

Homoeroticising Dorian: A key word study

Melanie Fitton-Hayward
University of Nottingham

Abstract

*The interpreted meaning that we derive from a text is a combination of the inherent, author-selected semantics of its language, and the cultural and contextual situation in which it is read. In other words, a text's meaning is a culmination of ideas which fuse together at both the stages of reading and writing. The most popular interpretation of the text analysed here seems to transcend contextual and social influences. Modern-day readers of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* more often than not interpret a homoerotic element to the novel, although nothing of that nature is explicitly stated in the text. Its contemporary readers did the same. This analysis therefore asks, if such a popular pragmatic association drawn from this particular text is not dependent on context, is it solely created through its linguistic content?*

1 Introduction

On the 24th April 1895, Oscar Wilde was tried and sentenced for committing acts of gross indecency. Beside the ultimately damning evidence of his involvement in the physical act of sodomy, the prosecutor, Edward Carson, employed scattered quotations from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to further affirm the offender's sinful habits and corrupt existence. Similarly today, in a very different context, many of those familiar with the novel imagine the same inferred homosexuality. Despite the lack of an explicitly defined homoeroticism, this novel somehow manages to receive a homoerotic interpretation which transcends contextual bias. What is it in the text which makes us, and made Carson, see this?

Oscar Wilde's trial transcript documents a conversation comprising an accusation of homoeroticism in the novel and a defence against such a derogatory notoriety. Carson's attack on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* includes a claim that "when [Wilde] was publishing that book he had in his mind a novel [...]"

which would lead to and teach sodomitical practices” (Holland 2003: 100). Wilde defended himself by saying that “no work of art ever puts forward views of any kind [...] There are no views in a work of art” (2003: 80), and that a sodomitical reading of his book would be a “misinterpretation” (2003: 81). Whilst this ‘misinterpretation’ has become somewhat popular, the reasons for it are not unclear. It was in Carson’s favour to attribute such an interpretation to the novel to lend further evidence to his case, and it is possible that what we now know about Oscar Wilde’s sexual orientation is enough to plant the seed of such an interpretation, which will germinate with the slightest suggestion of a catalyst. In our modern era, his novel is celebrated as an expression of what was an illegal sexual identity in a very restricted era, the exact reason which provoked such controversy at the time of publication (Gillespie 1995: 78, 80). Interpretations of it have ranged from a celebration of gay rights and equality to an unlawful attempt at preaching evil practices. However, even these polar opposite readings share a common thread - the existence of a homosexual element.

An explanation for this meaning might therefore be proven by Corpus Linguistics, which surpasses cultural views and individual agendas. The ensuing analysis will use a comparison of the language in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with that of other 19th Century novels, alongside excerpts from the trial transcript to illustrate how the novel was used against Oscar Wilde, and how the latter defended himself. Although there does certainly seem to be a homoerotic element to the relationship between Basil and Dorian (1995: 82), it is not as simple a question as wondering whether this indicates a gay novel. This paper will not claim that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a discussion on, or an indication of Wilde’s own sexuality, nor will it aim to identify any ideals which he was seeking to preach. Rather it investigates whether corpus linguistics can support Carson’s assertion, adopted by many of Wilde’s readers, that the novel contains unusually homoerotic language, atypical of literature in general.

2 From the relevance of key words to theories of language, sexuality and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The foundations for the research which follows comprises three main theoretical categories: corpus linguistics and key word theories, theories of language and its links to gender, sexuality and identity, and finally critical writings associated primarily with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Whilst the aforementioned topics apply mainly to the writing of the text, they all coincide as a layering of meaning and ambiguity, created through contextual pragmatics, which defines how a novel is transformed into subjective and context-dependent meanings by its

reader. Teubert writes that meaning is purely created by its contextualised social interaction, rather than within cognitive processes (Teubert 2008: 65), whereas Culpeper states that “characters arise as a result of a complex interaction between the incoming textual information on the one hand and the contents of our heads on the other” (Culpeper 2002: 251). The latter is usually the most applicable, but as already mentioned, the particular element of meaning discussed here is not the subject of one reader’s imagination, but rather a collective interpretation. Wilde himself was quoted in the trial as saying, “What Dorian Gray’s sins are, no one knows” in answer to which he tried to defend his novel by adding that “[it] is according to the temper of each one who reads the book; he who has found the sin has brought it” and that “some people might think [that the novel deals with sodomy]” (2003: 78). So Wilde is in agreement that the meaning of a text is as much created in the interpretative reading as it is in the writing. This complicates how we derive meaning from this text in particular, as each individual’s reading and understanding of a text is partly a result of their contemporary context, and personal viewpoints. This corpus analysis provides the advantage of showing unbiased examples of language connoting a homoeroticised identity of Dorian Gray, with judgement declaring whether what is in the text is enough for such a widespread meaning to have taken hold.

‘Key Words’ are those which define the “aboutness” of a text (Scott and Tribble 2006: 58). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* we might expect some key words which could indicate an unusual sexual content. If there are many key words which denote homoerotic acts or desire, then, according to Scott and Tribble’s definition of ‘keyness’, this will be what the text is ‘about’ (2006: 55). But more than realising the inclusion of these words, their concordances and collocations must be investigated, to completely understand their semantic prosody in context, and to take into consideration the non-static nature of linguistic meaning. Only then will it be possible to determine whether the language of this novel identifies an unusual sexual identity.

Any discussion of language and sexuality must raise queries about identity. There is much discussion as to the involvement of sexuality in self-identification, with Cameron and Kulick taking the position that “not everyone defines their identity around their sexuality” (Cameron and Kulick: 2003: 8), and going on to explain that your sexual identity is “historically and culturally variable” (2003: 8). This suggests that, much like an interpretation of a text, your sexuality is influenced by your culture, and is not a set of defined principles automatically engrained in the character. The investigation into the link between language and sexuality ironically taught us that there are problems with assuming such a link, as ‘gayspeak’ involves acts, settings, and audience, not just sexual

or sensual words (Leap 1996: xi). Besides, even if we can use inferences in the text to establish whether there is a same-sex relationship involved, sexuality has a much greater effect on your identity than simply defining which gender(s) you desire (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 11). A consideration of how language can connote sexuality must consider not only the semantics of the vocabulary used, but also the function of meaning in context, and how we understand the pragmatics of the unspoken, as our sexual identity is created through our speech acts and our vocal presence, not just our vocabulary.

Whilst an explicitly defined homosexual sociolect could not exist in Wilde's time, the link which gayspeak suggests between language, identity, and sexuality must have existed in a subtle, foetal form. In other words, the language of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* must help us to identify the sexual desires of the characters. Identity is revealed through the medium of speech, so if the link between identity and sexuality is intrinsic, then the latter must be revealed also (Kulick 2003: 121). However, the non-static nature of language also demands a sensitivity to the context in which the text was written. This includes the actual date and social context of the author, as well as his individual agenda, life and the situations of publishing. Indeed, temporal semantic change always ensures that we cannot always take words simply at their current meaning. The word *gay* has experienced an obvious shift in meaning, from being used to purport happiness and frivolity to denoting a same-sex sexuality. And even within our current linguistic period, an alternative meaning of the word *queer* is to be obsessed (Ohl 2005: 62), alluding to a link between homosexuality and excess which will be important to the analysis later. Evidence from another corpus study has proved such minor differences between contemporary words, showing that *homosexual* is more often associated with acts whereas *gay* is associated with identities (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2008: 109). Of course, corpus tools are not infallible, and human judgement must be relied upon to respect the inherent sensitivity of the semantics and pragmatics of these terms. Whilst the corpus study can highlight where these differences lie, a certain amount of knowledge must also be applied to appreciate the differences between pseudo-synonyms, and a single word's changing meaning.

Crucially, in Wilde's time, the term *gay* did not indicate a sexuality, and the word *homosexual* had not yet been coined. Indeed, there was no real word for such a sexual orientation, merely the derogatory term *sodomite* which only referred to the sexual act itself, rather than to a particular gendered choice. People whom we would now term homosexuals, were at that time simply heterosexuals (after all, everybody was) who also completed unlawful and punishable acts of sodomy. Whilst there may be evidence of homoeroticism in the novel, we

cannot therefore actively question its inclusion of homosexuality, as this was not a recognised concept. This leaves no answer for the characters, leading to disorientated confusion over their sexual identity. In our modern era it is of course perfectly possible to write an openly gay novel, but the only way for Wilde to infer this whilst avoiding prosecution (as was the intention) was to be ambiguous. He thus activates a critique of the limitations and restrictions of Victorian law and discrimination, balanced by heavily invoking its traditional and hierarchical lifestyle, as seen in plenty of his works (Gillespie 1995: 76–77). This creates his own idea of society, a context taken rather out of context.

Individual identity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* functions on several levels, partly due to the doubling-effect of the portrait. The frame of the painting, which provides a boundary for Dorian's sin, is obscured, to the effect that we question whether the true Dorian and the immortal Dorian are one and the same. Idolising his portrait provides a solid surface beneath Dorian's abstract search for his self-identification, made problematic because his sexual identity was undefinable in his era. Dorian's relationship with his portrait thus centres upon his feelings of dislocation and disorientation, caused by his suffocating social context, and his search for a place (Ohl 2005: 73) in which he can coexist with his sexuality. The repetitive use of the word *seemed* (2005: 74) only continues to stress the ambiguity of the narrative, of the characters' (sexual) identities, and of the confusion over the true Dorian. The novel centres on "three men's rapt fixation with the image of a beautiful youth," (2005: 99–100) which has a different identity to its mortal subject. The two images of Dorian create a complex identity facet; the painting is the object of Dorian's fixation, and his mortal body is that of everyone else (incidentally, this fixation links with the forefront of homoerotic themes: excess and extravagance). Indeed, the way in which Oscar Wilde portrays the excessive homosexual sin indicates that Dorian is certainly punished for his crimes, and perhaps even dies for them. Dorian's death comes to punish his mortal body for the deepest sins of his soul, which had been previously embodied by his portrait, and society seems to get the better of Wilde in not allowing his potentially homosexual protagonist to live happily ever after. As well as by his human body and his portrait, Dorian's death gives another facet to his identity and his sexuality, and provides the only way in which his real self can be remapped alongside his portrait.

Almost as interesting as the words used to build Dorian's identity are those with which he is not associated, such as the rose which often accompanies descriptions of Sibyl (2005: 80), a typical association of women with delicate flowers. Sibyl herself often affects Dorian's own identity, providing the North to his innate moral compass, which is soon polarised by the corruption of Lord

Henry Wotton. Dorian's language when with Sybil suggests a confusion surrounding his obligation to repress his inherent homosexuality when in the company of women, or when expected to abide by convention. Regardless of how it is defined, most readers and critics agree that some level of homosexuality is defined, and that Basil desires Dorian in some way (Mahaffey 1998: 82), leading to "characters experiencing the conflicting power of sexual desire and puritanical repression" (Gillespie 1995: 76).

These theories of key words, language, sexuality, and the identity of the novel and its characters, will all interplay in the analysis which follows.

3 *Methodology*

The majority of those familiar with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, whether they have had direct contact with the text, or are reacting social stereotypes, make the assumption that several of the characters have homosexual inclinations. The same assumption about the same novel was used against Oscar Wilde in his prosecution, as further proof of his sinful tendencies. Why is the text so often interpreted as a homoerotic novel, and why was it considered scandalous enough to be used by Carson to support his attack on Wilde's morals? The ensuing analysis questions whether it is solely the responsibility of the linguistic content of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for forging these homoerotic connotations, or whether there is some reliance on the pragmatics which we derive, dependent on our culture and on our agenda in reading the text. Knowledge of the text itself, and of pivotal vocabulary used in the trial by the attack or defence, provides the background for this analysis.

The full text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was available from Project Gutenberg online (see the references section for details of the version used). Using a single version of this text prohibits me from making major assumptions and claims regarding Wilde's intentions, as the different revisions of the text, and the sometimes unauthorised changes which were made, mean that not all of the words in one version can be attributed to his own selection. However, the use of one text was perfectly adequate for my purpose: simply to investigate how any reader provided with any single version of the text might interpret the sexuality of the novel. After all, my investigation is as much into how readers of this text interpret its meaning as it is into how Wilde composed it.

The first stage of the analytical process into the semantics of the language was to produce a word frequency list – a basic-level way of showing the words used most frequently in one text. WMatrix (Rayson 2009) was used to create the word frequency list, and from the first 250 words of the list, a set of words

which were considered useful to the analysis based on certain criteria was compiled. The categories were as follows:

- Words which indicate an identity, or which identified an aspect of the characters, to define with what they are most commonly associated
- Words which would usually be considered to indicate a sexual content, or which would often be used in sexual contexts; based on three further groupings:
 - Words describing physically sexual attributes
 - Words depicting unlawful or mysterious sexual relations
 - Words describing what was attractive in a relationship

Due to the fact that a word frequency list only draws results from the language of one text, it is important to remember that any conclusions which the list seems to offer may be attributed to Wilde's style of writing, rather than his intentions with this particular novel (Amador-Moreno 2010: 541). Because of this, and also to obtain a more representative view of Wilde's language, a key word list was then created in WordSmith (Scott 2011) to see how Wilde's words compare to those of other 19th Century novelists, whose works escaped similar scandal. A reference corpus made up of other 19th Century texts was used to provide a sample of language with no unique relevant function (i.e. without the intention of homosexual provocation) to help realise how the language of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* extends to its situational and cultural context (see Tognini Bonelli 2010: 18–19). It is through using this reference corpus as a comparison that it can be ascertained, from a neutral perspective, whether *The Picture of Dorian Gray* contains language with inherently homosexual undertones, rather than language typical of 19th Century fiction, which could have been twisted by Wilde's prosecutor. Of course this relatively small corpus is specific to the genre and time period of 19th Century fiction, but covers many themes and plots (see Koester 2010: 66, for an explanation of corpus size and relative contextualisation) so that it was as representative as possible (see Reppen 2010: 32ff). As the differing corpus sizes makes the frequency values incomparable without normalisation (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2008: 52–53; Evison 2010: 126), where necessary the key word ranking shall be quoted instead. This analysis sets a low 'p value' of 0.000001, so that it is less likely that any of the words in the key word list occurred by chance. The entire key word list was then scanned for words fitting my criteria, and to see which of the high frequency words that I had chosen were also key words. If a high frequency word did not happen to be a key word, this would mean that, whilst it had a high frequency in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it was not illustrative of Wilde's style or particular

to his novel, as it was also frequent in other 19th Century novels. However, if it was both frequent and key, it would indicate that, as well as being frequent in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it was also proportionally more frequent in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* than in the reference corpus.

The word frequency list and the key word list were used to compile a final list of words for further investigation. The further stages would involve reviewing their concordance and collocation patterns, with a view to finding subtle indications of homosexual content. The final list of words to be analysed further is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Full list of words for analysis

Category	Word	Word frequency rank	Key word rank	Keyness value
Identity	<i>Dorian</i>	39	1	3,331.65
	<i>Henry</i>	65	2	1,213.94
	<i>Basil</i>	79	3	1,106.33
	<i>Sybil</i>	115	8	646.3
Sexuality 1 The Physical Body	<i>Eyes</i>	102	N/A	N/A
	<i>Hand</i>	153	N/A	N/A
Sexuality 2 Unlawful Mystery	<i>Curious</i>	184	27	129.65
	<i>Pleasure</i>	200	N/A	N/A
	<i>Soul</i>	139	54	90.29
	<i>Corruption</i>	N/A	143	38.33
	<i>True</i>	178	N/A	N/A
	<i>Sin</i>	N/1	67	79.69
	<i>Secret</i>	220	N/A	N/A
Sexuality 3 Sexual Attraction	<i>Romantic</i>	N/A	205	28.41
	<i>Family</i>	N/A	283	-44.53
	<i>Beauty</i>	156	71	76.67
	<i>Beautiful</i>	203	167	34.21
	<i>Love</i>	112	N/A	N/A
	<i>Adore</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
	<i>Personality</i>	N/A	74	74.95
	<i>Passion</i>	194	56	87.39

My analysis shall be split into the sections defined in Table 1, beginning with the identities of the four main characters, and then with a section on how the sexuality of the novel is defined. This second section is split into three further categories, to discuss: the physical attributes of the characters, how their relationships are sometimes shown to be elusive or unusual, and finally, how the desires of the characters compare with what we would expect in a conventional Victorian novel.

4 Key words, collocations and concordances in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

I shall now discuss concordances and collocations for the list of words from Table 1. There are two main sections: Identity and Sexuality (the latter is split into three sections: The Physical Body, Unlawful Mystery, and Sexual Attraction). These strands should all tie together to form useful conclusions, as sexuality is intrinsically linked to identity (both were attacked by Carson in the trial), and sexual identities in the novel will be forged through words relating to desire and attraction.

4.1 Identity

The lack of a defined homosexual identity prohibits Wilde’s Victorian characters from associating themselves with any sexual orientation other than heterosexuality. Therefore, if the characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are, as suspected, of a different sexual inclination, they already have an identity problem. Even if they are homosexual characters, they cannot be labelled as so in the context of the novel. Here I shall define exactly what or who is identified in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, using collocations of each of the three main male characters: Dorian Gray, Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hallward; and, to provide a gender comparison, Sibyl Vane.

There were immediate links between the collocations of the three main male characters, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Collocations of the three main male characters

	Total	+ Dorian	+ Henry	+ Basil	+ Dear	+ Eyes	+ Cried	+ Very
Dorian	409	N/A	16	5	10	8	23	7
Henry	223	16	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	12	5
Basil	153	5	N/A	N/A	14	N/A	5	5

All three of them include the collocates *dear* and *cried*, indicating that they are all linked by an intimate, triangular attachment, in which they provide emotional support for one another. They also all feature possessive and subject pronouns (personal and masculine, but not often feminine) such as *my*, *his*, *me*, *you*, indicating that their identity is linked to each others' identity. This possession is the same one which influences, and, some would say corrupts, Dorian Gray, and which absorbs the other two characters when they become obsessed by his image and what he represents.

One of the collocates unique to Dorian is *eyes*, which gives Wilde a portal into Dorian's mortal body and pictorial soul, allowing him to describe what is one of his most beautiful attributes. It also fixes our gaze on him in the novel, and allows him to see through the medium of text, as his portrait sees through the medium of canvas. Dorian's double identity only serves to emphasise his status as an "iconic gay male figure" (Ohl 2005: 62), monopolizing the world of his contemporary characters as well as the world of the novel as we read it.

All three share a common collocation with *very*, alluding to the ideas of excess, extravagance and obsession, which are a link in this novel to homosexual values, and which Ohl suggested are part of the meaning of the word *queer* (2005: 62).

To contrast this, a collocation of *Sibyl* includes neither the words *dear* or *cried*, nor many pronouns (except for *her*), suggesting that she is given less intimacy and affection, that there is less opportunity in the novel for her to cry out and make her love heard, and finally, that there is less intensity of possession in her relationships. There are very few content words which often collocate with *Sibyl* indicating that she does not hold solidarity with any group and that she has no one with whom to share passions and secrets. This lack of many content words which are frequently used in her description also means that we do not get a thorough view of her character. Her true self almost remains absent even when she is being described, and she only appears briefly in the novel to provide a heterosexual case study. Dorian's image means that he becomes her obsession, just as Wilde's writing means that Dorian becomes ours.

Disorientated identifications, and "uncertain boundaries of the self in identification" (2005: 89), are achieved only through the characters' relationships to each other. Because they cannot identify themselves directly with what could be described as the concrete abstract that binds them together, they identify themselves firstly by collocation with words related to extravagance and other subtle aspects of their lifestyle, and secondly through each other. In fact, their solidarity with each other forms their main self-identification, and by dislocating the characters from standard description and collocation, Wilde can move away

from the need to express sexual normativity (2005: 61). Their unlawful sexuality almost creates its own translucent definition in relation to their lifestyle, and to their relationships with each other. Wilde makes it even harder for the characters to self-identify by creating moments with unclear, or sometimes undefined, set locations, where the blurring of the interior and exterior sets delocalizes and disidentifies the characters (2005: 78). It is less important to Wilde's agenda to set his characters within a typical Victorian scenery than it is for him to locate their relationships to each other. Setting them outside or at least out of focus of standard Victorian sets is another way for him to imply a non-standard sexual orientation.

Already we can see from the main characters that there is a seamless unity between the three men, creating some sort of bond which is unidentified, but is always present.

4.2 Sexuality

As stated previously, this section is split up into three sub-sections: the Physical Body, Unlawful Mystery and Sexual Attraction.

4.2.1 The Physical Body

Words like *lips* and *face*, which we might expect this novel to use in a very homoerotic context, seem to coincide with both negative and positive modifiers, regardless of whether they are masculine or feminine. However, whilst Wilde might not completely single out men or women with regard to these physical attributes, there are certainly differences between male and female *eyes* and *hands*.

Firstly, the word *eyes* is used one hundred and nine times, with a total of fifty collocates with *his* and only nineteen with *her*. The male eyes interestingly seem to impart negativity, rather than feelings of romance. Thirty-four of the fifty occurrences of *eyes* with *his* all have negativity attached. A selection of these lines are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Selected concordance lines showing negative uses of *eyes* + *his*

N	Concordance
1	, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you,
2	looked at Dorian Gray with the eyes of a sick man. His mouth
3	ing steadfastly into his stern eyes, "I shall show you my so
4	n horror. And with fear in his eyes, Lord Henry rushed throu
5	here was a look of fear in his eyes, such as people have whe
6	ded, passing his hand over his eyes, with a gesture of pain.
7	The hot tears welled into his eyes; he tore his hand away a
8	had come between them.... His eyes darkened, and the crowde
9	lip, and for a few seconds his eyes grew sad. Yet, after all
10	a troubled look came into his eyes. He shuddered. "I don't
11	enry, with a tired look in his eyes, "but I am always ready
12	Dorian with a sad look in his eyes. "But I am tired to-nigh
13	ng?" The hot tears came to his eyes. His lips trembled, and
14	ead body. As he rode home, his eyes were full of tears, for
15	ction. There were tears in his eyes as he went downstairs. H
16	agic figure? Tears came to his eyes as he remembered her chi
17	growing grave in his darkening eyes. At last, liveried in th
18	orian Gray, with his beautiful eyes, looked down at her, and

There are only five truly positive uses of the word, whilst the remaining are fairly neutral; see Table 4:

Table 4: All concordance lines showing positive uses of '*eyes*' + '*his*'

N	Concordance
1	e. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized
2	he woke, and as he opened his eyes a faint smile passed acr
3	egar. Suddenly he started. His eyes grew strangely bright, a
4	a gleam of light came into his eyes. He remembered that Lord
5	ps a flicker of triumph in his eyes. He had taken the flower

Neutrality is much more common in the description of the feminine *eyes*, with just two negative and three positive associations.

The negative quality of the masculine *eyes*, and especially their sadness, could be indicative of the men's entrapment in an unbending society. However, despite the general feeling of negativity attached to the male *eyes*, and the fact that it is a word not often used in a romantic context, we can see that when it is used in a romantic context, it is more commonly between the men. Half of the six occurrences of *eyes met* are between Basil and Dorian. So even though this word is reserved mainly for the overbearing gaze of Dorian's portrait, or for a tearful outlet for the main characters, half of the occasions in which it is used in a phrase which would traditionally be associated with relationships are here ascribed a homoerotic tone.

A similarly unexpected negative association appears with the word *hand*, which occurs sixty-six times, with only four connections to *her*, and a significant fifty-eight connections with *his*. This includes thirty-one occurrences in the L1 position (i.e. the first word to the left of the node word), indicating that *his hand* is almost half the total usage of the *hand* itself. Although included on the initial list for further investigation in this analysis due to its appearance in the word frequency list, and my assumption that it would be used in a romantic or sexual context, it is actually again used to express pessimism, in three main ways, shown in Tables 5-7:

Table 5: Selected concordance lines of the hand as a burden

N	Concordance
1	stealthy footsteps. He felt a hand laid on his arm and look
2	on his shoulder weighed like a hand of lead. It was intolerable
3	hours of pain--he felt a hand laid on his shoulder. He
4	mist of tears. He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon
5	against the wall, with a brutal hand round his throat. He
6	chair close to him, placed his hand upon his arm. "You talk
7	came close to him and put his hand upon his shoulder. "You
8	he studio, Dorian Gray put his hand upon Lord Henry's arm. "
9	ter him. In a few moments, his hand was on his arm. "Dorian!
10	stood behind him, putting his hand upon his shoulder. "I am
11	oke in Lord Henry, putting his hand on the lad's shoulder and
12	remind us." Hallward laid his hand upon his arm. "Don't, Ha
13	ng over to him and putting his hand on his shoulder, "you ha
14	had already come upon him. The hand upon his shoulder weighed

Table 6: Selected concordance lines of the *hand* as a sign of weariness

N	Concordance
1	from the piano and passed his hand through his hair. "Yes,
2	ut it." Dorian Gray passed his hand over his forehead. There
3	alf-hour struck, he passed his hand across his forehead, and
4	erhaps," he added, passing his hand over his eyes, with a ge
5	e to articulate. He passed his hand across his forehead. It

Table 7: Selected concordance lines of the *hand* with reference to blood, fear, violence, or feeling ill

N	Concordance
1	in which the trembling gloved hand was pointing. "Yes," he
2	ard turned pale and caught his hand. "Dorian! Dorian!" he cr
3	e spray of lilac fell from his hand upon the gravel. A furry
4	led into his eyes; he tore his hand away and, flinging himse
5	ard, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung it to the end
6	a time the book fell from his hand. He grew nervous, and a
7	grave was not so fearful. His hand shook, and the candle fe
8	ay, crushing the flower in his hand, "you met me, flattered
9	e scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and mor
10	had dripped--blood even on the hand that had not held the kn
11	ood pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, Which mannerly

Perhaps this negativity imparted by the male hands is similar to the sadness of their eyes. Because Wilde is delving into the problems faced by the corrupted souls of men, we see the hands as the part of the body which is the first to impart bad news, and which shares out burdens.

The women of this novel are often shown in a more frivolous way, and again here their hands only operate at a more superficial level (see Table 8). They are not faced with the same soulful corruption as the men.

Table 8: Selected concordance lines of feminine *hands*

N	Concordance
1	. Then she laughed and put her hand on his arm. He was merel
2	s the room to him. She put her hand upon his arm and looked
3	ied James Vane. She raised her hand up to heaven. "Before Go
4	the mere touch of Sibyl Vane's hand makes me forget you and

This study of *eyes* and *hands* has not given the conclusion that they impart more sexual feeling for men than for women, but there are clearly some gendered differences: the difficulties faced by the men of this novel, and the hardships which their illegal identities provide.

4.2.2 Unlawful Mystery

This section will essentially reveal what I believe is the most indicative factor of homoeroticism in Wilde's novel. That is that any relationship worth having in the novel is ascribed a certain amount of mystery, also included in some general discussions of the men's outlook on life.

The word *curious*, used forty-eight times, collocates with *his* and *he* eight times each. We can see that this word denoting mystery and a desire to investigate the unknown often results in pleasurable consequences, as shown in Table 9:

Table 9: Selected concordance lines showing *curious* linking to a pleasurable feeling

N	Concordance
1	in spirit and in flesh--those curious unpictured sins whose
2	a marked manner and went out. Curious stories became curren
3	m that was to keep for him the curious secret of his life an
4	. I thought you must have some curious romance on hand. You
5	vement in Germany, and found a curious pleasure in tracing t
6	telling you things. You have a curious influence over me. If
7	rld became to one! To note the curious hard logic of passion
8	is life had himself known this curious fancy. In the seventh
9	d looked at Dorian Gray with a curious expression in her eye
10	amatic. London is very rich in curious effects of that kind.
11	imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he f
12	fascinated him, and he felt a curious delight in the though
13	hat as one watched life in its curious crucible of pain and
14	flowerlike hands, even, had a curious charm. They moved, as
15	it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of

As we would thus expect, certain concordance lines for the word *pleasure* thus link with it being a curious thing, see Table 10. There is an obvious excitement surrounding *pleasure* here, befitting its semi-onomatopoeic resonance. Wilde is clearly intent on making the *pleasure* of his novel seem both elusive and exclusive. There is something mysterious about the sort of *pleasure* being discussed here, something which he does not quite explain in the novel, but which each reader is left to surmise. The fact that the *pleasures* in his novel are so often associated with mystery and collocated with mysterious words denotes that his is not a typical sort of *pleasure*, but rather a new and unexplored one.

Table 10: Selected concordance lines showing *pleasure* with curiosity or novelty

N	Concordance
1	w as easily as he can invent a pleasure . I don't want to be
2	that." "Oh! anything becomes a pleasure if one does it too o
3	as flushed with excitement and pleasure , and looked extraord
4	s curious crucible of pain and pleasure , one could not wear
5	n Germany, and found a curious pleasure in tracing the thoug
6	Henry, who found an exquisite pleasure in playing on the la
7	filled them with a madness for pleasure . They have gone down
8	and his inordinate passion for pleasure . The son, who had be
9	the thought brought a gleam of pleasure into his brown agate
19	irrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his fa
11	hed him with a subtle sense of pleasure . How different he wa
12	d anew in the darkness for our pleasure , a world in which th
13	the perfect type of a perfect pleasure . It is exquisite, an
14	Lord Henry, listening in rapt pleasure to "Tannhauser" and
15	ave given you a thrill of real pleasure , Dorian," interrupte
16	f sin, and smiling with secret pleasure at the misshapen sha
17	m dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to
18	e, and found, indeed, a subtle pleasure in the thought that
19	oment felt keenly the terrible pleasure of a double life. It

The pleasures which Wilde provides serve as nutrition for the *soul*, a word which appears relatively often as a collocate with the pronoun *his* (twenty-one times out of sixty-eight). Eight of these times they coincide as part of the cluster *his own soul*, where the over-emphatic pronoun *own* enhances possession. *Her soul* is mentioned just a single time. However, the single-text corpus only represents a single novel, and is very much a reflection of a particular writing style, and of a particular literary landscape (here for example there is a large imbalance of male to female characters). Oscar Wilde is after all not suggesting that women do not have souls. Indeed, the fact that there are more male souls mentioned does not tell us much about Wilde's intentions, and deeper investigation is required into how the male soul is represented. For Wilde, the soul is not only a significant part of the opulent and excessive lifestyle which Lord Henry Wotton advocates, but is also integral to the plot, and the degradation which the

anthropomorphism of the portrait causes Dorian’s soul. Table 11 shows some selected concordance lines for the word *soul*:

Table 11: Selection of *soul* concordance lines

N	Concordance
1	eld to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing
2	hat I have given away my whole soul to some one who treats i
3	rstood me." "Don't, Harry. The soul is a terrible reality. I
4	day they had met, "To cure the soul by means of the senses,
5	and the senses by means of the soul!" How the words rang in
6	rey-flannel mist. "To cure the soul by means of the senses,
7	and the senses by means of the soul." Yes, that was the secr
8	urmured. "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as
9	d colour on the canvas and the soul that was within him? Cou
10	ng can cure the senses but the soul." The lad started and dr
11	e to expel melancholy from the soul . At another time he devo
12	t secrets of life--to cure the soul by means of the senses,
13	im? Could it be that what that soul thought, they realized?-
14	own in it the secret of my own soul . "Lord Henry laughed. "A
15	erson is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his n
16	it teach him to loathe his own soul? Would he ever look at i
17	tion of the tragedy of his own soul . On one occasion he took
18	d in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with m
19	ould not give! I would give my soul for that!" "You would ha
20	. It would kill this monstrous soul- life, and without its hi
21	the hideous corruption of his soul? He kept his youth—that
22	e ruin he had brought upon his soul with a pity that was all
23	orrible malady, was eating his soul away. From time to time
24	The life that was to make his soul would mar his body. He w
25	ence over me. I was dominated, soul , brain, and power, by yo
26	utiful face, and his beautiful soul, he was a thing to wonde
27	made like that? Why had such a soul been given to him? But h
28	d, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I kno

Table 11 shows quite clearly that, to Wilde, the soul is not a proactive, dominant being, but rather a reflection of what we are. What we do and how we behave affects our soul, but it is not our souls themselves that are intrinsically or genetically malevolent. Therefore, homosexuality cannot be the result of a bad soul. Instead, the soul may suffer as a result of human action combined with current social limitations, and thus become a burden, as to Dorian. Several of the above lines refer to the need to cure the soul, or similar, admitting that Lord Henry's influence has unleashed upon the soul something which must be remedied. Again, the soul is an innocent being to which evil and malicious omens attach themselves. It has not set out to actively accomplish bad, but it has absorbed the evil within the body (and in Dorian Gray's case, his soul is then absorbed by his portrait). Of course, the evil and the corruption of this novel is not homosexuality itself (that would have been rather against Wilde's own morals), but rather Dorian's altered nature. It is his promiscuity, his violence, his greed and his carelessness for others which is his sin.

The soul is the part of Dorian which is essentially corrupted during the novel, and indeed, the word *corruption* appears with *soul* two out of its total nine occurrences; see Table 12:

Table 12: Total *corruption* concordance lines

N	Concordance
1	s to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse
2	ou have chattered enough about corruption. Now you shall loo
3	o they stagnate." "Culture and corruption," echoed Dorian. "
4	fe that is! You have gone from corruption to corruption, and
5	hy should he watch the hideous corruption of his soul? He ke
6	ore and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. H
7	ion of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself—s
8	u have gone from corruption to corruption, and now you have
9	himself, filled his mind with corruption and given horror t

As well as talking about the corruption of a soul seeking pleasure, we can see a different type of elusivity being discussed on a wider scale in the novel. Wilde was accused in the trial for having a strange meaning of the word *truth*. Carson quotes Wilde as saying, ““A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it,”” to which Wilde agrees, “My philosophical definition of truth –

something so personal that when another person holds the same – that in fact the same truth can never be apprehended by two minds” (Holland 2003: 76). Thus a truth has an air of mystery and secrecy, but the especial importance is that a truth is something personal. It is not therefore shared by a group of people or a society, or at least it should not be. It is in subtle ways such as this that Wilde condemns the morals of a judgmental and restrictive society, who imposes its truths upon all its inhabitants.

In the same manner, Wilde comments upon *sin* in his novel. In the trial, one of the main issues Carson raises against the novel is by quoting Wilde himself as writing “what Dorian Gray’s sins are, no one knows” (2003: 78). The prosecutor implies that it could be assumed that these sins are sodomy, which Wilde argues would be a “misconstruction” (2003: 78). Wilde is however pushed to admit that he had to make an amendment to his original manuscript, having been advised by Walter Pater that one section in particular would be open to such an interpretation. The word *sin*, of which in those days homosexuality was considered an example, used twenty times in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is often his but never hers, and is described mainly as we would expect with negative words, in phrases such as those shown in Table 13:

Table 13: Negative occurrences of *sin*

N	Concordance
1	e symbol of the degradation of sin . Here was an ever-present
2	ight escape the hideousness of sin , but the hideousness of a
3	of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the th
4	ght at the price of a terrible sin ; Gian Maria Visconti, who

However, *sin* is also used in ways which almost seem sadistically absorbing, incorporating the mystery which Wilde’s characters seem to yearn for, such as:

Table 14: Sadistic occurrences of *sin*

N	Concordance
1	tell us, when the passion for sin , or for what the world ca
2	he stage of the world and made sin so marvellous and evil so
3	ennui, Dorian. That is the one sin for which there is no for

The phrases from Table 14 and Example 1 (an extension of Line 1 from Table 14) show that *passion*'s step away from the acceptable and into the immoral is at least a source of excitement:

- (1) There are moments, psychologists tell us, when the passion for sin, or what the world calls sin, so dominates a nature that every fibre of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses.

Here the reference to sin being decided by the world again indicates Wilde's disagreement with the damning judgement of his society. Sins could, or should, be specific to each person's morals, as we saw that truths were to Wilde, rather than being judged and condemned by the world. Advocating such a view with regard to a sin as serious as homosexuality was a comparatively radical thought, though if people such as Wilde felt a conflict between their sexual desire, and the restrictions imposed by their society, it would surely be natural to question its sinful status.

But as homosexuality was indeed a sin at the time of writing, any indication of it would have to be a secret. Wilde's characters have lots of secrets, and the men seem to share theirs. The word *secret* collocates highly with *his* (fourteen times out of a total forty-one), especially in the phrases *of his life / of his soul*, reminding us of the elusive mystery of the homoerotic affair. Basil says, as quoted by Carson in the trial, "The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown with it the secret of my soul" (2003: 84)). He goes on to explain just what that secret is:

- (2) I turned half-way round and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious instinct of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself.

Secrets are again, never a burden, but always a pleasure. Dorian says that all the things he wants are:

- (3) Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasure subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins.

His secret appears in that arrangement five times, and there is no instance of *her* + *secret*. However, *her* does appear in the L2 position once (Example 4), where the addition of the word *shallow* completely undermines it, in a way which we do not see with the men.

(4) Her shallow secret nature was troubled when their eyes met.

Further uses of the word *secret*, indicating a joyful or happily mysterious activity are shown in Table 15:

Table 15: Selected uses of *secret*

N	Concordance
1	ation of sin, and smiling with secret pleasure at the missha
2	oment, as though to hide their secret . When they opened, the
3	id that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul." Lord
4	t American women do. It is the secret of their charm." "Why
5	er before it had concealed the secret of a man's life. Shoul
6	boy, don't look so tragic! The secret of remaining young is
7	I hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy. They
8	ous hanging that concealed the secret of his life. "I shan't
9	he to say of that? It held the secret of his life, and told
10	ed lips were smiling over some secret of their own. When he
11	arch for beauty being the real secret of life. I don't know
12	been forced to reveal his own secret, he had succeeded, alm
13	aled. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no su
14	sions, atom calling to atom in secret love or strange affini
15	s, perhaps Basil, too, had his secret . He would ask him and
16	some one else was to share his secret, and that the man who
17	as to keep for him the curious secret of his life and hide h
18	passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder
19	he face, "we have each of us a secret . Let me know yours, an

Again, as well as providing a useful way for Wilde to explore homoeroticism and unlawful relations in his novel, secrecy is also key to his plot. Dorian Gray asks Basil:

(5) We have each of us a secret. Let me know what is yours and I shall tell you mine. What was your reason for refusing to exhibit my picture?

It is of course Basil's love for Dorian that is his secret (and his sin). We never quite become privy to Dorian's secret, although perhaps this is the invitation for the popular inference most readers make.

We can see quite clearly from the words shown in this section that there is a tendency for the male characters to seek a pleasure that is novel, secret or sinful. It would seem that this suggests an aspect above and beyond typical sexual deviancy.

4.2.3 Sexual Attraction

I am going to begin this section on attraction, and what Wilde's characters are looking for in relationships, with two words which were noticed on my key word list, which would usually be part of a standard Victorian relationship.

Firstly, the word *romantic* is a key word in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, though I will argue that this is not in a conventional fashion. It appears to be problematic for Wilde, and appears eight times out of its total fourteen occurrences with reference to objects – a spirit, tragedy, background, play, art, face, end, history, explanation, rather than relationships; see Table 16:

Table 16: Total concordance lines of romantic

N	Concordance
1	e the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit an
2	out it. It is one of the great romantic tragedies of the age
3	n who was standing by him. His romantic, olive-coloured face
4	the panes? It is marvellously romantic. What a blessing it
5	!" cried Dorian. "It is a most romantic explanation," laughe
6	real name. I think it is quite romantic of him. He is probab
7	t he had come to such a really romantic end as you suggest,
8	ld be a premature surrender." "Romantic art begins with its
9	ful young Parisian in whom the romantic and the scientific t
10	e in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perf
11	es of real jacinth, and in the romantic history of Alexander
12	afraid of it. It makes me too romantic. I have simply wors
13	for romance, and, to the true romantic, background was ever
14	ton was mad after her. She was romantic, though. All the wom

This depersonalises it and takes it out of the standard context of a heterosexual relationship. For Wilde to have used this word with regard to heterosexual relations might have been against his agenda, whilst to use it with regard to same-sex relations might have been against that of his publisher. Certainly, an implication of the possibility (unrecognised at the time) of an actual sexual preference of men for men, rather than just an occasional impulsive desire, would have been exceedingly dangerous. As Gillespie writes, “Basil’s account of his response goes deeper than a description of mere physical attraction and touches on a more profound, less easily categorised imaginative power that Dorian’s nature exerts” (Gillespie 1995: 82); the nature of this makes us believe that it is not just a desire for sodomy, but for an emotionally felt relationship.

Family is another important part of relationships in the conventional Victorian novel. This word actually measures a negative keyness in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, though this is quite understandable. Family is not exactly at the forefront of Wilde’s mind when writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; and neither is it important to a group of men who seem to be little attached to women, and rather more interested in pleasurable sins and soul corruption. In contrast, we expect it to measure highly in other Victorian fiction. But here, it is used just three times in the entire novel, as shown in Table 17:

Table 17: Total concordance lines of *family*

N	Concordance
1	of surprises. Her capacity for family affection is extraordi
2	though. All the women of that family were. The men were a p
3	not visible till five." "Pure family affection, I assure yo

On one occasion it is used with the word *women* and on another with the word *her*. Twice it involves the word *affection*. Apart from being clearly and obligatorily related to women, it is also quite a tender and affectionate concept. Affection seems to encompass the main characters’ views on women; that is that they do not provide pleasures, nor, as we shall see later, do they provide passions or love. They are not privy to the secrets of the soul which the men share, but are simply a source of gentle, unassuming tenderness (something which impulsive and extravagant men can do without). Women seem to function on a much more superficial level, to provide a family, to provide entertainment (in the form of Sibyl’s acting), and to provide compliments which verge on being gratuitous,

and are certainly unappreciated. They do not function on the higher levels of the males in this novel; they are not invited to share in the fun.

Beauty, an important part of standard romantic attachments, is used fifty-five times in total, and does not frequently collocate with any female pronouns, but does with *his* (15), *him* (7) and *he* (5). That gives a possible total of twenty-seven individual times (almost half its total usage) that *beauty* is collocated with a male individual. *His own beauty* is a frequent cluster occurring five times, again enhancing the possessive element as with *soul*. Although the pronoun *her* never appears before *beauty*, there is a single concordance line which celebrates the feminine figure, the beauty of Sibyl Vane. In another instance, Lord Henry says:

- (6) People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is in the visible, not the invisible.

Correlating with this, the most common single usage of the word *beauty* in this novel is not to refer to male characters, but to speak of it as an aesthetic concept. A general air of aestheticism is very important to the novel's morals, and to the main characters; see Table 18:

Table 18: Selected concordance lines for *beauty*

N	Concordance
1	, Harry, believe me. You value beauty far too much." "How ca
2	ympathize with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life. The
3 People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. T
4	hos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fi
5	that genius lasts longer than beauty. That accounts for the
6	and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intelle
7	if she can create the sense of beauty in people whose lives
8	t revealed to me the wonder of beauty. In a mad moment that,
9	ur lives. If these elements of beauty are real, the whole th
10	ave lost the abstract sense of beauty. Some day I will show
11	at mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the se
12	se sorrows stir one's sense of beauty, and whose wounds are
13	lves perfect by the worship of beauty." Like Gautier, he was
14	unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes
15	erficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonde
16	, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant
17	together, about the search for beauty being the real secret
18	l expression and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends whe
19	is a peacock in everything but beauty," said Lord Henry, pul
20	ay. Don't frown. You have. And beauty is a form of genius—i
21	der of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor wa
22	spear." "I never tilt against beauty," he said, with a wave
23	y able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs

We see something similar with *beautiful*, which more frequently collocates with objects than with men or women. *Beautiful* appears forty-four times, and collocates with *his* nine times, *she* eight times, and *he* six times. With *his*, we see words like *his beautiful soul*, *eyes* and *face* (all referring to Dorian Gray). At no point does her appear in the L1 column; thus *her beautiful...* is never mentioned. However, there are several lines referring to *beautiful girl* / *beautiful woman* (two each), and also several lines of *she is beautiful*. Again there are lots of beautiful things, suggesting that aestheticism overrides gender, but also perhaps

that women are more vaguely described as being beautiful, whereas the beautiful aspects of men are pinpointed exactly. It is a stereotype of society to name a character 'a beautiful woman', but it is far more mysterious to ascribe beauty to a particular feature of a man. One particular example of *beautiful* shows an important link between pleasure and sin:

- (7) ““But, surely, if one lives merely for one’s self, Harry, one pays a terrible price for doing so?” suggested the painter.

“Yes, we are overcharged for everything nowadays. [...]. Beautiful sins, like beautiful things, are the privilege of the rich.”

“One has to pay in other ways but money.”

“What sort of ways, Basil?”

“Oh, I should fancy in remorse, in suffering, in... well, in the consciousness of degradation.”

Lord Henry [...] “[...] Believe me, no civilised man ever regrets a pleasure, and no uncivilised man ever knows what a pleasure is.”

So the civilised men of Wilde’s created society are those who will pay for these pleasures and beautiful sins, in the consciousness of their degradation.

Of course, *love* is an expected component of any secure and successful relationship. When we look at this word in this novel, we have to read it alongside the word *adore*. Although these words are often thought to be very similar, there are important undertones in the minor differences between supposedly similar words, and the meanings which they can impart in certain contexts: “It is often said that English has no perfect synonyms... Corpora make it possible to test this by examining collocation, phraseological structure, genre, variety and frequency” (Moon 2010: 206). There is evidence of this in the trial, when Wilde is unhappy with Carson’s use of the word *adore* and claims instead that he should be using *love* (“that is higher...it is greater” (Holland 2003: 90)).

In its concordance lines from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *love* has the collocates *I* and *you*, so it must be said often in speech, as this novel is not a first person narrative. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the cluster *I love you* is common, and indeed *you* only appears three times in the R1 position (i.e. the first word to the right of the node word), and much more commonly before the verb, showing that the characters talk about what the others love ahead of their own feelings. *Him* is a more common collocate of *love* than *her* but only by a frequency of four, and both are generally the direct object of the

verb, in position R1. Also, *her* and *his* are both common in the L1 position; indeed, *her* is slightly more frequent than *his*. However, *her* can signify either the direct object of a verb (e.g. *I love her*) or a possessive pronoun (e.g. *her love*), whereas the masculine version uses two different words – *him* is the direct object and *his* the possessive pronoun. Therefore, even though *her* has a fairly frequent collocate score of fourteen, the values for *his* and *him* added together produce a total score of twenty-five (18+7).

Her is more generally the object of the verb, rather than a possessive pronoun, meaning that the men in this novel do discuss loving women. However, when we examine the concordance lines, we can see negative incidences of this (shown in Table 19), suggesting a desire to self-confirm an enrolment in obligatory heterosexuality; see Table 20:

Table 19: Selected concordance lines of *love + her*

N	Concordance
1	her amends, marry her, try to love her again. Yes, it was h
2	his young dandy who was making love to her could mean her no
3	a great artist, had given his love to her because he had th
4	love her, and I must make her love me. You, who know all th
5	effect she was producing. Her love was trembling in laughter
6	woman, as long as he does not love her." "Ah! what a cynic
7	gentleman, isn't it, who is in love with her, or says he is?
8	t I tell you she has genius. I love her, and I must make her
9	ch to follow. Why should I not love her? Harry, I do love he
10	duchess very much, but I don't love her." "And the duchess I
11	a tempest. She was usually in love with somebody, and, as h
12	ld I not love her? Harry, I do love her. She is everything t

Love in relation to women is also discussed quite frivolously, as in Example 8.

(8) She was usually in love with somebody.

In contrast, the word *adore* is used just four times in the entire novel, compared to the one hundred and eleven times that *love* is used.

Table 20: All concordance lines of *adore*

N	Concordance
1	is girl his wife, passionately adore her for six months, and
2	" cried Dorian Gray. "It is to adore some one." "That is cer
3	to such simple pleasures?" "I adore simple pleasures," said
4	ink I don't like good music. I adore it, but I am afraid of

Line 1 extends to the following:

- (9) I hope that Dorian Gray will make this girl his wife, passionately adore her for six months, and then suddenly become fascinated by someone else. He would be a wonderful study.

Thus, adoration is something given to women, and which can easily be overridden by a new ‘fascination.’ The most telling line is Line 2, which extends to the following exchange:

- (10) Dorian: “I know what pleasure is. It is to adore someone”

Lord Henry: “That is certainly better than being adored. Being adored is a nuisance. Women treat us just as humanity treats its gods. They worship us, and are always bothering us to do something for them.”

Adoration then, is something which women give, and which is a *nuisance* to men. The word *adored* is used six times (Table 21); two of which I have already shown in Example 10.

Table 21: All concordance lines for *adored*

N	Concordance
1	shun him. Women who had wildly adored him, and for his sake
2	Charles VI, who had so wildly adored his brother's wife tha
3	arries again, it is because he adored his first wife. Women
4	is certainly better than being adored," he answered, toying
5	oying with some fruits. "Being adored is a nuisance. Women t
6	f my life. The people who have adored me--there have not bee

This annoyance with the very act of adoration is exacerbated by the fact that it most commonly occurs between men and women, and seems to be a superficial

sort of affection from a mindlessly complimentary fanatic, both of which Wilde would have thought less worthy than the secret loves and curious passions which could be felt between two men.

In the trial, Wilde kept trying to refer to “admiring a man’s personality,” as if it was less scandalous than “adoring a young man” (2003: 85, 86, 89) yet the word *personality* is only used sixteen times in the whole of the novel, and while it is linked to words like *fascinating*, it has no association with the darker terms such as *passions*, *sin* and *soul*. It does play an important role in several exchanges, such as during the scene where we presume that Basil is confessing his love to Dorian. He says:

- (11) Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me.

He also tells Lord Henry:

- (12) As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me.

These men are clearly being taken in by the personality of another man. Although the lack of overt sexual content means that a regard for personality only necessarily indicates a deep respect and admiration, perhaps Wilde is writing about male admiration a little too candidly for a person of his own reputation.

However, the desires and attractions of the characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* do not stop at personalities. The sort of relationship they require is demonstrated through Wilde’s use of the word *passion*. *Passion*, used forty-six times in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is much more likely to be his than hers (no female pronouns occur as frequent collocates, whereas both *his* and *he* collocate five times each), suggesting possibly that it is the men who experience such strong feelings (though this does not necessarily entail homoeroticism). Another common usage of the word is with regard to Christianity, as shown in Table 22:

Table 22: Concordance lines for *passion*, linked to Christianity

N	Concordance
1	, robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking t
2	ed with representations of the Passion and Crucifixion of Ch
3	umaged birds. He had a special passion , also, for ecclesiast
4	d, and in honour of a shameful passion built a pagan church

This could be an indication that passion occurs on the spiritual level of a relationship, or that it belongs to higher relations and ethereal authorities. In any case, it is not the sort of relationship in which the novel's women feature.

One of the most insightful appearances of the word *passion*, in a section which offers a useful indication of Wilde's agenda, is when Sibyl's performance causes a disappointed Dorian to realise that she has fallen short of his expectations, and that he is hugely disappointed in her. This sudden disillusionment in her acting ability leads to the loss of all his feeling towards her, indicating that her role in his life was to provide some sort of aesthetic service, rather than to return affection:

- (13) It was wrong in colour. It took away all life from the verse. It made the passion unreal.

If *the passion* is referring to that which is felt in high-level, spiritual relationships, then perhaps this is Dorian's realisation that what was then considered to be the only available sexual orientation will always disappoint him.

In this section we have seen that the words which would usually be expected to refer to relationships are not used in such a conventional way in this novel. Thus we could draw conclusions that the characters are searching for something beyond the traditional romantic attachment.

5 Conclusions

I have attempted to show, through corpus evidence, that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* does indeed contain words or phrases which could be construed as having homoerotic overtones. There is certainly an emphasis on the intimacy between the three men, on their own sinful activity, and their passions, with a lack of discussion about their feminine romances, or married life (the exception being Dorian's relationship with Sibyl, which goes only to prove Wilde's point that the very nature of heterosexual relationships means that they are often based on necessity and obligation, rather than passionate feeling). The words of the analysis which could have sexual connotations were more often associated with men than women. Despite the imbalance of character genders, which might lead people to believe that this association imbalance was natural, the ways in which these words were used with reference to men and women were rather different, and for Wilde's sentence, rather condemning.

Our attitudes towards Wilde are founded greatly on our contextual situation, and our agenda in reading this novel. Whilst the language does lend a homoerotic tone to the text, we are of course still influenced in reading it by our previ-

ous knowledge of Oscar Wilde, and of the scandal which this novel in particular caused. Of course, during Wilde's time, the desperation of some highly influential people to obtain some evidence against him meant that Carson would have certainly tried to twist the language to his favour. Ultimately, and further to the really damning evidence in the prosecution, the text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* lent itself to the purpose of securing Wilde's fate.

Of course it is difficult for us to associate an automatic assumption that a homosexual text must have been written by a homosexual author, or by an author seeking to preach homosexuality. Perhaps, aside from saying whether or not it endorses homosexual activity, it is appropriate to use Gillespie's words, and remember that the novel "readily supports interpretations that offer highly specific and opinionated commentaries on the nineteenth-century world Dorian inhabits" (Gillespie 1995: 78). And of course, meanings are to be interpreted; the foundations are within Wilde's language, but the sort of furore the novel created at its time was due mainly to the contextualised meaning which it produced, slightly altered from the meaning which we see today (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 57). Whilst *The Picture of Dorian Gray* endorses homosexuality, promotes it (in suggesting that it is a deeper love than heterosexuality), and is about it, Wilde is not preaching his sexual orientation to the masses. Instead, he is writing a "powerful indictment against the corrupting piousness of compulsory heterosexuality" (Mahaffey 1998: 83) which was to cause his death.

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Corpora texts

1. Dorian Gray single-text corpus

Text	Author	Version information (Latest release date, ebook number)
The Picture of Dorian Gray	Oscar Wilde	02/07/11, #174

2. Reference corpus of other 19th Century texts^a

Text	Author	Version information (Latest release date, ebook number)
<i>Emma</i>	Jane Austen	21/01/10, #158
<i>Persuasion</i>	Jane Austen	05/06/08, #105
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen	11/08/11, #1342
<i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>	Mary Elizabeth Braddon	09/05, #8954
<i>Agnes Grey</i>	Anne Bronte	25/12/10, #767
<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Charlotte Bronte	29/04/07, #1260
<i>The Professor</i>	Charlotte Bronte	06/08/08, #1028
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Emily Bronte	28/08/10, #768
<i>The Last Days of Pompeii</i>	Edward George Bulwer-Lytton	18/02/06, #1565
<i>Antonina or, The Fall of Rome</i>	Wilkie Collins	21/04/09, #3606
<i>Armadale</i>	Wilkie Collins	21/09/08, #1895
<i>The Woman in White</i>	Wilkie Collins	22/01/09, #583
<i>Great Expectations</i>	Charles Dickens	30/12/11, #1400
<i>Sybil, or The Two Nations</i>	Benjamin Disraeli	27/01/10, #3760
<i>Vivian Grey</i>	Benjamin Disraeli	12/11/11, #9840
<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	08/12/08, #2852
<i>Daniel Deronda</i>	George Eliot	05/02/10, #7469
<i>Mill on the Floss</i>	George Eliot	24/12/10, #6688
<i>Cranford</i>	Elizabeth Gaskell	18/08/02, #394
<i>Mary Barton</i>	Elizabeth Gaskell	23/05/03, #2153
<i>North and South</i>	Elizabeth Gaskell	28/11/11, #4276
<i>Jude the Obscure</i>	Thomas Hardy	13/09/05, #153

<i>The Return of the Native</i>	Thomas Hardy	08/06/03, #122
<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i>	Thomas Hardy	17/06/05, #110
<i>Frankenstein</i>	Mary Shelley	17/06/08, #84
<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	Robert Louis Stephenson	18/12/11, #42
<i>Dracula</i>	Bram Stoker	30/04/11, #345
<i>Vanity Fair</i>	William Makepeace Thackeray	13/10/11, #599
<i>The Small House at Allington</i>	Anthony Trollope	09/05/11, #4599

^a Kindly supplied by Michaela Mahlberg.

