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The dialogic dramaturgy of Matthew Bourne's *Dorian Gray*

Jackie Smart

Abstract

In this article, I consider Matthew Bourne's adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the light of recent theoretical perspectives on dramaturgy and translation which are less concerned with, respectively, synthesis and 'authority' than with complexity and negotiation. Relating these perspectives to Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and Kristeva's of intertextuality, I discuss Bourne's ballet as a dialogue between authors (including Bourne's collaborators), between texts and between forms. I explore how Bourne's is situated in his reading of Wilde's novel and interrogate his seemingly contradictory statement that he can remain 'true' to his source while 'taking liberties' with it. The article focuses on Bourne's translation of Wilde's central image, the picture itself, but also includes reference to critical reception of both the novel and the ballet. Its key aim is to illuminate the ways in which the multiple strands of this translation connect outwards from the ballet to sociopolitical, cultural and aesthetic concerns relevant, in different ways, to both Wilde and Bourne. Artists and academics in the fields of both dramaturgy and translation studies have for some time been engaged in a broadening of focus. As Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt explain in their editorial for an issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* dedicated to 'new dramaturgies':

Keywords

dramaturgy

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adaptation

intertextuality

polyphony

authorship

Dramaturgs and scholars have long attempted to free dramaturgy as a discipline, practice and term from exclusive concern with synthesis of meaning, with the dramatic text, or, still more narrowly, with Aristotelian dramaturgy[...]. This [...] has arisen out of the proliferation of new forms, working processes and questions facing contemporary performance and theatre practitioners and audiences. (Turner and Behrndt 2010: 146)

Accordingly, many recent studies of dramaturgy have extended their scope to include collaborative devised work, 'postdramatic' performance and dance. Two central reference points for such studies have been Eugenio Barba's conception of dramaturgy as a 'weave' (1985: 75–78) and Marianne Van Kerkhoven's suggestion that new dramaturgy is about 'learning to handle complexity' (2009: 7). Both these influential perspectives have to do with a new understanding of dramaturgy as being less concerned with producing or discovering unified meaning and more with paradigms of coexistence of and interplay between differing strands of meaning. Their focus is on the relations between the discourses and elements 'in play'. In the words of the Australian academic and dramaturg Paul Monaghan, dramaturgy is "“between”, “trans”, “across”; it is connective and sometimes dispersive' (2011: 76).

The connection I am making to translation studies arises out of this emphasis on the ‘in-between’. Twenty-first century conceptions of translation propose that a translation is something other than a direct copy of an original; it is instead ‘a fundamental act of human exchange’ (Bassnett 2002: 1), a negotiation between languages and cultures in which the translator must make choices about how to interpret and recontextualize the dramatic text. This perspective has grown out of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, in particular the absorption of post-structural and postcolonial theories which propose a view of translation as ‘essentially dialogic, as a process that happens in a space that belongs to neither source [language] nor target [language] absolutely’ (Bassnett 2002: 6). For theatre translator and academic, David Johnston, translation ‘is potentially a prism that releases, that fires off in different directions a series of intercultural and intertemporal moments that challenge and enrich spectator reception and experience’ (2011: 19). Johnston’s reference to a ‘prism’ recalls André Lefevere’s substitution of the term ‘refraction’ for ‘reflection’ in his influential essay on Brecht’s *Mother Courage* (Lefevere 2004: 240). Such metaphors present the activities and effects of translation as plural rather than singular, occurring not only between author and translator but also between the diverse cultural codes and systems within which both source and translation are situated.

Bourne is an adaptor rather than a translator, dealing not in linguistic exchange but in the much broader activity of transforming – in the case of *Dorian Gray* – text into dance. Thus he cannot be ‘literal’ in his interpretation: he has to find physical and visual ways to translate words on a page into the three-dimensional, present, visual, physical, musical form of dance. Adaptation, however, especially dance adaptation, is a field that

has received limited critical attention and I feel that the theoretical perspectives offered by translation studies, when considered in ‘dialogue’ with the dramaturgical perspectives discussed above, can open up interesting directions in terms of analysis. Susan Bassnett highlights three recurring stratagems articulated in postcolonial discussions of translation, all of which are relevant in relation to Bourne’s treatment of Wilde’s novel: a reconsideration of notions of ‘faithfulness and equivalence’, a new visibility of the translator within the translation and ‘a shift of emphasis that views translation as an act of creative rewriting’ (Bassnett 2002: 6). My intention is to explore whether these stratagems are present in Bourne’s adaptation of Wilde’s novel, conceiving of the ballet as being in dialogue with the novel in order to explore, in Johnston’s words, ‘the cultural momentum of the text, its journey through time and space, along which it acquires and absorbs different meanings and potentials for performance’ (2011: 20–21). Not being a dance specialist, I do not attempt to analyse in depth the movement content of Bourne’s ballet, but instead to bring my dramaturgical perspective to bear on how particular creative choices made by Bourne in his version of *Dorian Gray* stage a conversation between novel and ballet which, I suggest, can expand and multiply the potential ‘readings’ of each.

As an adaptor, the space between source and translation is Bourne’s chosen habitat and he consciously foregrounds the relationship between the two. He has based most of his pieces on existing, often canonical, artistic works including ballets from the classical repertoire (*Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Nutcracker!*), opera (*Car Man*) and film (*Edward Scissorhands*). It is his intention that these should be interpreted in the light of their relationship to the ‘original’, indeed their effect depends upon it. Discussing the

dramaturgical practice of Bertolt Brecht, Turner and Behrndt point out how much of Brecht's work consists of adaptations of existing, often canonical, texts. Indeed, they argue that 'for Brecht, dramaturgy is frequently defined through adaptation', emphasizing the fact that he 'consistently chose to enter into a dialogic, or indeed dialectical relationship with other playwrights through strategies of adaptation and assimilation' (Turner and Behrndt 2008: 43). I do not suggest that Bourne shares Brecht's Marxist intentions – perhaps one might say that his approach is more dialogical than dialectical – but I do propose that, in re-visioning his source material, often in irreverent ways, he aims to playfully disrupt traditional conventions of interpretation. Like Brecht, two central aspects of Bourne's method are to highlight those aspects of the source material that have most relevance for today's society and to draw on popular performance forms in order to make the relevance of that material accessible to more diverse audiences. He takes pleasure in the idea that his productions might return people to his source material 'with an altered perspective' (Bourne 2011).

I have so far referred to 'Bourne's ballet' as if it was created by him alone, but of course it was not. Although the work is titled *Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray* and the programme describes it as 'devised and directed by' him, in interview he was keen to emphasize the collaborative nature of the creative process. It is interesting to note how many stage adaptations of novels are created collaboratively. This has come about, perhaps, because stories and novels have been favourite starting points for devising-based companies. This collaborative approach to adaptation multiplies the number of creative voices involved in the dialogue between source text and performance and would be a fascinating study in itself. Unfortunately, I do not have room to address this aspect of

Bourne's process in depth here and, for the sake of readability, I will continue to refer to Bourne as a singular creative entity. It is important to note, though, that the voices and perspectives of the dancers, designers and composer are also, to borrow Van Kerkhoven's phrase, part of the 'ongoing conversation' of the work (2009: 10). Bourne's *Dorian Gray* 'sprang out of a workshop based on male duets maybe a year before this came out [which was] me exploring' (Bourne 2011) and which was originally called 'Romeo, Romeo'. Significant amounts of the choreography devised by the dancers in this workshop (in response to exercises set by Bourne) appeared with only minimal changes in *Dorian Gray*, a fact acknowledged by Bourne in the programme which gives joint credit to 'Matthew Bourne and the company' for the choreography. Richard Winsor, who danced the role of Dorian and Jason Piper, who took over the role of Basil Hallward in the second version of the ballet, were both involved in this workshop. It is this second version of the ballet, which was revised during a four week rehearsal period following the initial version's first tour and which I saw at Sadler's Wells theatre on 7 July 2009 to which I refer in this article.

Since I cannot cover every aspect of the ballet here, I focus on the choices made by Bourne in relation to the central metaphor of Wilde's novel, the picture itself. I am interested in the conversation these choices open up about the nature and function of the image – particularly the portrait – as concept. Bourne's representation of the picture is multiple and complex: the most direct aspect of it is a translation of the portrait of Dorian Gray, painted by the artist Basil Hallward in the novel, into a series of promotional images shot by the photographer Basil Hallward in the ballet; more indirectly, Bourne transforms a character in the novel, James Vane, into a Doppelgänger of Dorian Gray

himself. I begin with this second element, linking it to the intersection between the two ‘authors’ of *Dorian Gray*, Matthew Bourne and Oscar Wilde.

Doubles and Doppelgängers: Between authors

The redefinition of notions of faithfulness and equivalence that has taken place in translation studies calls attention to the cultural and political dimensions of source text and translation. Where, for instance, a literary work engages with the politics of a particular country or era, the translator must decide whether to faithfully reproduce the specifics of the original or to find an equivalent situation in the ‘target’ culture which, while it carries the translation away from its original source might, paradoxically, allow the reader greater access to the author’s political intent. It should not be forgotten that the author of the source text is also engaged in a dialogue with his own culture. The version of Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* we have today was itself a rewrite undertaken in response to the reception of his first version, published in July 1890 in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*.

In the revised 1891 novel, a new character appears. James Vane is the brother of Sybil, an actress to whom Dorian is briefly engaged and who kills herself when he deserts her. Vane disappears from the story in Chapter 5, to re-emerge in Chapter 16 as a figure of retribution who pursues Dorian in a shadowy way until he is himself killed. This character was added as part of a major rewrite Wilde undertook in response to the vitriolic critical response to the first version of his novel, which focused on its ‘corrupt’ nature. According to the *Scots Observer*, for instance, the novel dealt ‘with matters only fitted for the criminal investigation department’ (Anon cited in Drew 2001: xi). As such,

the character might be seen as an attempt by Wilde to reframe the novel within a more overtly ‘acceptable’ value system by introducing a character from whose perspective Dorian is unambiguously evil. In Bourne’s *Dorian Gray* Vane is replaced by a Doppelgänger (danced by Jared Hagerman), a young man who very closely resembles Dorian, increasingly threatening to step into his shoes and ‘steal’ his place as a figure of public and private adoration. In replacing James Vane with a Doppelgänger, Bourne points us towards a more ambivalent reading in which the central conflict lies within Dorian’s own nature.

As such, Bourne’s Doppelgänger represents both James Vane and Hallward’s portrait of Dorian, which he has hidden away so as not to have to confront the evidence of his ‘corruption’. In the ballet the Doppelgänger makes his first appearance immediately after the first death for which Dorian is (partly) responsible, the drug overdose of his lover Cyril (danced by Christopher Marney) and then becomes increasingly present. At various moments Dorian watches him as if stepping outside his body to observe himself in action. There is a slow and sensual drugged-up orgy where he watches the Doppelgänger have forceful sex with a young man; a club scene where he sees him dance with Hallward; a moment where he is surprised by the Doppelgänger’s emergence from Lady H’s bedroom (Lady H is danced by Michela Meazza). It is as if his own history is being played out before him, and aptly captures Wilde’s description of the painting which Dorian calls ‘a diary of my life [that I keep] from day-to-day’ (1992: 122). In the final scene of the ballet, which takes place in Dorian’s bedroom, Dorian and the Doppelgänger mirror each other’s movements before Dorian suffocates the Doppelgänger, thereby also killing himself. This is, of course, a parallel to the final scene

in Wilde's novel where Dorian stabs the painting, thus killing himself. A significant difference between this scene in the novel and the ballet is that where the body of Wilde's Dorian, 'withered, wrinkled and loathsome of visage' (Wilde 1992: 177) reveals the secret of his corruption, Bourne's Dorian remains a beautiful vision. His conflict with his 'double' kills him but fails to impact upon the world's perception of him. I will return to this point in my later discussion of Bourne's translation of portrait into photograph. Staying for the moment with the Doppelgänger, I want to investigate the weave of potential meanings his presence provokes.

Bourne's ballet is titled *Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray* and is described as having been 'freely adapted' from Oscar Wilde's novel (New Adventures 2011). The freedom of Bourne's adaptation though is tempered by his desire to be 'true' to the novel, to capture its 'essence'. In my interview with him he stressed that while he was happy to 'take liberties' with Wilde's work he believed that these were liberties the author 'would have approved of' (Bourne 2011). This choice of words suggests that Bourne identifies himself to some degree with Oscar Wilde. So, while acknowledging in the piece's title that this is his own interpretation of the novel, he aligns himself closely to the author of the original. Bourne's reading of the novel is that it is on one level, autobiographical, i.e., about Oscar Wilde. It is, though, also about himself as, following Barthes, any reading must be. He first read *Dorian Gray* as a teenager and recalls that

the thing that interested me was this love, seemingly obsession, between male characters [...] it felt like something I hadn't really explored myself [at the time] but was excited by

the possibility of. Even all those years after it was written it still seemed very daring to me. (Bourne 2011)

This first reading, then, was personal and emotional; it had significance for Bourne's developing sense of sexual identity and holds a symbolic place in his own autobiographical narrative.

His use of the word 'daring' gives us a clue as to Bourne's interest in Wilde as a role model. He identifies with Wilde as an artist who challenged the social and cultural mores of his era and feels for the writer as someone forced by his society to conceal or disguise his homosexual identity. In a sense I think he sees himself as Wilde's heir or proxy, able to state openly what Wilde could only imply. Returning to the book as an adult, its exploration of homosexual feelings remains of major interest to him but he now locates that in relation to other readings of the novel. He writes in his programme notes, 'it amuses me when people say that there are homoerotic "undertones" in the book. I suggest those people read it again' (New Adventures 2009), an overt invitation to his audience to compare his interpretation to its source text. His initial, personal, interpretation now forms part of a dialogue with the wider cultural sphere. While acknowledging, in the same programme note, the shift in attitude to homosexuality that has taken place, his wry comment about 'undertones' implies his sense of continuing cultural resistance to the *representation* of homosexual love and sex in art. Bourne's major cultural reference points, popular film and ballet, remain overwhelmingly

heterosexual in viewpoint and Bourne is implicitly using Wilde's tale as a springboard for a conversation about normative contemporary cultural representations of love and sex.

His identification with Wilde also has to do with Bourne's self-identification as an 'outsider' (Bourne 2011). On one level, he is referring back to his experience of growing up gay; on another, he is referring to his status in the world of dance. There is a contradiction in this respect that suggests a level of internal conflict. Bourne's critical and commercial success, his many awards and honorary doctorates and his position as Resident Artist at Sadler's Wells surely define him as a dance 'insider'. However, critics have found his work difficult to place in generic terms because he draws on so many different traditions, is willing to use elements from a wide variety of dance and performance forms and to mix up high art and popular culture. His privileging of narrative above dance steps has been praised and criticized in equal measure: he has been described as both a 'master story teller' and the man who 'made modern dance marketable by taking out the dance' (Seibert 2007). Like Wilde, he is both successful and suspected; hugely popular with the theatre-going public but mistrusted by dance world insiders because of his insufficient seriousness and, perhaps, their sense that his work is somehow mischievously mocking them. In dramaturgical terms, these complex layers of Bourne's reading of Wilde's novel play out within his process of adaptation, which draws on a range of sources beyond the novel itself, including other works by Wilde and about him, film versions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and a range of other books and films relevant to Bourne's conception (Bourne 2011). The dialogue between this particular novel and this particular dance is part of Bourne's ongoing interrogation of performance

forms and contexts and his negotiation of his own place in the cultural world, his stance in relation to it.

Bourne's position as an interpreter of Wilde's novel is, then, multifaceted and fluid, a description which might also be applied to Wilde's authorship of it. With no identified narrator or singular perspective, constructed largely of conversations in which the argument of one character is challenged by that of another, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a paradoxical text, full of questions for which there are competing answers. It is, in Bakhtin's term, 'polyphonic'. As Graham Allen explains:

In the polyphonic novel we find not an objective, authorial voice presenting the relations and dialogues between characters but a world in which all characters, and even the narrator him- or herself, are possessed of their own discursive consciousness [...]. No individual discourse can stand above any other discourse; all discourses are interpretations of the world, responses to and calls to other discourses. (2000: 23)

This dialogic condition of language exists not just between the characters of a novel, but within their own speech creating what Bakhtin refers to as a 'double-voiced discourse', meaning the sense that speech is directed towards an 'other', which may be an individual or a social group and may be present or absent. Julia Kristeva built on Bakhtin's ideas in her abstract theorization of 'intertextuality', a term she coined to describe the operation of conflicting historical, social and ideological meanings inscribed within words and, thus, within texts (Allen 2000: 32–59). For Kristeva, meaning resides simultaneously 'inside'

and ‘outside’ any text, since the words the text contains refer to concepts established before and beyond it, concepts which are often plural and contested. Her argument that all discourse is ‘double-voiced’ – that to understand a text as an intertext is to recognize its embodiment of simultaneous alternative meanings – troubles the attempts of dominant ideologies to establish singular understandings of phrases and concepts. In this sense, the concept of intertextuality is resistant and subversive. Subversion is also a quality attributed to the ‘creative’ translator who allows himself to be visible within the text. Citing Lawrence Venuti, Susan Bassnett suggests that translation, with its double allegiance to source and target cultures ‘is a reminder that no act of interpretation can be definitive’ (Venuti in Bassnett 2002: 9) and is thus ‘a dangerous act, potentially subversive and always significant’ (Bassnett 2002: 9). Bourne, as I have noted, makes himself extremely visible, placing his name in the very title of his adaptation. At the same time though, that juxtaposition of Bourne’s name beside Wilde’s character, *Dorian Gray*, highlights the relationship between the two.

As a gay man, Wilde was, of course, caught within the tensions of his time, but Bourne’s intertextual reading of the dialogue between Wilde’s novel and his life story is that he is also caught within the tensions in himself, his own conflicted value systems. The two major contrasting viewpoints are those of Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward. Lord Henry’s nihilistic perspective is summed up in the following:

We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us... The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield

to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself. (Wilde 1992: 18)

Basil Hallward, meanwhile is the personification of restraint and renunciation who, while he worships Dorian for his beauty, speaks to him of ‘honour, of goodness, of purity’ (Wilde 1992: 120). Dorian Gray stands between the two, influenced now by one, now by the other; at the heart of this novel is a character who is a paradigm of self-conflict, someone searching for his identity and constantly torn about which direction to take and how far to go. It would be difficult to translate the subtleties of Hallward and Wotton’s moral arguments into dance and Bourne does not attempt to. Instead he transfers their function to the Doppelgänger.

Seen in this way, Bourne’s introduction of the Doppelgänger figure could be interpreted as a staging of Dorian’s internal conflict but this creative intervention is not unconnected to Wilde’s original text. Wilde’s novel has been characterized by literary critics as a Gothic novel, a stylistic aspect Bourne chooses to highlight (New Adventures 2009). The classic instance of the Doppelgänger appears in Edgar Allen Poe’s short story, ‘William Wilson’ in which the eponymous hero is confronted at crucial moments of moral choice throughout his life by someone very like him and with the same name. The portrait of Dorian Gray painted by Basil Hallward in Wilde’s novel could itself be seen as a ‘quotation’ from Poe’s story: ‘how greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me’ says Poe’s William Wilson of his schoolfellow’s ‘imitation’ of him (Poe 1839). Bourne’s Doppelgänger is a more direct quotation of Poe and there are other references to ‘William Wilson’. For instance, a sequence where Dorian and the Doppelgänger dance in unison

within a setting of smashed mirrors references the final conflict of Poe's story where William Wilson realizes that the person he thought he had murdered is his literal mirror image. As well as highlighting the intertextuality of Wilde's 'original' text, the large mirrors in Lez Brotherston's design for Bourne cannot help but remind a dance audience of Bourne's own milieu, the dance-studio, reminding us that, as Wilde sought to push the limits of what could be written about in his own era, so Bourne tests the limits of what can be danced today. In the initial development period which eventually produced *Dorian Gray* Bourne asked his dancers to recreate famous male-female duets from ballets and film musicals as male-male. He wanted to know 'how far we could take it' (Bourne 2011) suggesting his awareness of the limits that still exist about the portrayal of homosexual relationships within the culture of ballet and 'popular' dance.

Lefevre's 'refraction' and Johnston's 'prism' strike me as very useful terms for illuminating the multiple functions of Bourne's Doppelgänger in relation to Wilde's text. One facet of the character is a simple theatrical device, a 'physical idea' (Bourne 2011) such as has been used by many adaptors to stage the inner dialogues of characters from literary novels. Other facets reveal the conflicts of both authors with themselves and their societies, Wilde's stylistic debts and Bourne's homage to them, Wilde's challenges to the literature and Bourne's to the dance of their respective eras. In placing two Dorians onstage, Bourne might also be making a direct reference to the co-presence of two 'authors'; to the dialogue between himself and Wilde in relation to, respectively, the social and cultural world of the 1890s and that of the twenty-first century, which brings me to yet another possible reading of the Doppelgänger in Bourne's ballet.

Taking my picture: Between times

Returning to my earlier point about how Bourne's Dorian remains beautiful in death, while the corpse of Wilde's Dorian reveals his inner corruption, I now want to explore another aspect of Bourne's translation of the picture, which is connected to his decision to update the tale's setting to the twenty-first century and the world of fashion and advertising. In this world, Bourne's Doppelgänger might be an actual, rather than a mythic, lookalike, just the next beautiful young man, indistinguishable from the beautiful young man he will replace. In this reading, Dorian is pursued not so much by death-as-retribution-for-sin as by death-as-boredom, the inevitable transfer of interest from him to the 'next big thing'.

David Johnston suggests that

Cultural analysis – through the work of the translator – can create ways by which the assumptions and practices of other cultures are infused into the assumptions and practices of an audience situated in the here and now of performance. (2011: 18–19)

Lawrence Venuti has discussed this practice of 'infusion' in terms of 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' (2004), where the first term refers to practices which focus on creating accessibility for the 'target' culture and the second to those which consciously evoke the 'foreignness' of the source or culture within the translation. There is a key difference here between translation and adaptation: in general, in theatrical adaptation, we have access to

the source text as well as to the performance since they are usually produced in the same language (and where the adaptation is of a foreign text, it will be of that text in translation). Hence the original is, to some degree, always present to the general audience member in the adaptation in a way that is much rarer for the reader of a translated text and ‘foreignizing’ reminders of the source text have less of a role to play. In the case of adaptations of canonical texts such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, even if audience members have not read the original, they will have some awareness of it or of its author or of the particular era in or circumstances under which it was written. Bourne’s task, as he sees it, is not to reproduce what is already available in another form but to find ways of evoking recognition of the themes and emotional content in the audience in relation to their own lives and culture. His decision to update *Dorian Gray* was based to a large degree on a theme of the novel which resonates differently for a twenty-first century reader than it did for Wilde’s contemporaries, that of ‘the glorification of the beauty of youth’ (Bourne 2011), and this interconnects with a dialogue that exists between novel and ballet about the public and the private in the 1890s and today.

Wilde’s picture is a portrait that is only ever seen by the artist, Basil Hallward, Dorian and Lord Henry. Hallward states that the portrait is ‘the best work of my life’ and ‘has suggested to me an entirely new manner in art’ (Wilde 1992: 12), yet he refuses to exhibit it publicly on the grounds that ‘I have put too much of myself in it’ (Wilde 1992: 6). As far as most contemporary critics of the novel were concerned, the aspect of himself that Basil did not wish to expose to the public gaze was his adoration of a beautiful young man and they did not distinguish between character and author. The book was ‘poisonous... heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction – a

gloating study of... corruption which might be horrible and fascinating but for its effeminate frivolity' (review in the *Daily Chronicle*, Drew 2001: x). Bourne's Basil Hallward has no need to hide his picture or to disguise his celebration of masculine beauty within the language of fine art. He is a photographer whose images of Dorian are taken for advertising purposes, to promote a perfume called Immortal Pour Homme. Thus far the dialogue between novel and ballet, between 'then' and 'now' can be interpreted as one of progress, of greater tolerance and diminishing prejudice. That however, is not the end of the story.

On the day of the portrait's completion Wilde's Dorian utters 'a mad wish', 'that he himself might remain young and the portrait grows old. That his own beauty might be untarnished and the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins' (Wilde 1992: 73). Once he realizes that this is what has happened, he conceals the portrait so that only he can witness its record of his inner corruption. Bourne's Dorian has no such option. The degradation of his image is seen publicly: the advert itself 'ages' becoming torn and battered; its sickness of soul is shown through other increasingly disturbing images of Dorian, one in which he is injecting drugs into his arm (suggesting 'heroin-chic') and another with his eyes poked out, blood sprayed across the surface of the image. Bourne's reference to today's tabloid world is inescapable. If the early photograph is a joyful hymn to gorgeous youth, the later ones bring to mind the red tops' delight in chronicling the flaws and foibles of the famous and the devil's bargain between PR companies and media to gain publicity by any means necessary. Wilde's Dorian has control over his public image; Bourne's Dorian does not. This highlighting of the part played by twenty-first century society in Dorian's downfall, offers a new perspective that

can alter our view of the novel, foregrounding the fact that Wilde's Dorian too adopts a role created for him by the society of his day. The hypocrisy of a society that privileges image over human reality has not changed, though the means by which it does so have 'advanced'.

Wilde's Dorian can only achieve eternal youth by 'magic'; in our own era, we can all achieve it, should we so desire, by recourse to the surgeon's knife. In Bourne's ballet, Wilde's metaphor becomes, to some extent, fact. The magic of Dorian's wish-come-true is replaced by the technology of the photograph and of plastic surgery. In a visual reference to the novel, Lez Brotherston's set creates the sense of a blank canvas with its white studio walls, against which, in an early sequence, models dressed in black strut and pose, hoping to catch the photographer's eye. Their status as aesthetic objects is reinforced by the repeated framing motifs of the choreography that introduces the audience to the world of this tale. In a sequence midway through the first half of the ballet, Dorian's physical appearance is manipulated by Lady H and a set of dancers in the masks and gowns of surgeons to a musical soundtrack that includes the repetitive beeping of the operating theatre. Between them, the photographer Basil Hallward and the publicist Lady H manufacture a 'Dorian Gray' they can present to the world and who can always be remade in the image the world desires. The effect is to provoke a reconsideration of Dorian's agency in the novel. Wilde's Lord Henry influences his young protégé with words and ideas, Basil Hallward by reflecting back to him his own ideal image but neither would have such power over Dorian without his own desire to establish himself within a society that privileges youth and beauty. Both Wilde's and Bourne's Dorians are subject to the force of the desires of others.

There is also an interesting formal interplay here that arises from the translation of literature into dance and which connects, dramaturgically, to Bourne's collaborative creative process. Bourne told me in interview that Brotherston is usually the first person he calls when he has an idea for a ballet. Citing author Phillip Pullman's assertion, in reference to the National Theatre's stage adaptation of his novel series, *His Dark Materials*, that 'in turning fiction into a stage performance "it has to become metaphorical not literal"' Govan et al. refer us to the fact that 'the Greek meaning of metaphor is "to carry across", which implies the transfer from one frame to another' (2007: 88). Brotherston must transfer Wilde's literary evocation of the glittering but superficial social world into which Dorian enters into a graphic, spatial form within which the performance can physicalize Dorian's journey through the time-space of the novel. Brotherston's set was in place in the studio from the beginning of rehearsals, providing an actual 'frame' for Bourne and the dancers to play within. Bourne said, of Brotherston's designs 'what's great [...] is that they are very adaptable to ideas. They're not just things that come in and hang there. It's like a moving thing that you can then have lots of ideas through' (Bourne 2011). Bourne's translation from word to image and action, therefore, takes place collaboratively and simultaneously on the levels of imagination and action, meaning and form.

The complex intersecting layers of Bourne's mode of translation are further illustrated the way he deals with the murder of Basil Hallward. In Wilde's novel, Hallward blames himself as much as Dorian for what occurs: 'I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it' (Wilde 1992: 125), a statement which the modern reader cannot help but associate with our knowledge of Wilde's own horrible 'punishment' for

his relationship with a beautiful young man. In Bourne's updated world in which sex between men no longer has to be a guilty secret, he transfers the source of conflict to ownership of the image. In the ballet, Dorian's murder of Hallward is provoked by a sequence in which the photographer will not stop taking his picture. In the first half, the choreography of Hallward and Dorian's first private meeting is characterized by a mixture of egotistical, self-loving poses and a push-pull dynamic that suggests the playful tension of sexual attraction. In this second duet, those same poses become aggressive and the dynamic tension between the performers, which uses many of the same moves as the earlier duet, has an unequal weight, a reluctance on Hallward's part which shows him being seduced in spite of himself. Dorian tempts him into the bath and then batters him to death with his own camera. Both Wilde's and Bourne's Dorians long to escape their pictures but while Wilde's Dorian cannot bear anyone to know about the truth behind the image, Bourne's twenty-first century Dorian is enraged by Hallward's refusal to see him as anything *but* an image. In our media-saturated society Bourne's Dorian is battling his transformation from person into 'personality'; the sacrifice of depth to two-dimensionality, the endless repetition of the same.

In the light of my earlier argument that Bourne's reading and staging of the novel contain elements of autobiography, it is interesting to consider this interpretation in relation to the critical reception of his ballet. Dance critic Judith Mackrell points out that much of the negative commentary on Bourne's *Dorian Gray* 'focused on the fact that the choreography looks trashy and posey' without acknowledging the fact that 'the world of celebrity it's portraying is itself trashy and posey' (Mackrell 2008). I suggest that the kind of criticism to which Mackrell refers is not wholly unconnected to a certain

snobbishness about Bourne's own overt 'commercialism', his contentment with the popular appeal of his ballets and the large and diverse audiences they attract. The world of Wilde's novel, although situated within an elite social milieu, was also considered by critics to be trashy and posey and contemporary reviews of it were similarly dismissive. Samuel Henry Jeyes described the book (and others like it) as 'incurably silly, written by simpleton poseurs' (Drew 2001: x). While modern critiques of Wilde's novel regard its witty banter as being underpinned by profound debates about the nature and purpose of art, personal moral liberty and human relationships, this thematic content was condemned at the time as 'tawdry philosophising [...] the contaminating trail of garish vulgarity which is all over Mr Wilde's elaborate Wardour Street Aestheticism and obtrusively cheap scholarship' (*Daily Chronicle* review in Drew 2001: x).

I began this article with a discussion of how recent perspectives on dramaturgy and translation have opened up new ways of thinking about adaptations such as the one considered here. The change of emphasis in new dramaturgies from synthesis to interplay and, in translation studies, from reproduction to negotiation suggest questions about authorship and interpretation, which provoked me to approach this analysis in dialogical terms. I have proposed that it is the territory 'in between' source material and interpretation that Bourne likes to inhabit, consciously provoking comparisons between original and adaptation which in turn raise questions about the location of each within their respective historical, socio-cultural and aesthetic contexts. Although Bourne wishes to be 'true' to Wilde's novel, it is the liberties he takes with it that make it interesting, by means of opening up a conversation between novel and ballet that extends and enriches

our interpretations of each. Rereading Wilde's novel after seeing Bourne's ballet, I found myself much more aware of its intertextual aspects and its polyphonic construction, of the competing, sometime contradictory voices within it. This rereading in turn suggested new layers of potential interpretation of the ballet and a greater appreciation of some of the tangential connections with the novel Bourne had made. The 'picture' presented in Bourne's ballet, weaves together many pictures: of Wilde; of himself; of their respective conflicts with and provocations of the social and cultural mores of their time; of the nature and function of the image; and of the eternal conflict within us all between being and being represented.

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Contributor details

Jackie Smart is currently joint Director of Studies for Dance and Drama at Kingston University. Her main research interests lie in devising and dramaturgy. She is co-editor, with Alex Mermikides, of the book, *Devising in Process* (2010, Palgrave Macmillan) and has published articles and chapters on companies including Forced Entertainment, Optik, Gecko and Random Dance. Jackie has created many devised productions, professionally and with students, usually working in an interdisciplinary mode with choreographers, composers and writers. As a practitioner and teacher, she has a particular interest in collaborative devising methodologies and the questions they raise about authorship. She is currently working with psychology scholar, Dr Fatima Felisberti on a project which will explore the connections between emotion and cognition in the perception and interpretation of paintings.

E-mail: J.Smart@Kingston.ac.uk