjoys his gay, conscienceless existence, and continues to utter the persiflage that constitutes much of the attraction of the book as well of his society. Debonair, witty, learned, giving expression to aphorisms as keen as the sayings

of Thackeray's characters, with the moral element eliminated, and as cynical as those of Norris, with exquisite taste and the fascination of a finished man of the world, Lord Henry belongs as truly, on the material side of his nature, to the life of to-day, as he appertains on its spiritual side to the region of Pluto. A gay child of the great London social world, he hovers airily around and about the emotions of life, declaring that death is the only thing that ever terrifies him, and that death and vulgarity are the only facts in the nineteenth century that one cannot explain away. The climax of Lord Henry's sardonic worldliness is reached when he becomes the spectator of his own domesticity, if he may be said to have any, and speaks to Dorian of his divorce from his wife as one of the latest sensations of London, remarking apropos of his music, "The man with whom my wife ran away played Chopin exquisitely. Poor Victoria! I was very fond of her. The house is rather lonely without her."

Lord Henry is so entirely true to himself and the worst that is in him that towards the close of the book, when Dorian announces that he is "going to be good," and begs his friend not to poison another young life with the book with which he had corrupted his, we find ourselves trembling for Dorian's one remaining ally, especially when he exclaims, "My dear boy, you are really beginning to moralize. You will soon be going about warning people against all the sins of which you have grown tired. You are much too delightful to do that. Besides, it is no use. You and I are what we are, and we will be what we will be." Had not the hero stabbed himself, or his picture (which was it?) it is only a question of time how soon Dorian Gray, with the slightest obtrusion of conscience, would have ceased to charm him who had welcomed him as a *débutant* on the Stage of Pleasure, where, to use his favorite saying, "the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it." Dorian Gray struggling against the temptations of the world would have proved an inartistic and disturbing element in the life of Lord Henry.

All that is needed to complete the tale is Lord Henry's own comment on the highly dramatic taking-off of his friend. This chapter, Mr. Wilde, true to his artistic instinct, has not finished, preferring to leave appetite unappeased, rather than to create satiety by making his Mephistopheles say precisely what one would expect him to say under the circumstances.

*Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. September 1890. P412—415 in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine vol 46 (July—Dec 1890). "The Romance of the Impossible" by Julian Hawthorne.*

Fiction, which flies at all game, has latterly taken to the Impossible as its quarry. The pursuit is interesting and edifying, if one goes properly equipped, and with adequate skill. But if due care is not exercised, the Impossible turns upon the hunter, and grinds him to powder. It is a very dangerous and treacherous kind of wild-fowl. The conditions of its existence—if existence can be predicated on that which does not exist—are so peculiar and abstruse that only genius is really capable of taming it and leading it captive. But the capture, when it is made, is so delightful and fascinating that every tyro would like to try. One is reminded of the princess of the fairy-tale, who was to be won on certain preposterous terms, and if the terms were not met, the discomfited suitor lost his head. Many misguided or overweening youths perished: at last the One succeeded. Failure in a romance of the Impossible is apt to be a disastrous failure; on the other hand, success carries great rewards.

Of course, the idea is not a new one. The writings of the alchemists are stories of the Impossible. The fashion has never been entirely extinct. Balzac wrote the "Peau de Chagrin," and probably this tale is as good a one as was ever written of that kind. The possessor of the Skin may have everything he wishes for; but each wish causes the Skin to shrink, and when it is all gone the wisher is annihilated with it. By the art of the writer, this impossible thing is made to appear quite feasible; by touching the chords of coincidence and fatality, the reader's common-sense is soothed to sleep. We feel that all this might be, and yet no natural law be violated; and yet we know that such a thing never was and never will be. But the vitality of the story, as of all good stories of the sort, is due to the fact that it is the symbol of a spiritual verity: the life of indulgence, the selfish life, destroys the soul. This psychic truth is so deeply felt that its sensible embodiment is rendered plausible. In the case of another famous romance—"Frankenstein"—the technical art is entirely wanting: a worse story, from the literary point of view, has seldom been written. But the soul of it, so to speak, is so potent and obvious that, although no one actually reads the book nowadays, everybody knows the gist of the idea.

“Frankenstein” has entered into the language, for it utters a perpetual truth of human nature.

At the present moment the most conspicuous success in the line we are considering is Stevenson’s “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” The author’s literary skill, in that awful little parable, is at its best, and makes the most of every point. To my thinking, it is an artistic mistake to describe Hyde’s transformation as actually taking place in plain sight of the audience: the sense of spiritual mystery is thereby lost, and a mere brute miracle takes its place. But the tale is strong enough to carry this imperfection, and the moral significance of it is so catholic—it so comes home to every soul that considers it—that it has already made an ineffaceable impression on the public mind. Every man is his own Jekyll and Hyde, only without the magic powder. On the bookshelf of the Impossible, Mr. Stevenson’s book may take its place beside Balzac’s.

Mr. Oscar Wilde, the apostle of beauty, has in the July number of Lippincott’s Magazine, a novel, or romance (it partakes of the qualities of both), which everybody will want to read. It is a story strange in conception, strong in interest, and fitted with a tragic and ghastly climax. Like many stories of its class, it is open to more than one interpretation; and there are, doubtless, critics who will deny that it has any meaning at all. It is, at all events, a salutary departure from the ordinary English novel, with the hero and heroine of different social stations, the predatory black sheep, the curate, the settlements, and Society. Mr. Wilde, as we all know, is a gentleman of an original and audacious turn of mind, and the commonplace is scarcely possible to him. Besides, his advocacy of novel ideas in life, art, dress, and demeanor had led us to expect surprising things from him; and in this literary age it is agreed that a man may best show the best there is in him by writing a book. Those who read Mr. Wilde’s story in the hope of finding in it some compact and final statement of his theories of life and manners will be satisfied in some respects, and dissatisfied in others; but not many will deny that the book is a remarkable one and would attract attention even had it appeared without the author’s name on the title-page.

“The Picture of Dorian Gray” begins to show its quality in the opening pages. Mr. Wilde’s writing has what is called “color,”—the quality that forms the mainstay of many of Ouida’s works,—and it appears in the sensuous descriptions of nature and of the decorations and environments of the artistic life. The general aspect of the characters and the tenor of their conversation, remind one a little of “Vivian Gray” and a little of “Pelham;” but the resemblance does not go far: Mr. Wilde’s objects and philosophy are different from those of either Disraeli or Bulwer. Meanwhile his talent for aphorisms and epigrams may fairly be compared with theirs: some of his clever sayings are more than clever,—they show real insight and a comprehensive grasp. Their wit is generally cynical; but they are put into the mouth of one of the characters, Lord Harry, and Mr. Wilde himself refrains from definitely committing himself to them; though one cannot help suspecting that Mr. Wilde regards Lord Harry as being an uncommonly able fellow. Be that as it may, Lord Harry plays the part of Old Harry in the story, and lives to witness the destruction of every other person in it. He may be taken as an imaginative type of all that is most evil and most refined in modern civilization,—a charming, gentle, witty, euphemistic Mephistopheles, who deprecates the vulgarity of goodness, and muses aloud about “those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue, and those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin.” Upon the whole, Lord Harry is the most ably portrayed character in the book, though not the most original in conception. Dorian Gray himself is as nearly a new idea in fiction as one has nowadays a right to expect. If he had been adequately realized and worked out, Mr. Wilde’s first novel would have been remembered after more meritorious ones were forgotten. But, even as “*nemo repente fuit turpissimus*,” so no one, or hardly any one, creates a thoroughly original figure at a first essay. Dorian never quite solidifies. In fact, his portrait is rather the more real thing of the two. But this needs explanation.

The story consists of a strong and marvellous central idea, illustrated by three characters, all men. There are a few women in the background, but they are only mentioned: they never appear to speak for themselves. There is, too, a valet who brings in his master’s breakfasts, and a chemist who by some scientific miracle, disposes of a human body; but, substantially, the book is taken up with the artist who paints the portrait, with his friend



Lord Harry aforesaid, and with Dorian Gray, who might, so far as the story goes, stand alone. He and his portrait are one, and their union points the moral of the tale.

The situation is as follows. Dorian Gray is a youth of extraordinary physical beauty and grace, and pure and innocent of soul. An artist sees him and falls aesthetically in love with him, and finds in him a new inspiration in his art, both direct and general. In the lines of his form and features, and in his coloring and movement, are revealed fresh and profound laws; he paints him in all guises and combinations, and it is seen and admitted on all sides that he has never before painted so well. At length he concentrates all his knowledge and power in a final portrait, which has the vividness and grace of life itself, and, considering how much both of the sitter and of the painter is embodied in it, might almost be said to live. The portrait is declared by Lord Harry to be the greatest work of modern art; and he himself thinks so well of it that he resolves never to exhibit it, even as he would shrink from exposing to public gaze the privacies of his own nature.

On the day of the last sitting a singular incident occurs. Lord Harry, meeting with Dorian Gray for the first time, is no less impressed than was Hallward, the artist, with the youth's radiant beauty and freshness. But whereas Hallward would keep Dorian unspotted from the world, and would have him resist evil temptations and all the allurements of corruption, Lord Harry, on the contrary, with a truly Satanic ingenuity, discourses to the young man on the matchless delights and privileges of youth. Youth is the golden period of life: youth comes never again: in youth only are the senses endowed with divine potency; only then are joys exquisite and pleasures unalloyed. Let it therefore be indulged without stint. Let no harsh and cowardly restraints be placed upon its glorious impulses. Men are virtuous through fear and selfishness. They are too dull or too timid to take advantage of the godlike gifts that are showered upon them in the morning of existence; and before they can realize the folly of their self-denial, the morning has passed, and weary day is upon them, and the shadows of night are near. But let Dorian, who is matchless in the vigor and resources of his beauty, rise above the base shrinking from life that calls itself goodness. Let him accept and welcome every natural impulse of his nature. The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young: let him so live

that when old age comes he shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that no opportunity of pleasure and indulgence has escaped untasted.

This seductive sermon profoundly affects the innocent Dorian, and he looks at life and himself with new eyes. He realizes the value as well as the transitoriness of that youth and beauty which hitherto he had accepted as a matter of course and as a permanent possession. Gazing on his portrait, he laments that it possesses the immortality of loveliness and comeliness that is denied to him; and, in a sort of imaginative despair, he utters a wild prayer that to the portrait, and not to himself, may come the feebleness and hideousness of old age; that whatever sins he may commit, to whatever indulgences he may surrender himself, not upon him but upon the portrait may the penalties and disfigurements fall. Such is Dorian's prayer; and, though at first he suspects it not, his prayer is granted. From that hour, the evil of his life is registered upon the face and form of his pictured presentment, while he himself goes unscathed. Day by day, each fresh sin that he commits stamps its mark of degradation upon the painted image. Cruelty sensuality, treachery, all nameless crimes, corrupt and render hideous the effigy on the canvas: he sees in it the gradual pollution and ruin of his soul, while his own fleshly features preserve unstained all the freshness and virginity of his sinless youth. The contrast at first alarms and horrifies him; but at length he becomes accustomed to it, and finds a sinister delight in watching the progress of the awful change. He locks up the portrait in a secret chamber, and constantly retires thither to ponder over the ghastly miracle. No one but he knows or suspects the incredible truth; and he guards like a murder-secret this visible revelation of the difference between what he is and what he seems. This is a powerful situation; and the reader may be left to discover for himself how Mr. Wilde works it out.

*The Newsdealer. September 1890. "Professional Reform." P178 in Newsdealer volume 1 (1890).*

[In a larger article on the seizure of "immoral" books, which in this instance it was condemning; the books seized included Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata, Dumas's L'Affair Clemenceau, and Balzac's The Devil's Daughter.]

If this delectable creature—described by the Herald as “a kind of spawn from Comstock”—is sincere in his desire to rid the bookstalls of pernicious material, why does he not arrest the publishers of such filth as “A Marriage Below Zero,” “The Picture of Dorian Gray;” such crime-breeding sheets as the so-called police papers; and such receptacles of scantily veiled obscenity as one or two of our “society” journals?

Procedure instituted against such enemies of good morals would have the sympathy and support of all decent men in the community.

But no; with the brutal stupidity that is the trade-mark of all hired “reformers,” Britton turns his sanctimonious back on the real offense and the real offenders, invades the domain of the kings of literature, and uses the machinery of the law to oppress an entirely innocent citizen.

*Sunday School Times*. 13 September 1890. “Recent Books Worth Noting.” P588 in *The Sunday School Times v 32 (1890)*.

Under the head of Fiction, including the Juvenile, nothing more is needed, in addition to a recent review of new novels, than to chronicle a few titles: *The Broughton House* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. \$1.25), a New England character-novel by Professor Bliss Perry, of Williams College; *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co. 25 cents), a curious compound of an excellent idea and an imperfect execution, in which story the face of a smooth but depraved sinner remains beautiful until after his suicide, while his one Endymion-like portrait shows the development of his wicked character, and finally leads to the murder of its artist by its subject; ...

*The Critic: An Illustrated Monthly Review of Literature, Art, and Life*. 4 October 1890. “*The Lounger*.” P169 in *The Critic volume 14 (1890)*.

A correspondent of the Observer insinuates that Oscar Wilde, in ‘Dorian Gray,’ has freely ‘borrowed’ from other authors. The resemblances between Mr. Wilde’s story and ‘A Rebour,’ by J.K. Huysmanns [sic], ‘are so many and so striking that it is impossible to entertain the theory of accidental coincidence.’ Not only Huysmann, but Balzac and our own Hawthorne are said to have lent something more than inspiration to the apostle

of aestheticism. Can it be that Mr. Wilde is over-cultivating the art which he so cleverly described in a recent magazine article?

*Chicago Daily Tribune. 5 October 1890. P25. "Oscar Wilde's Latest Production."*

Has Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray" been as much discussed in America as in England? Perhaps Americans are more accustomed to unconventionality than the Europeans are. Certainly, they have more writers who work on French lines, as Mr. Wilde does in his curious story. At this moment an attempt is being made to convict Mr. Wilde of direct plagiarism, chiefly from the extraordinary romance of M. J.K. Huysmans, "A Rebour," to which he certainly owes much. Whether the debt goes so far as to become plagiarism I am rather inclined to doubt. Plagiarism is a big, unpleasant word. I prefer to say that a man has studied such and such models, and has, perhaps, assimilated them extremely well. That is safer, and it is probably more accurate. Nobody sits down to write with the deliberate intention of imitating somebody else.

What too many people do is allow themselves to be carried away by the influence of a stronger personality. The influence of the younger French writers—the Decadents, the Symbolists, and the rest—is in the air at present, and it would be difficult for a wonderfully clever man like Oscar Wilde, who has infinitely electric wit, but not a profound originality, to escape it. No doubt he will write some entertaining letters to the newspapers on the subject, and the charming episode of "Dorian Gray" will be a lengthened out a little longer. It has indeed been charming. Such letters from indignant moralists! Such reprisals from the disciples of the art for art's sake doctrine! The whole question of the relation between art and morality has been thrashed out once more for the benefit of the readers of a certain number of Lippincott's. Mr. Wilde has preserved an attitude of serenity. He has found an unexpected ally in some low church paper which has an immense number of pious readers, and he has gracefully accepted the tribute. This paper declares that so far from the story being immoral it is the work of a righteous moralist. Of course nothing about morals ever entered Mr. Wilde's head, and the idea must have amused him immensely. But there was no reason why he should not reap the benefit of the misunderstanding.

## 1891 British Reviews

*Reviews of the book publication were much sparser. There were some parodies of and comments about the “Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray” published in The Fortnightly Review in March of 1891, but none of the sustained debate or wide review that the magazine edition received.*

### Publisher Advertisements

Mr Oscar Wilde is about to publish “Dorian Gray” in book form on the suggestion of many friends who regard this remarkable story as worthy of wider reading than it can obtain in a back number of Lippincott’s Magazine.

*The American Bookseller. 4 July 1891. “Books and Bookmakers.” P13 in The American Bookseller, vol 30 (July–Dec. 1891).*

Ward, Lock & Co., announce an edition de Luxe of Oscar Wilde’s Picture of Dorian Gray. The edition will be strictly limited to 250 Copies, each of which will be numbered and signed by Mr. Wilde. It will be of Foolscap 4to size, and printed upon the best Van Gelder hand-made paper. The title-page, lettering, and binding have been specially designed with a view to novelty and artistic effect. Mr. Wilde has now revised the work, and has added a characteristic preface, and several chapters which greatly heighten the interest of his extraordinary narrative. The central idea remains unchanged, but the construction of the tale has been materially altered, and in one chapter—that in which Dorian visits the opium dens of East London—there is a novel and startling situation. The Picture of Dorian Gray will probably be as hotly discussed in book form as it was when it appeared in Lippincott’s; and as each copy of Edition de Luxe will contain Mr. Wilde’s signature, and as only 250 copies will be issued, the volume is likely to become coveted and scarce.

### Comments on the “Preface”

*At least two parodies (“A Preface to the County Council’s Bill for the Regulation of Theatres and Music Halls” published on p2 of the March 3, 1891 publication of the Pall*

*Mall Gazette*; “Yet Another Preface to ‘Dorian Gray,’ published on p2 of *The Globe* on March 3, 1891) were published.

*Notes and Queries*. 7 March 1891. “Miscellaneous. Notes on Books, &c.” P199 in *Notes and Queries series 7 v.11 (1891)*.

Under the title of ‘A Preface to “Dorian Gray”’ Mr. Oscar Wilde gives some remarkable gnomic utterances. Here are one or two: “There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.” “No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.” “All art is quite useless.”

*The Observer*. 1 March 1891. “*The Magazines*.” P7.

Mr. Oscar Wilde writes a preface to *Dorian Gray*. We do not think his string of carefully polished epigrams will affect the critics who condemned that tawdry romance as bad art. Mr. Wilde says of his critics “those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.” But *Dorian Gray* was not a beautiful thing. They will, however, agree with him when he says that “the only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it inordinately.” Mr. Wilde has assuredly endeavoured by his appalling admiration for *Dorian Gray* to urge the only conceivable excuse for writing it.

*The Pall Mall Gazette*. 3 March 1891. “*The Reviews for March*.” P7.

Mr. Oscar Wilde contributes twenty-three short paragraphs, separated from each other by asterisks, and bearing the general heading of “A Preface to ‘Dorian Gray.’” In another column we have paid Mr. Wilde’s apothegms the flattery of imitation.

*Derby Mercury*. 4 March 1891. “*Literature*.” P6

Mr. Auberon Herbert attacks the mismanagement of the New Forest, and has some very nasty things to say of Sir William Harcourt, and Mr. Oscar Wilde contributes a smart satirical “preface” to “*Dorian Gray*,” which is really a rejoinder to his critics.

*Morning Post. 4 March 1891. "The Magazines for March." P2*

Mr. Hardy's story, "For Conscience Sake," is hardly worthy of his pen, while Mr. Oscar Wilde's "Preface to 'Dorian Gray'" is a pedantic resetting of his peculiar views with regard to the meaning and purposes of art, of which as typical specimens may be given—"There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all;" and "All art is quite useless." The axioms in question may perhaps be regarded as works of art.

*Birmingham Daily Post. 7 March 1891. P9. "Periodicals for March."*

There is another curious production in this number. It is called "A Preface to 'Dorian Gray,'" and is signed "Oscar Wilde." It consists of about twenty short sentences, distributed over two pages, and ornamented with nearly a hundred artistically-displayed asterisks. Like Christopher Sly, we say as we reach the last sentence—"All art is quite useless—[sic] 'Tis a good play, madam lady; comes there any more of it?"

*Aberdeen Journal. 10 March 1891. P2. "Magazines."*

Literary criticism is well to the front. Oscar Wilde's contribution, under the heading of "Preface to Dorian Gray," is a short collection of paradoxical critical aphorisms, of which two may be quoted as examples:—

We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it inordinately. All art is quite useless.

*Punch. 14 March 1890. "Wilde Flowers." P125 in Punch v. 100–101 (1891).*

Some other fellow, in the P.M.G., has been beforehand with us in spotting "A Preface to Dorian Gray," by our Oscar Wilde-r than ever, in this month's Fortnightly. Dorian Gray was published some considerable time ago, so it belongs to ancient history, and now, after this lapse of time, our comes the preface. And this "preface" occupies the better part, I use the expression in all courtesy, of two pages; which two pages represent a literary flower-bed, where rows of bright-asterisks are planted between lines of brilliant

aphorisms. The rule of the arrangement seems to be—“when in doubt, plant asterisks.” Sic itur ad astra. The garden is open to all, let us cull here one and there one. “To reveal Art and conceal the Artist, is Art’s aim.” Is there not in this the scent of “Ars est celare artem”? “Art” includes “the Artist,” of course. Then “Puris omnia pura” is to be fond in two other full-blown aphorisms, if I mistake not. St. Paul’s advice to Timothy is engrafted on the stalk of another aphorism. “Why lug in Timothy?” Well, to “adapt” Scripture to one’s purpose is not to quote it. Vade retro! Do we not recognise something familiar in “When Critics disagree the Artist is in accord with himself?”

But after it is all done, and the little flower-show is over, then arises the despairing cry of our own cherished Oscar. It is in the Last of the Aphorisms; after which, exhausted, he can only sign his name, fling away the goose-quill, and then sink back in his luxurious arm-chair exhausted with the mental efforts of years concentrated into the work of one short hour. Ah! “La plupart des livres d’a present ont l’air d’avoir été faits en un jour avec des livres lus de la veille.” Ask Messrs. Rochefoucauld, Chamfort, Rivarol, and Jean Morlé. “Ai! Ai! Papai! Papai! Phillaloo! Murther in Irish!” Let us be natural, or shut up shop. Yet there is a chance,—to be supernatural. The great Pan is dead, so there is a seat vacant among the gods, open to any aspirant for immortality. “All Art is quite useless!” cries Oscar Wilde-ly. And has it come to this? “Is this the Hand?” Yes, this is his last word—for the present. Pan is dead! Vive Pannikin!

#### Comments on the Novel

*The Glasgow Herald. 30 April 1891. P9. “Literature.”*

“The Picture of Dorian Gray.” By Oscar Wilde. (London: Ward, Lock & Co.)—Criticism has long ago said its best and its worst, in each case with ample emphasis, of the well-known novel which originally appeared under Mr Oscar Wilde’s name in the pages of Lippincott. In its present substantive form the book, with its unique and piquant binding and lettering, its characteristic title-page, and yet more characteristic preface, is a delight to eye and hand. In the preface Mr Wilde takes the opportunity of delivering in a series of oracular aphorisms his crystallised views on art. As might be expected, they are smart and sparkling, and amusingly grave and superior. Most of them are none the less true on



that account. “It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors” is much more to the purpose than the commonly accepted pronouncement. On the other hand, the ultra-aesthetic attitude of the artist and the believer in this beatific vision of the Beautiful is summed up in the deliciously naïve dictum—“We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it.” There may be some benighted mortal who has not yet read “Dorian Gray.” If after seeing the present edition of the story he refuses to buy it, he must indeed be a Philistine beyond hope.

*The Scotsman. 4 May 1891. P3. “New Novels.”*

Mr Oscar Wilde’s story *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2) came out originally in an American magazine, and the Americans, who have some sense of humour, must have found it tolerably amusing. It is so affected as to be funny. The central idea is a mere fancy, but the flimsiness of the foundation is a rock compared with the airy absurdities of the style and treatment. You are presented to a beautiful young man, who is supposed to be a type of the children of this end of the century. In the Scottish phrase, he is “vera bonnie, but he’s no weel guidit.” He has his portrait painted, and as his moral corruption proceeds, the portrait shows the degradation in the features, while the man himself retains all his freshness and juvenility of appearance. After being the death of his sweetheart and murdering the man who painted his portrait, Dorian tries to cut up the picture, but only succeeds in killing himself, when the picture becomes once more as fresh as paint while Dorian himself takes on the loathsomeness of aspect appropriate to his character. Now, as an idea, there is very little in this to make a book of. There are some benevolent persons, it is true, persons of unimpeachable morals and inured to the practice of virtue, who, when photographed at the seaside, appear to the thoughtless eye to be bloodthirsty and abandoned ruffians. But they do not kill the photographer, however small the number of copies he gives you for a shilling; nor do they, as Dorian does, speak in exalted terms about Art. In fact, small but pretentious talk about Art occupies the chief part of the book, as it forms the whole of the preface which the author has issued with the story in this form. Mr Wilde’s principal point in the preface seems to be that old fallacy that art has nothing to do with morals. But if so, why does he make Dorian a murderer instead of a mere painter, or poet, or novelist?

*The Manchester Guardian*. 5 May 1891. P9. "Books of the Week."

Mr. Oscar Wilde must be laughing in his sleeve when he puts that amazing preface of paradoxes to his enlarged edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Ward and Lock, pp. 334)—“There is no such thing as a moral book,” “The elect are those to whom beautiful things mean only beauty,” and so forth. The fact is that he has written a highly moral book, and, being surely himself one of the elect, he proves to us that beauty is not merely worthless but a snare. He says such hard things of critics that all that is left for them is to go forth bravely and encounter the stones with which he pelts them. Everyone knows that Mr. Oscar Wilde, however he may pose in a different character, is really a clever man. He writes charmingly, and sometimes even wittily. He can describe a dramatic situation with effect. He has made no plot in this book, but probably could if he tried. The odd thing is that while he declares in his preface that art and beauty are real and morals are fiction, he has produced an allegory to show us that beauty is vain and its worship fatal, that self-indulgence and selfishness, which must be cruelty, will destroy a man in the end. If Balzac’s “*Peau de Chagrin*” had never been written, if Dr. Jekyll [sic] and Mr. Hyde had never appeared, this “*Picture of Dorian Gray*” would never have seen the light. But the fault is that no symbol is suggested by the peculiar form of Mr. Wilde’s magic, while beneath each of the other stories lies a tremendous truth. Dorian Gray’s portrait is painted by an artist who, we regret to say, adores his remarkable beauty. As he is presented with his own portrait, Dorian Gray breathes a devout prayer that the picture may grow old while he remains young for ever. So, with the assistance of Lord Henry, the tempter, and a wicked French novel, he grows old in soul and foul and cruel in his ways, while the picture changes its fresh young beauty into the record of corruption and decay. There are few incidents. The easy descent into Avernus is sketched with enough force, but never defined. In this course there is artistic as well as moral delicacy. The fate of Sybil Vane, whom Dorian Gray refuses to marry because in her absorbing love for him she fails in her attempt to personate Juliet when he has brought his friends to admire her talent; his conduct afterward under the cynical influence of Lord Henry; the murder scene, when his anger at the horrible changes in the portrait moves him to revenge himself on the painter; his escape from Sybil’s brother when he shows him his young face and convinces him that he could not have committed a crime eighteen years ago—these incidents are vivid

and dramatic, though the opium scenes are a failure. In all we feel the moral, but we are forbidden to ask for a key to the allegory. What truth is hidden in the power given to Dorian to remain fresh and young and lovely while the picture ages? Why should he stab himself when he means to destroy the picture, and why should youth be restored to the picture while the dead body assumes its due hideousness? Mr. Oscar Wilde may storm if he pleases; the truth is that this is a failure in art, not, as he would have us agree, a noble scorn of vulgar requirements. As for his paradoxes, they are at times amusing, but if we could imagine a reader growing sleepy over the book we should expect to hear him mutter as he dozes, "The bad is better than the good," "The round world is as flat as the critic's pancake," and that sort of stuff would not be very far from the text. Mr. Oscar Wilde can write capital English and sometimes say witty things, as when he describes the forty old gentleman at the Athenaeum in forty armchairs practicing for an Academy of Letters. But Mr. Oscar Wilde is far too clever to have the right to be silly.

*The Bookseller. 6 May 1891. P449 on The Bookseller (1891).*

It is difficult to classify Mr. Oscar Wilde's story. Is it a novel, or a philosophy, or a criticism? In a singular preface the author delivers himself of certain characteristic aphorisms: "The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all. All art is quite useless," he finally exclaims as the last pronouncement of the school of Mawdle [sic] and Botticelli Brown. The story that follows is just as peculiar as the preface. It is a case of transformation as strange as any told by Mr. Stevenson, and with guide as mysterious a transference of identity. At the end we gaze in horror upon the being which until that moment had been an image of ideal beauty. The puzzling thing is that Dorian Gray should have for so long imposed upon his friends, while the world (on the other hand) had taken his measure more accurately. His life did not bear inspection, and even the suggestions of it were better left alone. The whole story from beginning to end breathes an unwholesome hothouse atmosphere, though its cleverness and artistic qualities are not to be denied.

*Freeman's Journal. 16 May 1891. P6. "In Bookland."*

Daring paradoxes, epigrams—some startlingly brilliant and others as dull—and ruthless cynicism run rampant throughout this somewhat unevenly written novel. The sayings of that remarkable nineteenth century drawingroom Diogenes, Lord Henry Wotton, would of themselves form a curious collection of verbal pyrotechnics. Though, to use a mild term, generally unsound they oft-times in a few sarcastic phrases convey a world of meaning. Thus, speaking of a certain lady, he declares that she “tried to found a salon and only succeeded in opening a restaurant.” Of another he states that “she is a peacock in everything but beauty,” and gives as a reason for not caring for his brothers that his elder brother won’t die whilst his younger brothers never do anything else. But despite the pseudo thinly veneered false philosophy with which this abnormally gifted scion of aristocracy inundates the book, it on the whole teaches a vivid moral lesson. Its hero, Dorian Gray, when first presented, is in the flush of extraordinary beauty and the pride of glowing youth. Basil Hallward, a celebrated artist and also an attached friend of Dorian, paints a portrait of the latter. Just as he has completed his labour of love an event occurred which Hallward dreaded. Lord Henry, who was likewise an intimate of his, became acquainted with the fresh, innocent, ingenuous youth. Basil was but too justly apprehensive of the baleful influence the sneering, unsparing cynic would exercise over Dorian. His fears were realised to the full. On their introduction Lord Henry indulges in some brilliant aphorisms on the fleeting nature of beauty. These cause Dorian to look with hatred on his picture which will remain unchangeable whilst day by day he himself will slowly but none the less surely decay. This idea impresses itself with such terrible tenacity on his mind that he impassionedly asserts he would make any sacrifice in order that it might be the painting which would grow old and that he might retain his youthful appearance. By a fanciful use of the novelist’s privilege this prayer is granted. Owing mainly to the insidious and hollow precepts enunciated by Lord Wotton, Dorian sinks from one abyss of excess and vileness into another, until finally he imbrues his hands in blood and is the very personification of human degradation. But all this time he remains seemingly as young and incapable of committing the most trivial breach of divine or other laws as when he sat to Basil for his portrait. Not so, however, with the wonderful picture. It not only duly chronicled the wear and tear which time works on all mortality, but also depicted the appalling characters that profligacy indelibly writes on the human

countenance. According as Dorian fell each of his sins was vividly portrayed on the lineaments of the picture. Thus, at last, we have him standing before the fated portrait the very beau ideal of virile beauty, whilst the painting represents a prematurely aged man, whose face and form are rendered hideous by the combined effects of years of unbridled dissipation and sensuality. How this weird and powerfully written tale ends it would not be fair to the author to say. Let all those who are anxious to know peruse “The Picture of Dorian Gray.”

*The Theatre. 1 June 1891. “Reviews.” P295 in The Theatre v. 26 (1891).*

“Dorian Gray,” as the finished work of a literary exquisite, must command a certain attention. It is the very genius of affectation crystallised in a syrup of words. Reading it, we move in a heavy atmosphere of warm incense and slumbering artificial light. We thread our way through a mob of courtier epigrams, all bowing, all murmuring to the white lily of beauty, all forced to premature growth in the hothouse of a somewhat sickly fancy. We long to push on to the light, and the blowing wind, and the clean air of honest commonplace that Mr. Wilde’s cultured puppets cry faugh! to. The author and his following have nothing in common with the lilac and violet they belaud. Their most fragrant speech stirs no one of the breezy plumes: nor is the spirit of the dank ghostly wood an open secret to them. Not for them is “A green thought in a green shade,” but rather that comfortable mystic pessimism, which “the bliss of being sad made melancholy.” Power is here, but rather the inventive power of the engineer than the creative force of the artist. Still, to say that only an age that had produced the wild study of Dr. Jekyll’s [sic] dual personality could give birth to a “Dorian Gray” is not necessarily to disparage the latter. That shrewd knowledge of the weight and value of words that Mr. Stevenson has taught us, has pierced the cuticle of man a man of letters who would be loth to acknowledge his teacher. But that disciples may outdo their masters is an obvious truism, and “Dorian Gray” may remain a psychical curiosity when Dr. Jekyll is forgotten. It is at least undeniably clever, and even brilliant—as a sick man’s eye. Looking at it from the point of view of dramatic possibilities, we are bound to recognise in it great attractions, saying, alone, in its almost utter lack of true humanity. As a book, it is, from

cover to finish, an elaborate work of art, extremely clever, wonderfully ingenious, and even fascinating; but not convincing, from that same absence of human interest.

*The Daily Telegraph. 15 June 1891. P2. "Literature of the Day."*

Mr. Oscar Wilde's novel, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" (Ward, Lock, and Co.), has a character and a style with which the majority of English readers have probably not often made acquaintance. There is a good deal of what is sometimes called "The New Paganism" in these pages; for the book is not only full of that philosophy which makes pleasure the end of life, but is fashioned after a Greek model, dealing with the influence which an extremely modern Socrates has upon a beautiful and very susceptible Alcibiades. Yet, perhaps, it would be truer to say that, however much the young man who wrecked himself and Athens might recognise a kindred soul in Dorian Gray, Socrates would hardly avow much sympathy with Lord Henry Wotton—except that both were facile framers of paradoxes. If Mr. Wilde had not himself assured us in his preface that no artist desires to prove anything, a virtuous reader might have found in the fate of the hero a tremendous and most un-Pagan moral as to the easiest route to the everlasting bonfire. As, however, no evidences of a didactic intention must be sought for in "Dorian Gray," we can only regard it as an extremely clever study, not always quite pleasant in tone, of a complex stage in modern culture, which the author has painted in strong colours and adorned with many memorable epigrams. In some respects the workmanship is a little like that of M. Paul Bourget, though the analytical power is not so great nor perhaps the psychology so thorough as in the best work of the French writer.

*The Athenaeum. 27 June 1891. "Novels of the Week." P824 in The Athenaeum no3297–3322 (1891).*

Mr. Oscar Wilde's paradoxes are less wearisome when introduced into the chatter of society than when he rolls them off in the course of his narrative. Some of the conversation in his novel is very smart, and while reading it one has the pleasant feeling, not often to be enjoyed in the company of modern novelists, of being entertained by a person of decided ability. The idea of the book may have been suggested by Balzac's 'Peau de Chagrin,' and it is none the worse for that. So much may be said for 'The

Picture of Dorian Gray,' but no more, except, perhaps, that the author does not appear to be in earnest. For the rest, the book is unmanly, sickening, vicious (though not exactly what is called "improper"), and tedious.

*The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art. 17 October 1891.*

"Novels." P450 in *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* v. 72 (1891).

In his kaleidoscopic preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a preface made up of little fragments of coloured paradox which you may rattle into any shape you please, Mr. Wilde seems to claim for his tale consideration as a work of art, and to deprecate every other critical attitude. We are sure that he will not wish us to go beneath the surface of his book, or look upon its author in any light but that of one who desires to be, as he says, "the creator of beautiful things." We will, accordingly, waive our right to ask whether certain subjects make a suitable theme for fiction, or whether the luscious fabrication of "a New Hedonism" is condoned by the fume of sulphur in the last chapter. We may leave all this to the Nonconformist Conscience, which will probably thank Mr. Wilde for his "timely exposures" of the wickedness of high life. In the following remarks we shall endeavour, with as much candour as possible, to show what measure of credit is due to Mr. Wilde for the technical execution of *Dorian Gray*.

The story is one of the essentially fantastic order, which Crébillon fils and the boudoir novelists of his age may be said to have invented, in which the evolution of a modern and realistic plot is disturbed by the introduction of a single wholly incredible incident. This is a kind of story more frequent in French literature than in English, and the very type of it is Balzac's *Peau de Chagrin*. It belongs to a perfectly legitimate class of fiction, but it so interweaves the threads of romanticism and naturalism that it demands extraordinary tact. The skill required is analogous to dancing on the tight rope. The storyteller tells us what we know could not possibly have happened, and he refuses us even the satisfaction of supposing ourselves the victims of an illusion. In order to keep us interested, he is incessantly entertaining us with local colour.

Let us say at once that Mr. Wilde has shown considerable adroitness in the general conduct of his story. A painter produces a marvellous portrait of a beautiful young man; the latter expresses the wish that the changes which passion, sin, and advancing age will make in his own personal appearance should be recorded on the portrait and not on himself. This wish is fulfilled, to the infinite horror of the young man. We confess that we do not clearly see why he should be so much distressed. In the *Peau de Chagrin* every fragment of the hero's action positively and obviously lessened the entire substance of his life. That was horrible, indeed; but why the fact that the wear and tear of existence is reflected on a locked-up canvas, which acts as scapegoat, and secures the hero a practical immortality of youth and beauty, should so greatly distress Dorian Gray, we acknowledge ourselves totally unable to understand.

It is not to be denied that the style in which this singular fantasy is told is careful and distinct. Its fault, indeed, is that it is too careful. The excessive elaboration of the sentences, the loaded splendour of the adjectives, is overdone. There is no repose, no reserve. The author models himself, sometimes very closely, upon Mr. Pater; but he has not his master's subtlety. The book is more interesting as an essay on self-indulgence than as a novel. Mr Wilde appears to think, and he should know; perhaps he feels a little, though not very poignantly; he does not appear to see at all. The descriptions in *Dorian Gray* are drawn with laborious care, and with an evidence desire to obtain freshness of effect through novel and violent imagery. But they never rise above still life and bric-à-brac. When such a scene is attempted as Dorian's visit to the opium den, or the interview with Alan Campbell, the art of the storyteller fails him, and we do not realize what happened. Some of the rich lists of reminiscences, though out of place in a story, have a curious attraction; and it is not always that Mr. Wilde, in spite of his odd air of dogmatic earnestness—a sort of priggishness turned inside out—becomes ridiculous. He makes us laugh, however, at a wrong place when Hallward draws out a long *Don Giovanni* list, with names and coats-of-arms, of the young men of fashion whom Dorian has led astray. Finally, then, we consider *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the result of strenuous effort by an accomplished man whose true talent does not lie in the path of storytelling, but who is too clever to fail altogether in doing anything to which he has given pains. So much toil has evidently gone to the production of this book, and it is so genuine an attempt to write well



in a kind in which bad writing is commonly taken for granted, that we honestly regret not being able to praise it in a more unqualified fashion.

*The Bookman*. November 1891. "A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde. By Walter Pater." P59–60 in *The Bookman vol 1* (Oct. 1891–Mar. 1892).

There is always something of an excellent talker about the writing of Mr. Oscar Wilde; and in his hands, as happens so rarely with those who practise it, the form of dialogue is justified by its being really alive. His genial, laughter-loving sense of life and its enjoyable intercourse, goes far to obviate any crudity there may be in the paradox, with which, as with the bright and shining truth which often underlies it, Mr. Wilde, startling his "countrymen," carries on, more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Mathew Arnold. *The Decay of Lying*, for instance, is all but unique in its half-humorous, yet wholly convinced, presentment of certain valuable truths of criticism. Conversational ease, the fluidity of life, felicitous expression, are qualities which have a natural alliance to the successful writing of fiction; and side by side with Mr. Wilde's *Intentions* (so he entitles his critical efforts) comes a novel, certainly original, and affording the reader a fair opportunity of comparing his practice as a creative artist with many a precept he has enounced as critic concerning it.

A wholesome dislike of the common-place, rightly or wrongly identified by him with the bourgeois, with our middle-class—its habits and tastes—leads him to protest emphatically against so-called "realism" in art; life, as he argues, with much plausibility, as a matter of fact, when it is really awake, following art—the fashion of an effective artist sets; while art, on the other hand, influential and effective art, has taken its cue from actual life. In *Dorian Gray* he is true, certainly, on the whole, to the aesthetic philosophy of his *Intentions*; yet not infallibly, even on this point: there is a certain amount of the intrusion of real life and its sordid aspects—the low theatre, the pleasures and griefs, the faces of some very unrefined people, managed, of course, cleverly enough. The interlude of Jim Vane, his half-sullen but wholly faithful care for his sister's honour, is as good as perhaps anything of the kind, marked by a homely but real pathos, sufficiently proving a versatility in the writer's talent, which should make his books popular. Clever always,

this book, however, seems intended to set forth anything but a homely philosophy of life for the middle-class—a kind of dainty Epicurean theory, rather—yet fails, to some degree in this; and one can see why. A true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's hero—his heroes are bent on doing as speedily, as completely as they can, is to lose, or lower, organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development. As a story, however, a partly supernatural story, it is first-rate in artistic management; those Epicurean niceties only adding to the decorative colour of its central figure, like so many exotic flowers, like the charming scenery and the perpetual, epigrammatic, surprising, yet so natural, conversations, like an atmosphere all about it. All that pleasant accessory detail, taken straight from the culture, the intellectual and social interests, the conventionalities, of the moment, have, in fact, after all, the effect of the better sort of realism, throwing into relief the adroitly-devised supernatural element after the manner of Poe, but with a grace he never reached, which supersedes that earlier didactic purpose, and makes the quite sufficing interest of an excellent story.

We like the hero and, spite of his, somewhat unsociable, devotion to his art, Hallward, better than Lord Henry Wotton. He has too much of a not very really refined world in him and about him, and his somewhat cynic opinions, which seem sometimes to be those of the writer, who may, however, have intended Lord Henry as a satiric sketch. Mr. Wilde can hardly have intended him, with his cynic amity of mind and temper, any more than the miserable end of Dorian himself, to figure the motive and tendency of a true Cyrenaic or Epicurean doctrine of life. In contrast with Hallward the artist, whose sensibilities idealise the world around him, the personality of Dorian Gray, above all, into something magnificent and strange, we might say that Lord Henry, and even more the, from the first, suicidal hero, loses too much in life to be a true Epicurean—loses so much in the way of impressions, of pleasant memories, and subsequent hopes, which Hallward, by a really Epicurean economy, manages to secure. It should be said, however, in fairness, that the writer is impersonal: seems not to have identified himself entirely with any one of his characters: and Wotton's cynicism, or whatever it be, at least makes a very clever story possible. He becomes the spoiler of the fair young man, whose bodily form

remains un-aged; while his picture, the chef d'oeuvre of the artist Hallward, changes miraculously with the gradual corruption of his soul. How true, what a light on the artistic nature, is the following on actual personalities and their revealing influence in art. We quote it as an example of Mr. Wilde's more serious style.

“I sometimes think that there are only two eras of any importance in the world's history. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinous was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me. It is not merely that I paint from him, draw from him, sketch from him. Of course I have done all that. But he is much more to me than a model or a sitter. I won't tell you that I am dissatisfied with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that Art cannot express it. There is nothing that Art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work, is the best work of my life. But in some curious way his personality has suggested to me an entirely new manner in art, an entirely new mode of style. I see things differently. I can now recreate life in a way that was hidden from me before.”

Dorian himself, though certainly a quite unsuccessful experiment in Epicureanism, in life as a fine art, is (till his inward spoiling takes visible effect suddenly, and in a moment, at the end of his story) a beautiful creation. But his story is also a vivid, though carefully considered, exposure of the corruption of a soul, with a very plain moral, pushed home, to the effect that vice and crime make people coarse and ugly. General readers, nevertheless, will probably care less for this moral, less for the fine, varied, largely appreciative culture of the writer, in evidence from page to page, than for the story itself, with its adroitly managed supernatural incidents, its almost equally wonderful applications of natural science; impossible, surely, in fact, but plausible enough in fiction. Its interest turns on that very old theme; old because based on some inherent experience or fancy of the human brain, of a double life: of *Döppelgänger*—not of two persons, in this case, but of the man and his portrait; the latter of which, as we hinted above, changes, decays, is spoiled, while the former, through a long course of corruption, remains, to the outward eye, unchanged, still in all the beauty of a seemingly immaculate youth—“the

devil's bargain." But it would be a pity to spoil the reader's enjoyment by further detail. We need only emphasise, once more, the skill, the real subtlety of art, the ease and fluidity withal of one telling a story by word of mouth, with which the consciousness of the supernatural is introduced into, and maintained amid, the elaborately conventional, sophisticated, disabused world Mr. Wilde depicts so cleverly, so mercilessly. The special fascination of the piece is, of course, just there—at that point of contrast. Mr. Wilde's work may fairly claim to go with that of Edgar Poe, and with some good French work of the same kind, done, probably, in more or less conscious imitation of it.

## 1891 American Reviews

*The book does not appear to have been widely commented on in the United States, and the second of these two reviews refers to the magazine rather than book version.*

*Columbus Enquirer-Sun. 2 August 1891. P10. "Metropolitan Gossip. Some Pleasant Notes of Southern Interest."*

We saw the other day No. 127 of an edition de luxe of 220 copies of "The Picture of Dorian Gray," by Oscar Wilde. It is signed by the author, who has added six chapters and a prefix, which is in the nature of an argument—or rather an evasion of the question of the morality of the book. This copy was sold to a Southern lady and brought over by her on the Teutonic last week. It is bound in pale gray silk with a design in gold of conventionalized marigolds. The illustrations are as fantastic as the text and lurid eyes, mocking eyes and eccentric designs as well as execution mark the whole work. In the preface the author states that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or ill written. That is all." Well, that is enough, some think, to damn Dorian Gray.

*Dallas Morning News. 15 February 1891. P4. "An Hour With Books."*

The world has long regarded Mr. Oscar Wilde as incapable of writing anything deep or serious. His poses as a disciple of aestheticism and his sickly lackadaisical way disgusted all Americans. His name thus became synonymous with shallow, boyish sentimentality. He was written down a crank with an unusual craze, who would live his little day upon

the world's stage, amuse the people for a while with his quaintness and then be forgotten. When the announcement was made that he had adopted literature as a profession the world thought it a huge joke and laughed outright.

His first work, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which was given a forced popularity through the medium of Lippincott's was shocking. There was some strength in it, but more of morbidness and disgusting passion. But he has come bravely out of all this, and "Guido Ferranti" is a tragedy which will rank with some of the best productions of the day. Recognizing and bowing to the prejudices against Mr. Wilde had obtained in this country, Mr. Lawrence Barrett, who first introduced "Guido Ferranti," waited until its popularity was secured before he permitted the name of the author to appear on the boards. ...

*While the Dallas Morning News published this negative review, it also published a group of Dorian quotes in "Keeping their Secret" (Sept 14, 1890, p17)*

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** F.S. Nakhaie

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** University of Windsor  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
2008–2013 B.A.

University of Waterloo  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada  
2013–2014 M.A.

Western University  
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**Related Work Experience** Teaching Assistant  
University of Waterloo  
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### Publications:

“Black Lives Matter Movement Finds New Urgency and Allies Because of COVID-19.”  
5 July 2020. Co-Author. *The Conversation*. <<https://theconversation.com/black-lives-matter-movement-finds-new-urgency-and-allies-because-of-covid-19-141500>>