Chrononormativity: An Exploration of Queerness, Time and Aesthetics in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English, University of the Western Cape.

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April 2024

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Keywords:

Oscar Wilde
Virginia Woolf
The Picture of Dorian Gray
Orlando
Chrononormativity
Sexuality
Gender Fluidity
Queer Temporality
Modernism
Victorian

Abstract:

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MA Thesis, Department of English, University of the Western Cape

This thesis will explore the extent to which Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) addresses chrononormative issues in the Victorian period, using literary scholar Josh Mcloughlin's "Queer Time in Woolf and Wilde" as a point of departure. By definition, chrononormative issues are linked to the organization of human lives towards maximum productivity following the "major milestones" of life, including but not limited to coming of age, academic graduation, marriage and children. Mcloughlin examines the connection between queerness, aestheticism, gender practices and what Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) refers to as chrononormativity. Mcloughlin argues that in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1933), both protagonists, as queer characters, resist and reject chrononormativity. Mcloughlin goes on to compare the use of aestheticism in both novels as useless and digressive. In order to expand on his claims, I apply the theoretical framework of Freeman's chrononormativity and queer temporality, with reference to Swikriti Sanyal's focus on gender and sexuality in "Breaking through the Limits of Flesh: Gender Fluidity and (Un)natural Sexuality in Virginia Woolf's Orlando".

I argue that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* represents the disavowal of chrononormativity, meaning the character's refusal to support or engage in it. If chrononormativity means following conventionally or socially accepted rites of passage, then the refusal to participate in these social conventions amounts to society's refusal to acknowledge or recognize the agency of the "deviant" individual. Woolf's *Orlando* engages with the gender dependence of the chrononormative space. This thesis raises the question of whether it is possible to establish queer normativity on its own terms: that is to say, could there be a space for a queer chrononormativity, where the agency of the queer subject is acknowledged rather than denied. Wilde's novel demonstrates queer temporality through his characters obsessively engaging in aesthetic activities like painting and reading because Victorian society dictates that they cannot be allowed chrononormativity due to their queerness. Both Wilde and

Woolf's characters turn to aesthetics such as reading and painting when they are disallowed chrononormativity as a form of imaginative escape, rather than a digression from the plot because they are not given an alternative space of expression.

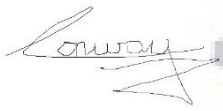
Freeman sees futurity and reproductivity being symbols of a heteronormative temporality, with queer temporalities falling outside of these boundaries; an example of this being that society did not and still does not consider gay marriage as normative and precludes people from entering that space, othering them instead. This thesis offers an alternative perspective to the problem of chrononormativity by proposing a guideline for society to follow that is both inclusive and productive.

April 2024

Declaration:

I declare that *Chrononormativity: An Exploration of Queerness, Time and Aestheticism in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and Virginia Woolf's Orlando* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Jamie Conway Date: 30 November 2023

Signed: 

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express immense gratitude to my mother, Cecily Conway, who ferociously supported and endorsed my academic career every single day for the past seven years. Mom, your strength and determination inspire me, and I will forever be thankful to have such a powerful, kind, and understanding role model to look up to.

I'd like to honour my late step-father, Glenn Hopper, who passed away during the writing of this thesis. Your goofy jokes and can-do attitude helped push me through lots of late nights of writing.

To my supervisor, Dr Courtney Davids, who worked many, many hours on this thesis with me, who never gave up on me for a second, even through the hardest of times – your dedication to this project and belief in my ability to achieve what I set out to do is remarkable. I will always be immensely grateful for your efforts, your sweet words, your understanding, your unwavering support, and your willingness to go beyond the extra mile. I am also extremely grateful to Professor Carrol Clarkson for her contributions and assistance throughout some of the most challenging times while writing this thesis.

I am sincerely grateful for my aunt, Therese Wiborg, who encouraged me to keep going when I was at my lowest and always allowed me the space to work on my thesis at her house when I could not concentrate at home.

Finally, this thesis would not be possible without the financial assistance and helpful support of the UWC Faculty of Arts Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Doctoral Fellowship, under the programme "Turning the Tide: Consolidating an Academic Pipeline for Staff to Advance Career Pathways at South African Universities". A debt of gratitude is owed to the foundation, and I feel extremely lucky to have been a part of it.

Table of Contents:

Introduction: Chrononormativity, Aestheticism and Queer Temporality

This thesis compares Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1933), exploring the novels' criticism of the exclusionary ideology and limited views of homoeroticism prevalent in their respective Victorian and Modernist social contexts. It engages with the thematic inflexions of aestheticism through artistic expression which challenges chrononormativity. Both authors criticise the Victorian and Modernist societies for the rejection of sexuality and gender fluidity by using aesthetic expression such as reading and painting as a form of escapism and reproval of gender normativity. The rejection of homosexuality and gender fluidity present in the Victorian and Modernist periods are still prevalent in varying degrees in today's society, though awareness has grown in recent years.

Elizabeth Freeman defines chrononormativity in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) as the organization of human lives towards maximum productivity following the major milestones of heteronormative life, including but not limited to marriage and children. Freeman sees futurity and reproductivity being symbols of a heteronormative temporality, expanding on the definition of chrononormativity as:

> Chrononormativity is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Evitar Zerubavcl calls "hidden rhythms," forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege. (3)

This indicates that the chrononormative life cycle is strictly limited to those who fall into the spectrum of heteronormative, i.e., cisgender heterosexual men and women. With that, queer temporality falls outside of these boundaries. An example of a queer temporality is gay marriage, which society did not and still does not consider normative and precludes people from entering that space, excluding them instead. Queer temporalities, in essence, are specific events which drastically alter one's life cycle and are specific to people existing in queer spaces, whether based on sexuality, gender or otherwise. Freeman elaborates on this:

> coming out, consummation, development, domesticity, family, foreplay, genealogy, identity, liberation, modernity, the progress of movements - all key concepts for gay and lesbian as well as other social justice projects and theories, and all of which take their meanings from, and contribute to, a vision of time as seamless, unified, and forward moving. Queer temporalities, visible in the forms of interruption I have described above (6), are points of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities

> for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically. (22)

Describing the chrononormative life cycle as a temporal order further emphasises the fact that this was the expectation of society upon its people – to adhere to both unspoken and written rules and not to stray far from heteronormative "rules" of heterosexual partnerships, receiving a respectable education, having children, etc., not all of which queer people are able to adhere to or wish to adhere to.

Swikriti Sanyal's "Breaking through the Limits of Flesh: Gender Fluidity and (Un)natural Sexuality in Virginia Woolf's Orlando" argues that anything outside of heteronormativity falls into the realm of perversions, which were handled with legal severity and medicalized as mental illness likened to adultery, rape and incest. Some scholars, such as Josh Mcloughlin, offer a comparison between the novels the thesis explores in "Queer Time in Woolf and Wilde" while arguing that the parallels between the two are an attempt to "push against chrononormativity" and "refuse future-driven narrative" while other critics have explored how sexuality and gender fluidity are expressed in these novels separately (1). However, there is a lack of comparison between these periods through these texts and the manner in which they can be read as simultaneously rejecting chrononormativity and disallowing it by society. Wilde's novel represents the rejection of chrononormativity through the character of Dorian Gray who disavows it, yet characters such as Basil do not have the agency to do so. With reference to Woolf's *Orlando*, the protagonist is first allowed the space and rejects it, but that allowance is gender-dependent, i.e., when Orlando's gender changes, they no longer have the viable choice to disavow chrononormativity.

The Picture of Dorian Gray and *Orlando* were chosen as they represent two very different periods and societies exploring the same issues, with different outcomes. The ways in which society rejects sexuality and gender fluidity expression in these two novels contributes to the concept of chrononormativity placing a limitation on identity. The similar use of aesthetics in terms of artistic expression as a form of escapism also adds to this argument significantly. Woolf's novel mocks the pursuit of a core identity through the creation of such a diverse character as a way to challenge the effects of chrononormativity on those unable to adhere to it due to their gender and expressions of sexuality. Wilde's novel portrays the lives of Dorian and Basil in such a way as to present the impossibility of chrononormativity. The novel demonstrates queer temporality through the characters obsessively engaging in aesthetics like painting and reading, because Victorian society

dictates that they cannot be allowed chrononormativity due to their queerness and thus this becomes a form of escapism and an alternate chrononormativity.

Mcloughlin examines the connection between queerness, aestheticism, gender practices and Freeman's chrononormativity. Mcloughlin argues that in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Woolf's *Orlando*, both protagonists resist and reject chrononormativity as queer characters. He goes on to compare the use of aestheticism in both novels as useless and digressive. The thesis uses Mcloughlin's arguments as a point of departure to examine the ways *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando* address issues of chrononormativity and utilize queer temporality in literature. This will be explored through an analysis of how both texts use aestheticism to denounce their respective societal expectations as a form of escapism, as well as a critical discussion of the manner in which both texts engage with chrononormativity in their respective societies. Both Mcloughlin and Freeman engage with the works of Jack Halberstam in terms of the queer experience of space and time. This theory suggests that queerness is made up of unique queer temporalities, and these experiences affect the way the LGBTQI+ experiences space and time.

I have spoken to this elsewhere — my research paper, "Love and Beauty in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" served as a catalyst for this thesis – Victorian society was underscored by class and gender hierarchies which played out in private spaces with a clear distinction between the roles of man and woman, following an expected life path of heteronormativity. Victorian domesticity ideally envisioned the woman's place to be the home, while the man took on the traditional role of breadwinner in the public sphere. Michael McKeon's comments on separate spheres in *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Divisions of Knowledge* (2007), clarifies that women and men were prescribed by gendered doctrines in Victorian society: "Women are not undeveloped and subordinate version of men; they are biologically and naturally different from them —the "opposite" sex" (272). This patriarchal ideology essentially meant that women should remain, and govern the private sphere at home but under her husband's authority, while men dominated the public sphere too.

Additionally, Victorian society had high expectations for beauty in both men and women. In upper-class women, having pale skin was a sign of nobility as a result of white supremacy, as noted in Valerie Steele's *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (119). Whereas for men, having youth and education was a sign of beauty. In this patriarchal world, a woman's sense of value was also defined by

her ability to be a good wife and mother. Appel's "Victorian Ideals: The Influence of Society's Ideals on Victorian Relationships" comments on this:

> Women in Victorian society had one main role in life, which was to marry and take part in their husbands' interests and business. Before marriage, they would learn housewife skills such as weaving, cooking, washing, and cleaning, unless they were of a wealthy family. If they were wealthy, they did not always learn these tasks because their maids primarily took care of the household chores. Typically, women were also not allowed to be educated or gain knowledge outside of the home because it was a man's world. (1)

Victorian middle and upper-class men also believed that for a woman to be suitable for marriage, she needed to exhibit feminine traits including innocence. Also class-specific, the Victorian male had to live up to standards prior to and during marriage as well, to impress the rest of society (as well as potential wives) and obtain respect; if they were unmarried, they were seen as less masculine, as inferred by Appel. They were expected to uphold the family's financial stability in turn preserving the family's reputation. The conventional union between man and woman in marriage was considered sacrosanct, an extension of the moral order believed to underpin the nation.

With traditional ideas of love and beauty dogmatically shaping identity, one would be remiss to overlook the influences of the economy in the reading of the novels. The Victorian period was an era marked by social and political change, whilst still having conservative remnants. Sarah Heinz explores ideas about sexuality, love and the body in the Victorian economy and society in "The Age of Transition" and explains that this was an age in which "the traditional system of belief was not only questioned but also transgressed" (159). When these systems were transgressed, if women had affairs, they would become rejected figures in society, creating space for discrimination to take place. Men and women were ostracised for loving outside of their class. Married men were protected by the law, but women felt the full brunt of it, compelled to live in self-isolation and shame or to leave England and begin new lives in the New World, some assuming different identities once there as a furtive attempt to reinvent themselves.

Heinz further argues that simultaneously, the Victorian period "is often considered to be emblematic of conservatism, prudery and a stability which borders on stagnation" (159). This suggests that the period continued to value stability and conservatism, even though it was an age of significant social and political change, as the Industrial Revolution had begun in the latter part of the previous century (159). The History Press' "Victorian Society"

explores the workings of Britain's society and economy during the period: "Never had there been such an explosion of building and money-making, turning Britain into the 'workshop of the world'" (n.pag). Britain's society was a scurry of labour and success stories, all of which markedly impacted personal ambitions and ideals of masculinity – in this sense – straying from the conventional male working life by becoming an artist, a space of artistic loneliness is created, leaving room for alienation. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2001), Deirdre David comments on the condition of the economy at the time as essentially being materialistic. The main ideal of people during this age was consistent ambition for class and material success: "At the middle of the century, after the demise of Chartism and the establishment of an improved economy, Britain felt herself to have come through busy factories, bustling shipyards, active financial markets" (6). This insistence on success in Victorian economy and society contributes to how people expressed and demonstrated love in the period. Class position and comfortable economy at the time were some of the many expectations of an ideal masculinity and marriage partner, thus limiting masculinity to certain material characteristics that could not always be fulfilled. This expectation contributes to the loss of personal identity, evident in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Dorian idolizes his mentor, Lord Henry Wotton, as an established nobleman and strives to mimic this, along with his skewed and transgressive ideas of morality. Lord Henry's unorthodox moral stance causes him, too, to fall into the category of the outsider, even though he envelops ideal masculinity. His sense of morality and life choices are vastly different from the majority of Victorian society, though there is not much known about him. Lord Henry's past is not often discussed, but based on his constant compliments of Dorian's physical appearance, it appears that he too, experiences degrees of homoerotic desire, leading him to deceive society into thinking otherwise in order to avoid marginalisation. This can be seen in his clear admiration for Dorian:

> Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. (Wilde 20)

With the use of phrases such as "wonderfully handsome", "finely curved scarlet lips" and "worshipped", one gets the sense that Lord Henry has paid close attention to Dorian's physical appearance. Lord Henry notices finite details about his face and admires them immensely. This indicates that Lord Henry portrays particular degrees of homoerotic desire.

There is also a sort of loneliness present, associated with the outsider when considering Lord Henry's lack of empathy, sympathy or emotional response. The attributes of the ideal man include physical attractiveness, youth, a high level of education, a distancing from feminine comforts, a high degree of material success and a sense of respect from other men, as noted by Appel. This ideal of masculinity is directly linked to the undertones of homoerotic desire and taboo love in the novel. Dorian drifts away from Basil's homoerotic passion and influence, which was certainly not conventional, and drifts towards Lord Henry Wotton's ideal masculinity in the form of a mentor, as was desired and expected of him from society.

With an understanding of the context and background of the novel, it is essential to acknowledge the traditions of courtship and chivalry in the Victorian period, as these directly reflect Dorian and Sibyl's conventional, but tragic, short-lived relationship. The courtship's sequence of actions was incredibly specific, and if not adhered to, the relationship usually would not commence. Women were groomed for this their entire lives until they were ready for marriage at the age of seventeen or eighteen. As previously mentioned, women of the established classes were expected to be subservient and domesticated mothers and wives. These gender-specific courting traditions constitute how Victorians demonstrated love, and thus affected an individual's personal identity. Elizabeth Langland's "Nobody's Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel" demonstrates a few social practices that would influence and shape courtship expectations:

> These discursive practices range widely from increasingly complex rules of etiquette and dress to the growing formalization of "Society" and "the Season," to the proliferation of household help manuals, to the institution of household prayer and the custom of house-to-house visiting; they even encompass major changes in domestic architecture. In regulating what is sayable and how it can be articulated, who can speak and in what circumstances, discursive practices constitute knowledge. (291)

Men were compelled to be cautious during courtship, placing a strain on individual sexual and romantic desires, especially those desires which were considered to be unconventional. If this sequence of events of courtship were not adhered to, for example, not dressing appropriately or using frowned-upon speech, the courtship was often rejected or dismissed entirely, further affecting individual self-esteem. When Sibyl first sees Dorian, she likens his appearance to that of a "prince" (Wilde 79), and she immediately informs her mother of her infatuation, speaking mainly of his attractiveness and wealth, again pointing to traditional courtship. They do not share their engagement with her parents, as this is seen as taboo. It is

tradition to receive the father's permission for proposing (in this case, the mother's permission as Sibyl's father is not present in her life). Dorian did not adhere to these rules of courtship, thus the secrecy. The beginning of a courtship, involving continuous flattery and compliments, is an essential part of development as well. In fact, this can be seen as one of Dorian's first strays from chrononormativity, as he avoids chrononormative expectations and societal conventions as defined in Freeman's *Time Binds.* This courtship can be likened to Basil's constant compliments of Dorian in the novel, alluding to the subtle plotline of homoerotic desire. The courtship between Basil and Dorian is never outrightly stated, and thus ultimately dismissed, though the two characters often share moments which can be likened to courtship traditions. These courtship and chivalry rules did not originate in the Victorian period, but in the Medieval period. In particular, this refers to the chivalrous knight of the Middle Ages. In Laura Ashe's "Love and Chivalry in the Middle Ages" she describes the relationship as:

> The two lovers are noble, beautiful, courtly and virtuous; he is a great knight, and she is a perfect lady. This is the ideal of medieval love which culminates in marriage. But the interesting thing about this romance with a happy ending is that it isn't really about individual desire at all. The ideal is made to be adaptable, malleable: it can fit whoever is appropriate. (1)

The perfect lady in this case would be Sibyl, and the knight or noble prince is Dorian. In particular, this relationship involved knightly worship of a specific value of the person in question, rather than the person as a whole, often described as knightly worship – Dorian regularly puts Sibyl on a pedestal and refers to her as "sacred" (Wilde 77), a goddess he worships as something above him. This can also be related to the ways in which Lord Henry and Basil refer to Dorian and describe him. These conventions of love are present in Victorian courtships through its procedures, and the fact that values are admired above humans as a whole is essential in understanding these courtship traditions. For example, this is seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* as Dorian values Sibyl's ability to act more than he admires Sibyl as an individual. There is no focus on the individual at all; it is all about the focus on particular ideal values, admired and sought after by society in its entirety. This focused admiration has its toll on individual identity. Dorian's expectations of Sibyl and her inability to meet those expectations eventually lead to her untimely death. It was quite uncommon for women to commit suicide in the Victorian period, and thus, this manifests the concept of the outsider in Sibyl. As scholar Deborah Deacon mentions in "Fallen Women: The Popular Image of Female Suicide in Victorian England, c. 1837-1901", during the time

period, society "presented the female suicide as sinful" (12). The image of unlawfulness and sin present in Sibyl alienates her character.

With the latter in mind, the notions of love and beauty present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reflect all of the ideals akin to Victorian ideals of society, economy and courtship. The concept of Victorian love and chrononormativity life cycles are flawed; individuals are moulded to fit the ideal role expected of them by society, but the impact of these expectations - particularly on one's personal identity and how this can result in alienation and the creation of the outsider - is hardly acknowledged or discussed.

The Picture of Dorian Gray explores society underscored by class and gender hierarchies, played out in the private upper-class Victorian household with a clear distinction between the roles of man and woman: any deviations in sexuality and gender expression were condemned. The novel, set in London, has an aura of suspense and mystery, as fitting Wilde's novel. The story follows the life of Dorian Gray, a wealthy and handsome young man, who sits for a portrait painted by Basil, an artist. Basil, who is completely taken by his youthful energy and beauty, expresses his affection for Dorian through his art. It is here where the hidden plotline of homoerotic desire in the novel is presented. Basil refuses to exhibit this portrait of Dorian, as it represents his secret desire for Dorian. He then reluctantly introduces Dorian to his friend, Lord Henry Wotton, who goes on to become Dorian's mentor and ultimately, quite a negative influence. Lord Henry encourages Dorian to prioritise his youth and beauty while discarding conventional standards of morality. This begins Dorian's obsession with the possibility of his beauty fading with age and he makes a wish for the painting to age, rather than his own.

As time passes, he realises that his wish has come true; his youthful beauty remains over the years, while the portrait grows increasingly unattractive. Dorian's desire for eternal youth and beauty mimics the figures of Dionsysos and Apollo, as represented in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. In fact, Lord Henry even makes a comparison between Dorian and Apollo later in the novel when he refers to him as the "young Apollo" (Wilde 234). Dorian falls in love with a talented actress, Sibyl, for her ability to act. Further on in the novel, Dorian loses interest in her and she commits suicide. After Dorian rejects her, he goes on to observe the changes in the portrait, and the narrator comments that Dorian was to have "Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sin" (115). A parallel can be drawn here between these statements and a remark made in *Metamorphosis* when Ovid describes Bacchus (Dionysos):

For thine is unending youth, eternal boyhood (puer aeternus),

Thou art the most lovely in the lofty sky;

Thy face is virgin-seeming ... (Book IV, lines 17)

These texts are remarkably similar when drawing a comparison between the concepts of eternal youth, virgin-seeming, purity, and beauty. This comparison is necessary as a background theoretical framework, but it is not a key focus in this thesis.

When Dorian shows the now hideous painting of himself to Basil, he is infuriated and the two have a heated argument. In a fit of rage, Dorian murders him; Basil had isolated himself throughout the novel, certainly for the same reason that he refused to sell the portrait or publicly display it – his homosexuality would have alienated and disgraced him from society, as this was outside of societal norm and acceptance, and he self-isolates in order to avoid the ostracism that would take place along with this.

Dorian later decides that he wishes to amend for his sins, and attempts to stab the portrait in order to erase his own crimes. When the servants in the house hear the crash and enter the room to investigate, they find Dorian's lifeless body, withered and disfigured with a knife in his own chest, as well as the unharmed portrait depicting a beautiful, youthful Dorian. The novel interestingly captures the consequences of demonstrating love in the chrononormative fashion on personal identity in numerous ways and pays attention to effeminacy, particularly in the description of its characters with hints at homoerotic codes that are never outrightly stated. A description of a man's physical beauty offered by another man was often synonymous with homosexuality. Luljeta Muriqi's "Homoerotic Codes in The Picture of Dorian Gray" comments on this phenomenon and explains how gender roles are not easily definable, but Victorian society drew clear labels for people, leading to the act of discrimination:

> The greatest presumption we have about homosexuality is that homosexual men are very effeminate and by writing three major characters, and especially the protagonist, in such effeminate manner, Wilde could never escape the label of homoeroticism. Although dandyism being the fashionable way to be for Wilde and his peers at that time, it became more taboo in connection to his very public trial and conviction of gross indecency. In the end all comes down to the presumptions and prejudice of what is homosexual and what is heterosexual since the gender roles are not always black and white. (19-20)

The themes of secrecy and shame run parallel with homosexuality in this case, in which Wilde's characters, Dorian, Henry and Basil go on to live conventional heteronormative lifestyles, but with homosexual people being placed into a restrictive and taboo box described

as effeminate with no grey areas, it is no surprise that gender fluidity was viewed in a very similar way. The theme of homoerotic desire and the sense of loneliness associated with being an outsider as a result of this is quite evident in the text upon a close inspection of Basil's character. Being that Wilde is recorded to have been homosexual himself, in a period where this was illegal and not approved of, he makes a strikingly relevant point in "The Decay of Lying", calling attention to the fact that "it is none the less true that Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life" (9). This places an extension on the themes of homosexuality and the outsider in the sense that his characters undergo multiple consequences due to their life choices in the same ways that he did; one essential consequence in the novel is Basil's sense of loneliness experienced in the life of the artist and homosexual outsider, later ultimately resulting in his death.

Wilde followed a similar life path. He was sent to trial and exiled for homosexual acts – according to Professor Dr. Peter Paul Schniererhe's transcripts and comments on Wilde's trial in "I Will Take Your Answer One Way or Another", he suffered a "two-year imprisonment in Reading Gaol accompanied by hard labour" (11). Under the law at the time, this was the maximum penalty. Wilde was imprisoned between 1895 and 1897. It was in prison where Wilde fell ill and eventually died of meningitis. This takes place a few years after the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the parallels between the path that led to his death and the path that led Basil to appositely reflect his statement of life imitating art, as well as the result of straying from the chrononormative lifestyle. Wilde experienced discrimination in his extreme prison sentence for having a characteristic which was considered to make him inferior – being homosexual. Not only was he victimised for his sexual preferences, but he became an outsider from his own Irish nationality. Scholar Tara M. Fueshko in "The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Irish National Tale or a Novel Written by a Great Irish National?" discusses Wilde's experience of Ireland, and mentions that the country was under strain due to the oppression felt by many at the hands of British imperialism. She explains Wilde's vision of Ireland:

> Due to the oppression felt by many, O'Connor believed Wilde saw Ireland as an imaginary place created by the imagination of other people such as the Britons. Wilde only felt his Irishness upon leaving Ireland due to his status as an outsider and his refusal to submit to another culture. He experimented with looks changing preferences on facial hair, hair, and clothing styles as he traversed the Atlantic gaining a reputation as an aesthete. (1)

Wilde's refusal to submit to another culture reflects upon the earlier notion of the outsider living a double life, creating a cultural conflict in his identity and ultimately, his leaving the country is a form of self-isolation as well. By experimenting with this physical appearance so often and in such an unconventional manner, he expresses that his use of aestheticism is utilized as an escape from being an outsider. Lord Henry embodies the values of the dandy, as seen when he expresses the fallibility of the dandy's gods, Youth and Beauty. In fact, he warns Dorian of the impermanence of these characteristics:

> Some day, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it, you will feel it terribly. Now, wherever you go, you charm the world. Will it always be so? (Wilde 26)

Lord Henry draws attention to the helplessness of the very gods he believes in, and the same characteristics he favours in Dorian. This indicates that Wilde's novel not only challenges the beliefs of dandyism and aestheticism in general but also these beliefs within the LGBTQI+ community within the upper class. When making mention of "aestheticism" in this thesis, I refer to the artistic expression of the authors and their characters in terms of aesthetic delights such as writing, reading, painting, experimentation within identity expression etc., as well as the marvelling and idolizing of youth and beauty. When considering the character of Dorian, it is clear that he is a personification of Wilde's own conflict with identity. Fueshko goes on to point out that Dorian is the apex allegory: "Dorian Gray is Ireland oppressed for centuries by a country wishing to maintain its power through its imperialism" (7). He is frustrated and comes to realise that he is unable to obtain inner peace, even by any unorthodox methods such as the deal he has made for his soul. He cannot resolve the inner conflict with his identity and has been alienated by what Freeman defines as chrononormative society. Thus, he goes on to lash out at the people around him – this can be likened to a country acting in revenge upon the oppressor. In Dorian's case, this was society.

Subsequently, while aestheticism in the form of artistic expression was an escape for Wilde in terms of writing, in the novel this escape is depicted as art for Basil. It is through his art that he is allowed to explore the double-life mentioned earlier – he cannot express, nor act on, his desire for Dorian, and uses art as an escape from this reality, as well as to depict what he desires. He creates an idolized version of Dorian in the painting and indulges in this. Cameron Dodworth delves into these ideas in "The Strokes of Brush and Blade: How Basil Hallward Executed Dorian Gray in the Style of Naturalism":

> True to the Aesthetic doctrine of Oscar Wilde, Basil's image of Dorian is that of a work of Art. This image is not based on reality; it springs solely from the mind of the artist. Dorian exists as an idealized image in Basil's mind. (12)

Basil's use of art as escapism mirrors and parallels Wilde's use of aestheticism in order to escape from the consequences of being an outsider. Though these methods may work, they do not form part of reality and are ultimately futile and short-lived – Basil eventually realises and understands that Dorian is not the man he envisioned him to be, that he could never truly express his desire. Gagnier noted in *Critical Essays on Oscar Wilde* that Wilde: "lived before a time when sexual preference had become an identity" (24). Wilde passed away from meningitis, having never fully come to terms with his identity conflict, as he lived in a period where encompassing a homosexuality identity was simply not possible. These are both instances that make up the picture that Wilde eventually painted himself – the precursor to modernity's sense of discrimination, the outsider – faces many consequences, such as a limitation on identity and alienation, and has no true escape from the confines of chrononormativity, which will be elaborated on further on in the thesis through a critical discussion of the theoretical framework used.

The literary Modernist period falls between the early 1900s to approximately the early 1940s and marks a stark contrast to the Victorian period – it established a transition away from tradition and focussed on creating new forms of expression. Technology was transforming swiftly and the embrace of an industrialized modern society occurred. Due to the large influx of scientific, political and social change, many Modernists likely had to find completely new ways of expression that abhorred those ideals and standards belonging to the Victorian period – this in itself created a certain kind of discrimination, as this moral isolation serves to create a space for alienation if expressions of change were radical. Modernism in itself was a philosophical movement, as well. Modernism presents many known experiments with temporality in literature. When reading previous innovations by Woolf, such as *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), it becomes clear that Woolf was experimenting with the concepts of time and space well before she began writing *Orlando.* This sets the stage for what she achieves in regard to gender and sexuality innovations later on.

The period marks Sigmund Freud's peak of the psychoanalytical approach to mental illnesses, which was revolutionary in the early 1890s. However, there was also a focus on a society's collective crisis and shared pain. Maurice Beebe's "What Modernism Was" captures this sense of collective pain and how it was expressed:

> Knowing that modern literature began sometime in the late nineteenth century, at a time when Darwinism and other scientific or philosophic schools of thought were destroying the sense of religious community which had prevailed until then, they have found it easy to see Modernism as essentially an age of crisis marked by a shared sense of loss, exile, and alienation that was to find expression in such recurrent themes as the quest for a father, the end of innocence, and man's inability to communicate. Knowing that the period was marked by a rapid acceleration of the Industrial Revolution, the socio-historical critics have noted that the depersonalization of the individual in a mechanized society is reflected in the art of the period, and they have easily traced an increased emphasis on urban and technical imagery as opposed to the rural and the natural. (1068)

Taking this into consideration, it becomes clearer that writers such as Woolf used art and literature as a form of escapism and to express feelings of alienation. The use of the word "depersonalization" here contributes to earlier comments about Victorian ideals creating a limitation on personal identity; in this case, Modernism inferred a contradictory, shared lack of belonging and marginalization from society. A rapid increase in the technological and industrial world has created a limitation on identity – ushering in an emerging experience of discrimination.

With modernisation came colossal economic growth, resulting in a swift change to the class structure, followed by a rapid shift in the social hierarchy. With the new technological advances, the opportunity for wealth and success grew closer and many people considered as part of the lower class found themselves stumbling into the new middle class as the construction of society was at once promptly but also protractedly modified in some ways. Keith Watenpaugh's introductory chapter "Modernity, Class, and the Architectures of Community" analyses this singularity:

> the growing cultural and economic penetration by the West in various forms meant, for members of the emerging middle class, the possibility of changing their society and their role in it to such a degree and in such a fashion as to make it, in the way they understood the concept, modern. (4)

Watenpaugh mainly focuses on how modernized society from the West affected the Middle East, but critically discusses the creation of the new middle class, keeping in mind that the Modernist period introduced a newly integrated social hierarchy due to rapid growth in wealth and success that is linked to industrial advancement; this allowed for those in the middle class to utilize these opportunities in order to advance to the position of upper-class

society much faster in a Modernist society. Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser's *Social Change and Modernity* (1992) goes on to discuss this new middle class taking the place of the minimised working class:

> the contraction of the working class, in the sense of the body of manual wage-earners and, on the other, to the emergence of what has most often been labeled the "new middle class" of nonmanual, salaried employees—as distinct from the "old middle class" of proprietors and "independents," whose social significance diminishes as large-scale enterprises increasingly dominate the economy. The class structure of industrial societies is in fact seen as coming increasingly to reflect the social hierarchy of the modern corporation, although at the same time across all classes a reduction occurs in the more evident inequalities—for example, in incomes and in standards and styles of living. (125)

The reduction in members of the working class in Modernist society led to the formation of the new middle class. What one would refer to as the old middle class consisted primarily of small-business owners was completely overshadowed by large corporations and enterprises that flooded the job arena, resulting in a mass increase of salaried employees, further advancing the economy. With this changed class structure and social hierarchy came completely different standards of living. Many who did not break into these categories suffered from poverty, but those who did soared financially.

As is the case with class structure, the same applied to gender; there was a hierarchy wherein the idolized male took on the masculine role of the husband by becoming the breadwinner, while the woman took on a less-respected role as a housewife until the rise of feminist theory in the 1960s. This structure links with Freeman's description of a chrononormative society and the expectations of that society in terms of gender roles. Though this structure was beginning to be questioned in late modernity, inequality did and still does exist, to some extent. Haferkamp and Smelser go on to comment on this as a characteristic of modernity:

> The increasing proliferation of roles and institutional structures, however, provides an ever-increasing number of structural bases for inequality. Indeed, some have identified distinctive patterns of inequality (such as class, gender, and race) as the fundamental characteristic of modernity. (20)

With these inequalities between class, gender and race systems and socially created hierarchies comes discrimination, mistreatment and alienation. Women in this context were often pressured by society into domestication and young marriage as they were seen as

incomplete persons and identities without marriage. If women refused to marry, they were seen as the other and alienated by society, creating another limitation on identity by inferring that one's identity or individuality does not exist without a significant other. Jennifer Haytock's section on marriage and alienation in her book *Edith Wharton and the Conversations of Literary Modernism* (2008) comments on the concept of a marriage constituting two incomplete units until the moment of union by marriage:

> The marital unit contains two distinct personalities, each with his or her own perceptions, experiences, and desires, and these differences can create discord that belies unity. Divorce, the private and public acknowledgment that the unified whole does not exist, signifies those differences and gaps between individuals, and within the context of the modernist movement, it also represents the lack of unity within the individual herself. (131)

Stating outright that there is a lack of unity in an individual who has either never married or is divorced insinuates that there is something lacking in an individual's identity which can only be fulfilled by a significant other. This creates a reliability on romantic union in order to lead a fulfilling life, often resulting in hasty decisions in the choice of partner and resulting in an unhappy marriage – one that would not ordinarily end in divorce at the risk of public humiliation and mistreatment in the public sphere. In other words, at the risk of being alienated by society. Anne Fernald's "The Domestic Side of Modernism" from *Modern Fiction Studies* comments on the hierarchy of gender, stating that "the masculine modernism that dominated the headlines and the early decades of criticism focused on heroism over housework" (828). Describing modernity in itself as "masculine" speaks directly to the gender hierarchy dominating the modern world. By relating to masculinity as heroic infers that by merely existing, the male dominates the gender and class hierarchy and is seen as more essential to society when compared to the domesticity of femininity.

With the Modernist philosophical movements beginning to gain traction, social change movements swiftly followed. One of these was the feminist movement, which disseminated into different branches of liberalism and radicalism. Women retaliated against societal pressure and fought for equality. Haferkamp and Smelser go on to discuss both branches in depth; feminist liberalism is what he refers to as an "emancipation movement". What this means is that it was an attempt to completely break away from societal norms and fight for equality in the public eye, as well as for equal opportunities in the workplace. Simone de Beauvoir stands as the main representation of this rebellion. On the other side, radical feminism existed as an "opposition movement" against the dominance of masculinity,

which accentuated sexuality and emphasised the physical divergence between men and women. The issue with this is that in some cases it over-sexualized women to the point where in fighting for equality between the masculine and the feminine, introduced the "risk of isolating militant women in a homosexual rupture that could result in the creation of a marginal cultural that ceases to be a social movement" (Haferkamp and Smelser 72). Besides risking the loss of a social movement by the manner in which equality is fought for, this too could create a space for alienation and marginalization.

Woolf's *Orlando* is set in the Modernist movement, marked by transformation in society along with stark changes in science and politics. Modernists found new ways of expression that rebelled against the ideals and conventions of the Victorian period. *Orlando* challenges exclusion and discrimination and the resulting limitation of identity by attempting to contest chrononormativity or being disallowed due to sexuality and gender expression. The novel breaks binary codes in different ways through its exploration of gender fluidity- this, too, was curtailed by society in such a way that self-expression was restricted. Sanyal comments on Woolf's methods as:

> (a) feminist approach offer[ing] a deployment of gender instability in her dialogue with (un)natural sexualities. Orlando's paroxysmal shifts between male and female, heterosexuality and homosexuality, reality and fantasy, past and present, life and poetry, biography and autobiography unsettles and disavows the very possibilities of fixed meanings and binaries. (79-80)

With fixed meanings, binaries blurring and gender fluidity as a form of evolving self-expression, the act and concept of alienation accompanied it. Sanyal's arguments speak to Muriqi's understanding that the clear definition of gender roles within a society leads to alienation, but gender itself, as well as gender roles, lack fixed meanings and binaries. After bearing witness to Woolf's character Orlando exhibiting ambiguities between masculine and feminine expression, both emotionally and physically, the character's experience indicates that gender is performative. It is a form of identity expression, but not a core sense of demonstration. Throughout Woolf's *Orlando*, the notion of gender is fraught with inconsistencies. Orlando's experiences as man and woman, the constant interplay of masculinity and femininity in their body, taken together with her abrupt sex change at the age of thirty, suggests an assumption of gender as performance. On reading Orlando following Judith Butler's proposition of performativity in that gender is a social construct, one might appreciate the novel's objective of exposing, and at the same time, upsetting the naturalized gender binaries whilst rejecting chrononormativity. As such, I change Orlando's pronouns

throughout the thesis in reference to which section of the novel is being referred to, prior to or post their transition. It is interesting to note that Woolf was writing about gender and queer theory much earlier than theorists like Butler. Her original approach to gender and sexuality in the novel is extraordinary, and Woolf essentially creates a third gender and sexual lifestyle, a far stray from society's conventions.

Chris Coffman's "Woolf's Orlando and the Resonances of Trans Studies" terms *Orlando's* key feminist theme as "highlighting the interlocking oppression of women, transgendered people and sexual minorities" (12). Woolf wanted to bring discrimination against women to the surface of society in order to force immediate attention and action to the inequalities and halt the act of alienation. The result of this type of exclusion is the creation of a physical, emotional or mental distance between one superior self and what is considered or perceived as an inferior other, always resulting in alienation and discrimination. The entity or group affected thereafter always succumbs to self-isolation, hiding parts of one's self which results in a limitation on identity.

The book is not generally classified as a transgendered text as Orlando firmly decides that they are a male or female at any given time. Coffman comments on this literary conflict:

> Evermore, while a woman, Orlando frequently circulates in public in men's clothes, often while pursuing women. At first blush, it would seem that these crossings of sex and gender would closely affiliate Orlando with transgender studies. However, unlike Hall's novel, Woolf's has been claimed both by feminist theory and by a queer theory that privileges sexuality. (4)

Woolf fully encompasses the characteristics of the outsider or other in *Orlando* as previously discussed; this being the marginalized. Orlando as a character utterly voids social norms by dressing in whichever way felt true to their identity at that moment and pursuing a gender that they wish to at that same moment, whether that be a homosexual desire, such as Wilde's character Basil, or a heterosexual one. Queer theory suggests that sexuality is a privilege in that heterosexuality is a norm/privilege due to the fact that it comes with no risk of discrimination, while every other sexuality does.

Orlando is a fictional biography that makes use of satire and falls within the fantasy genre including elements of a queer love story interwoven with Woolf's own personal life experiences. The fantastical elements of the novel present themselves in many strange aspects of Orlando's biography; this is seen in the fact that the novel covers nearly 400 years in the life of Orlando, and captures his supernaturalistic transition from one sex to another. Orlando's story begins at age sixteen, in the year 1588. He was incredibly wealthy,

considered conventionally handsome and a noble on his way to meet Queen Elizabeth. The queen formulates a good impression of him based on a short interaction and thinks very highly of him. Just two years later, she gives him a title and invites him to live with her. Throughout this period, Orlando courted Lady Margaret, otherwise known as Euphrosyne. During their engagement, he falls passionately in love with a princess of Muscovite, Sasha, but she deceives him and he is left utterly heartbroken. This angered the nobles and he was left distraught, rejected and alienated – this marks the beginning stage of his discrimination experience, in which he is excluded by the nobles for his deceitful actions against Euphrosyne. After a few woeful days, he can no longer remember anything from his old life, and doctors come to see him. He is overcome by depression and turns to writing and literature as a form of escapism. This is another indication of Orlando being discriminated against - the narrator notes that he is very unusual, and he is already attempting to escape his feelings of alienation through writing a poem "The Oak Tree, which he works on throughout the entire novel. He befriends Nicolas Greene, an established writer, who admonishes Orlando's literary ambitions as unrealistic. Greene then goes on to write a satirical review of Orlando's play; in which he publicly insults it with a negative review. This marks another discriminatory experience for Orlando.

Later on, when living in Constantinople, Orlando is awarded Dukedom and decides to host a lavish ball and party, in which it is speculated that a miracle will take place; this brings an ominous foretelling of what is to come in the next week. The day after the party, it is discovered that Orlando married a dancer, Rosita Pepita, and he does not awaken for several days. When he eventually does break out of his slumber, he is suddenly a woman. She does not seem at all astonished by this mysterious change in gender and continues on as if nothing about her has changed drastically. It is clear to the reader that although physically Orlando has changed, her identity remains the same. Not long after this, she decides to move back to England. Once on the ship to England, Orlando realises the changed expectations of her from society; as a woman, she is now expected to dress a particular way and act more submissively. This is obviously a newfound pain to her and certainly not what she was used to as a man. The narrator then discusses Orlando's changed sex life which followed her transition; she now takes several male (predominately poets) home with her. Time seems to then pass quickly, as it moves to the 1800s. Orlando's sexuality becomes a little muddled here, in that he meets, falls in love with and marries Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine all quite quickly. Being that "Shel" is a man and Orlando is still a woman, Orlando's sexual orientation is taken into question and not just her sexual identity/sex. Three hundred years

have passed since the beginning of the story, but Orlando has barely aged. She accidentally comes across Nicolas Greene once more, who insists that she publish her poem. She ponders this when she returns home; not long after this, she gives birth to a son. Suddenly, the year is 1928 and what the narrator calls the present. Orlando reflects on the current age and how much things have changed; how they seem happier but in what appears to be a façade to cover layers of trauma. She leaves her poem at the base of an oak tree, after what has now been several editions of publication.

With each new age, place, lover and gender, Orlando changes and adapts to society's expectations. When he lives with the queen, he dresses in lavish clothing and acts as a gentleman and noble. When he reaches the 17th century, he is forced to learn Turkish in order for the community to accept him as ordinary. Once his gender changes to that of a female, she struggles with clothing and appearance as society's expectations of conventional standards of beauty and expectations of women cripple her. She feels constricted by these clothes and men now treat her in a condescending way, which they absolutely did not do when she was a man. Legally she cannot inherit the home which should have been passed down to her as she is no longer a male, though she eventually achieves this after much difficulty. If Orlando had not tirelessly adapted to each new era and societal expectations, she would have been completely alienated and discriminated against, even more so than she already is. Throughout the novel, there are many instances of this, which Orlando learns from, but being forced to adapt certainly has its toll on her identity. Near the end of the novel, Orlando decides that she will no longer conform to these ideals and conventions in middle age, and internally becomes a lot happier even though this was a major risk. The character of Orlando is immediately noted as an outsider by Woolf and automatically falls into the category of the other due to their changing sex and sexual orientation. Woolf herself struggled with similar issues and found different methods of escapism from being an outsider and the other.

Woolf is a self-proclaimed outsider or other, by noting it herself, being a queer woman writer in the arts. In scholar Bonnie Kime Scott's "Virginia Woolf: Access to an Outsider's Vision", Scott notes that Woolf's main concerns as a Modernist writer are "deconstructing more deeply embedded cultural norms. But as an outsider, adding weather to words, attacking closed-off castles of sand, Woolf was a model deconstructor, preparing for our vision" (136). This indicates Woolf's status as an outsider, a woman writer against social and cultural norms breaking apart popular works and ideals in order to create new ones. She intended to deconstruct society's formations of expectations and ideals, therefore pitting her

outside of these norms. Woolf even coined the term "Outsider's Society" – this hints that there is a need and desire to be a part of a societal whole which is not being satisfied due to alienation, thus she created her own society. The term "outsider" is "synonymous with being a woman writer" (126), a marginalized group as it is.

Besides being autobiographical in a sense, *Orlando* is essentially a love letter written from Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West. While both Woolf and Sackville-West were married, they partook in a passionate but very discreet affair in order to avoid ostracism. Woolf's work focussed primarily on gender and feminist issues and the perception of the self, as further shown by her stream-of-consciousness-styled works, such as *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Scholar Aimee A. Wilson notes in "Holding Hands with Virginia Woolf: A Map of Orlando's Functional Subversion" the confusion of *Orlando's* genre while still addressing its main concerns:

> Although she viewed Orlando as fun and fantasy, her interest in the issues it addresses – gender and definitions of the novel, for instance – continued to inspire her through the writing of A Room of One's Own, a decidedly serious social critique. (5)

Woolf was serious about her criticism, although she portrayed it in different ways and in this case, using comedy and irony through the fantastical genre, but still a critique of society in the same way that *A Room of One's Own* (2004) is, which addresses feminist issues and the status of women in society as well as society's gaze upon women as outsiders and its act of discrimination against women.

The Aesthetic Movement, which took place in the late 1800s, specifically during Wilde's literary peak, was adopted by Modernist writers as part of a countering of Victorian ideology. Woolf uses aestheticism in her texts as a way to escape the aforementioned alienation. In the final chapter of *Orlando*, Woolf utilizes the stylistic device of stream of consciousness in presenting Orlando's changing perception of the self and time, which artists used as a form of escapism. Scholar Nast-Edine Ouahani analyses the aesthetic literary devices in literature in "Aesthetics of Modernist Literature: A Style Analysis of Three Texts from T. S. Eliot, S. Beckett and V. Woolf´s Writings as Sample" and comments on the stream of consciousness as a modern aesthetic device:

> By doing this, the writer indulges in an escape from reality, from the confines of society, religion, and materialism. Her imagination, her flaw of thought, keeps going back and forth questing, questioning, analyzing and interpreting with no limits or boundaries. The writer becomes her own psychiatrist. The language of the narrative is a chaotic one describing a chaotic and haphazard self or inner represented by an

> informal colloquial style; interconnected, long-winding structures and stylistic deviance. (52)

Woolf therefore breaks the boundaries of societal expectations and ideals and adopts an alternative aesthetic device in order to create an escape from reality, as well as the realities of modernity and discrimination. In this way, she uses aestheticism in order to avoid the circumstances of alienation that accompany the other and instead focuses on analysing the internal self without the restrictions of society, religion or materialism. Woolf took great joy in her other aesthetic passions as well, such as painting. She gained inspiration from controversial art and used this as a muse for her writing about controversial topics, conflicts and issues. The seeking of alternative art indicates her sense of being an outsider, and a desire to fill the gaps within herself and pursue controversial topics from an outsider artist's perspective. This was also a yearning for physical beauty and inspiration. Other literary devices linked to Modernist aestheticism include the use of irony, satire, strong symbolism and vivid imagery, all of which are clearly present in *Orlando*. Ultimately, Woolf uses aestheticism in her texts and this novel as a form of escapism for her characters and herself, as is the case with her romantic life. There are certainly parallels in the homosexual nature and gender concerns between Woolf as the author, her novel *Orlando* and Wilde as the author, and his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which points to the parallels between Wilde and Woolf's characters in terms of discrimination and alienation due to straying from the chrononormative life cycle, whether they disavowed it or were disallowed it.

Chapter 1: The Disavowal of Chrononormativity and Use of Aestheticism in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*

Oscar Wilde's gothic novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) portrays both the disavowal and disallowance by society of chrononormativity. This chapter focuses on how the characters of the novel portray disavowal, which in this context refers to the deliberate rejection of a chrononormative lifestyle, the rebellion against its trademark milestones and the lack of support for its end result. Kathleen Riach et al define chrononormativity in "Un/doing Chrononormativity: Negotiating Ageing, Gender and Sexuality in Organizational Life" as:

> Chrononormativity presents a fruitful means of exploring the temporal orders inscribed in organizational life which produce assumed and expected heteronormative trajectories that may include (but are not exclusive to) ideas about the 'right' time for particular life stages surrounding partnering, parenting and caring vis-a-vis career progression, promotions and flexible working. (4)

This particular arrangement of life events and the assumption of a chrononormative lifecycle dictates a singular "wrong" and "right" method for life, creating a space of alienation for those who reject chrononormativity or are not allowed it. This insinuates that all other life choices not in parallel with the chrononormative, and by extension heteronormative, organised life are immoral and unproductive, generating a society that ostracises those who fall into categories such as homosexual, transgender, etc., who cannot or will not adhere to chrononormative expectations. Riach et al go on to explain:

> chrononormativity as the normative assumptions associated with a heterosexual life course serves to effectively 'undo' older LGBT workers in Butler's terms, negating their complex lived experiences, requiring them to constantly negotiate carefully narrated identities. (5)

Not only does chrononormativity dictate an organized life with set milestones, represented as the normative and respected lifestyle in Freeman's writings, but it also consciously works to reject and alienate lifestyles that are not compatible with its expectations by minimalizing LGBTQI+ identities, resulting in a number of identity issues such as compulsory heterosexuality, marginalization, depression and detachment. Rachel Fraser's "The Epistemology of (Compulsory) Heterosexuality" defines compulsory heterosexuality as:

> Compulsory heterosexuality is a social system which regulates sexual desire and romantic attachment: it mandates heterosexuality and punishes, penalises, or renders

> invisible those who violate its norms. The social system constituting compulsory heterosexuality will typically be a cluster of related and interlocking social institutions, cultural assumptions, and ideologies which, to varying degrees, presuppose and mandate heterosexuality. Paradigm cases of culprit institutions and ideologies include the institution of heterosexual marriage, tax systems which privilege heterosexual couples, cultural assumptions and ideologies which privilege penilevaginal penetrative sex, and laws or norms making it difficult for single people or couples who do not fit the heterosexual paradigm to adopt children. (2)

The Picture of Dorian Gray has subtle homoerotic undertones, reflecting compulsory heterosexuality in both the period and within the novel. Victorian society presupposed heterosexuality and imposed it on people, resulting in lawful and societal exclusion and the urge to stifle any homosexual and gender expression that did not correlate with the norm. Wilde's novel was revolutionary through the rejection of chrononormativity and the prevalence of aesthetic pursuits in his characters. Iliana Tsaousidou's thesis expands on this claim:

> That is how gay/ lesbian identities emerge and how a homosexual culture develops, undermining compulsory heterosexuality and claiming its own space in society. It is this space that Wilde also tried to claim in his novels, for the sake of the projection of a homosexual culture against the prevalent heterosexuality, the suffocating Victorian family and the gender and sexual binaries that the Victorian era imposed. (13)

Wilde's novel presents a narrative of contrasting expressions in the duality of art (and the artist) through his characters presenting the limitations society imposes on identity expression and the compulsory heterosexuality that follows as a result. The author toes the line between the demonstration of homoerotic identities and compulsory heterosexuality for the sake of avoiding the inevitable societal alienation within the novel as well as externally, in the context that it may be rejected for controversy. Compulsory heterosexuality can be observed in Basil's character when he reflects on the moment that he first locked eyes with Dorian. He was overwhelmed by his youthful aura and beauty and the understanding that he was attracted to Dorian immediately; he was completely aware that Dorian would grow to have a significant impact and influence over his life, and this terrified him: "I grew afraid and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that made me do so: it was a sort of cowardice. I take no credit to myself for trying to escape" (Wilde 13). When recalling the comparison with *Metamorphosis*, this admiration and fear could be caused by Basil's respect for Dorian's god-like youth and beauty. However, his insistence on ignoring and even attempting to escape

from his emotions immediately reflects his unnatural desire to externally reflect heterosexuality, a desire indoctrinated by generations of oppressive societies. Basil does not disavow chrononormativity; he makes a veiled attempt to appear alongside chrononormative society because he knows that if he indulges in an honest expression of his homosexuality, he will be disallowed chrononormativity. As a result, his personal identity is restricted, and instead of being alienated from society, he isolates himself.

Dorian and Lord Henry in particular demonstrate the disavowal of chrononormativity in Wilde's novel by making the conscious decision to forego the customary life milestones that are usually associated with it, notably as academic graduation, a heteronormative marriage, and having children. There are several alternatives to this lifestyle, one of which is focusing on aesthetics as an escape from reality. In the novel, aestheticism is often used as a code for homoerotic expression as well as imaginative escapism. Muriqi's "Homoerotic Codes in The Picture of Dorian Gray" explores these concepts:

> In the case of The Picture of Dorian Gray aestheticism works as a code for homoeroticism because of the great value placed on the beauty of one man by other men. It is mainly the fact that Wilde himself is trying to explain away Basil's feelings for Dorian in terms of aestheticism that leads to aestheticism being seen as a code. (6)

The themes of beauty and youth play major roles throughout the novel when discussing narcissism, materialism, corruption and homoeroticism. As the novel primarily focuses on the pursuit of hedonistic pleasure and maintaining youth and beauty as a priority, it extends to using the aestheticism of art, pleasure and physical appearance as homoerotic expression, especially when considering the human body as a reflection of art, or art reflecting the artist. The novel consistently uses art as a veil for what society views as immoral actions, emotions and thoughts. This is indicated by the preface of the novel already, "Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault" (Wilde 1). This indicates that the author is possibly crafting a parallel throughout the entire novel; that when things are beautiful, it is a fault to find anything wrong with them. Such is the pleasure acts of narcissists and hedonists in the context of the novel – they present as beautiful, but act immorally:

> My dear boy, you are really beginning to moralize. You will soon be going about like the converted, and the revivalist, warning people against all the sins of which you have grown tired. You are much too delightful to do that. Besides, it is no use. You and I are what we are, and will be what we will be. As for being poisoned by a book,

> there is no such thing as that. Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile. The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame. (Wilde 236)

The phrase "my dear boy" sounds condescending with the intent to manipulate; as Dorian's time for redemption approaches and he begins showing signs of discontent with his lack of morality and wrongful acts, Lord Henry attempts to halt his progress. Lord Henry goes on to criticise those "lesser" beings in society who follow the chrononormative pattern with a moral code. He then insinuates that those above a moral code such as himself and Dorian are superior and act only as mirrors for societal shame and blame. He shrugs off all concerns and makes it appear to Dorian that he has no other options but to follow through with his lifestyle until his demise in "it is no use" and that they "are what we are". Throughout the novel, he influences Dorian to act only in pleasure and indulge in art, beauty and his youth; the typical aesthete struggles to make a distinction between moral and immoral actions, differentiating only between what brings selfish pleasure and what does not. The phrase "books that show the world its own shame" is ironic and adds a humorous edge to the passage, as it reflects *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as one of these books. The word "shame" is directly related to the concept of "knowledge" here, in the sense that the novel shows the world its own shame, and forces its readers to acknowledge that shame and name it as such. This creates a power imbalance in terms of those who define ideas as "shameful" and force that knowledge upon others. Thus, the making of laws is also inferred here, particularly with reference to the same laws condemning "shameful" homosexual acts.

Another alternative to the chrononormative lifestyle is practising hedonism, which is the idea that pursuing pleasure and satisfying one's desires should be the standard of living - a stark contrast to chrononormativity. Discussions of hedonism in philosophy and ethics go as far back as writings from Plato and Aristotle, but are summarised by Daniel Weijers' "Hedonism and Happiness in Theory and Practice", which emphasises that it is not a normative theory:

> As a theory of value, hedonism states that all and only pleasure is intrinsically valuable and all and only pain is intrinsically dis-valuable. Hedonists usually define pleasure and pain broadly, such that both the pleasure of reading a good book and the pain of reading a bad thesis are included. Thus, a gentle massage and recalling a fond memory are both considered to cause pleasure and stubbing a toe and hearing about the death of a loved one are both considered to cause pain. With pleasure and pain so defined, hedonism is intuitively appealing as a theory about what is valuable for us.

> Indeed, its appeal is evidenced by the fact that nearly all historical and contemporary treatments of well-being allocate at least some space to discuss hedonism. (16)

With hedonism, the morality of any one action is determined by whether it will cause one to experience pleasure or suffering, thus allowing these two emotions to be the driving forces behind daily decisions and lifestyles, whether these activities have grave repercussions on others or not. Hedonism plays a role in the novel from the beginning; once Basil realises his admiration for Dorian's beauty and captures it in a painting, creating the environment for Dorian and Lord Henry to meet in his home, Dorian's fate is sealed and the plot is set in motion. From that moment, Dorian's life would be forever changed after Lord Henry met him and took him under his wing. He is influenced by the 'noble' Lord Henry to become a person devoted to consuming pleasure; he develops a severe case of narcissism and decides that his youth and physical attractiveness are the most important aspects of himself. Lord Henry's speech on beauty and youth serves as a mark of change for Dorian:

> You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Don't frown. You have. And Beauty is a form of Genius-- is higher, indeed, than genius, as it needs no explanation. It is of the great facts of the world, like sunlight, or spring-time, or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. It cannot be questioned. It has its divine right of sovereignty. It makes princes of those who have it. (Wilde 26)

Prior to this speech, Dorian had not even considered himself beautiful or understood the importance of youthful beauty in this context. Lord Henry's priorities become clear as he describes beauty as a deity, something above mortality and reigning over humanity. The words "Beauty" and "Genius" are capitalized here, indicating personification of these concepts as beings, of which he defines beauty as divine, righteous and powerful enough to create royalty. Dorian becomes obsessed with the painting and himself, and as a result, he makes a deal in which the portrait mysteriously ages and becomes less attractive while he stays young and handsome. Dorian adopts hedonism and rejects chrononormativity as well as conventional morality. Upon meeting Lord Henry, Dorian's sense of morality and perception of life begins to change to a primary focus on desire and self-satisfaction, as in line with hedonism. Lord Henry mentors Dorian throughout the novel, with his first lesson about the importance of pleasure and succumbing to its temptation:

> We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. 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, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. (Wilde 22)

The drawback with hedonism and indulging in every temptation is that the sense of immediate gratification and fulfilment is temporary, whilst the consequences can be dire and ever-lasting, particularly on others. In fact, the consequences on one's own personal identity and character can be disastrous, too - Dorian's innocence shifts, he strays away from conventional morality and becomes something of a monster himself, inflicting damage on the people around him such as Basil, sometimes even causing permanent pain as seen with Sibyl. His atrocious behaviour towards Sibyl, lack of commitment and superficial affection for her played a major role in his own downfall and further highlights how hedonism fails as an alternative to chrononormativity. Instead of grieving over her passing, he praises her suicide as a triumph of art, whilst their entire relationship was comprised of Dorian yielding to temptation when it suited him. The word "punished" used in the context of refusing self-satisfaction and pleasure indicates that Lord Henry greatly exaggerated the benefits and consequences of a hedonistic lifestyle. Although this life philosophy lecture is intended to be motivating and insightful, the tone is gloomy and discouraging, due to words such as "strangle", "poisons", "sick" and "monstrous", all words which allude to Dorian's imminent hollow future and death. There is a sense of foreshadowing in these lines, and the irony is that yielding to temptation is exactly what caused Dorian's soul to "grow sick" and his immortal youth to ultimately become his downfall. Thus, it is evident that the pursuit of the hedonistic lifestyle as an alternative to chrononormativity proved fatally detrimental to Dorian:

> Was it really true that one could never change? He felt a wild longing for the unstained purity of his boyhood-- his rose-white boyhood, as Lord Henry had once called it. He knew that he had tarnished himself, filled his mind with corruption and given horror to his fancy; that he had been an evil influence to others, and had experienced a terrible joy in being so; and that of the lives that had crossed his own, it had been the fairest and the most full of promise that he had brought to shame. But was it all irretrievable? Was there no hope for him? Ah! in what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days, and he keep the unsullied splendour of eternal youth! All his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure swift penalty along with it. There was purification in punishment. (Wilde 237-238)

The opening words point to Dorian's remorse at the immoral life he had lived, the people he had hurt and the longing for his lost innocence. He refers to this innocence as "his rose-

white boyhood"; untarnished, pure, virtuous and blameless, interrupted by his urge to seek only pleasure and beauty in life, regardless of the consequences that have now caught up to him. The contradiction is clear here; a rose in bloom offers a promise of goodness and innocent beauty, while later in his life, Dorian's character reflects the opposite. He recognises his evil deeds for what they are, that he was misled down a path of selfish temptation and fulfilment. He describes his narcissism and love of self as "monstrous", akin to the manner in which the portrait reflects his image back at him, and he aches for purification through punishment. The word "punishment" here is in parallel with Lord Henry's previous speech about morality, wherein he says that one is punished for refusing temptation; this existed as ominous foreshadowing for the punishment Dorian would seek for yielding to these temptations in the first place.

In terms of chrononormativity, Dorian disavows chrononormativity due to the lifestyle he chooses to live – he does not pursue an education, it is insinuated that he is bisexual and he never marries. In terms of education, it is clear that Dorian is wealthy enough to not need a profession, indicating that he never acquired an education and considers intellect a waste in comparison to the pursuit of pleasure. In one of Lord Henry's teachings, he criticises the chrononormative milestone of marriage: "Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed" (52). Dorian takes to this advice without hesitation, claiming that the pleasurable sensation of love overwhelms any thought of marriage and stating that he will do anything Lord Henry advises him, a very unhealthy dynamic leading to an immoral lifestyle. The novel pays attention to effeminacy, particularly in the description of its characters with hints at homoerotic codes that are never outrightly stated. A description of a man's physical beauty offered by another man was often synonymous with homosexuality. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, this is shown by Wilde's use of aestheticism in the novel as he revolves Dorian's life around materialistic pleasures and beauty linked with immorality and Basil's imaginative escape through art. The effects on the personal identity of encompassing the outsider to chrononormative society proliferate in the limiting of male and female identity, restricting ideals of love and beauty and creating a space in which self-isolation is born. Dorian's life collapses more each day as he continues to reject chrononormativity and engage in hedonistic behaviour, becoming increasingly lonely. Despite his suffering and faults, it can be argued that he attains a sense of individualism in his disavowal of chrononormativity. In the final chapter of the novel, Dorian reflects on his life and presents a strong insight into his youth and beauty that make his sense of identity and individualism so strong. He completely sets

aside the conventions of chrononormativity and the ideas of society in saying, “It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for. But for those two things, his life might have been free from stain. His beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery” (238). Beauty and youth are considered two of Victorian society’s most sought-after qualities; Viktoria Drumova’s thesis “The Picture of Dorian Gray: Eternal Themes of Morality, Beauty and False Values Through Centuries” comments on this:

> What concerns to a face and stature, for Victorians they were the main indicators of the unspoken reflections and intentions of a person. Victorians trusted in physical appearance. They believed that one’s face and figure are able to disclose inner intentions and emotions of the person as accurate as attire reveals one’s occupation. This belief is easy observable in the literature of the period. American journalist and poet John Reed declares, “Victorian literature abounds with expressions of faith in physiognomy”. (Reed 1975: 336). Emphasis on appearance is also reflected in Wilde’s novel as being one of the main preoccupations of the society. Beauty rules through the whole of the novel. The society in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* adores beauty, putting youth and physical appeal at the top of the main values. (7)

In Victorian society, the first impression based on a person’s appearance dictated one’s opinion about them. Youthful, beautiful people who dressed well were trusted, and these characteristics were valued above all else, even morality. It is interesting to note that Victorian society believed that “one’s face and figure are able to disclose inner intentions and emotions of the person”, as even though Dorian presents well physically, he commits many immoral atrocities. At this point in the novel, Dorian rejects and despises them. In his dying moments, he rediscovers his humanity, realises that his indulgence in aesthetic and hedonistic pursuits has damaged his soul, and makes an effort to repent. This speaks to chrononormativity in that it implies that a balance between the rejection of chrononormativity and the pursuit of personal identity is necessary for true happiness in a life cycle. Dorian seems to be punished for his quest for a different lifestyle, just as one is punished by the influence of chrononormativity and the way it limits individualism – a balance between these two lifestyles is essential. Wilde is also making a much larger statement here; not only is Dorian being punished externally for his different lifestyle, but he is also punishing himself. Dorian essentially attempts to demolish his own conscience by destroying the painting, creating a sense of self-punishment. This speaks to Wilde’s intention in the novel to challenge the limitations within upper-class LGBTQI+ Victorian communities and ask universally important moral questions.

It should be noted that Dorian was allowed the choice to reject chrononormativity, he had agency to do so, while other characters, such as Basil, are portrayed to underscore that sometimes having a choice is negated because of their homosexuality. He is forced into chrononormativity through compulsory heterosexuality. However, it is indeed inferred that Dorian is bisexual in, "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men?" (Wilde 162), indicating that Dorian's apparent bisexuality may have played a role in his not adhering to chrononormativity. Nevertheless, while it is clear that Dorian suffers due to his rejection of the chrononormative life pattern, subconsciously this may have been due to society's disallowance of it because of his sexuality.

Lord Henry is a fascinating and brilliant man who places a high value on pleasure, youth, and beauty, but he is unaware of the consequences of his influence. Lord Henry is a very static figure; he does not go through a major transformation during the story, demonstrating that his rejection of chrononormativity did not result in an extraordinary existence or a particularly distinctive personal identity. His philosophy is alluring in the first half of the novel but superficial in the second, because he does not change while Dorian and Basil obviously do. He describes himself as a hedonist who indulges in aestheticism by going to the theatre, engaging in flirtatious but meaningless relations with women and attending many parties, among other fleeting pleasures. The hedonistic lifestyle is accompanied by the pursuit of aesthetic pleasures, as evidenced by Lord Henry's infatuation with these aesthetic activities. He can be defined by what one would refer to as a dandy. This is explored by scholar Beibei Guan's "Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism":

> The dandy is generally known as anti-bourgeois intellectual. The dandy, who despised the vulgarity and false morality of the newly emergent bourgeoisie, placed particular importance on nonchalant appearance, refined language, banter and cynicism, which manifested the contradiction between spirit and material, aristocracy and vulgarity, art and nature. Because the dandy regarded himself as artwork, aestheticism is essential to understanding the phenomenon of the dandy. (Guan 24)

This elucidation encapsulates the character of Lord Henry, who frequently enters into banter-like conversations and debates, criticises most of society and focuses on the self.

Aestheticism is an essential link to such characters, as they make up the foundations of their appearance, daily lives and personalities. The essence of the novel is summarised by Guan in stating the important role that aestheticism plays in the ploy, i.e., "beauty masks evil", meaning that Wilde shows us the inner workings of the human being and how one uses aesthetics, including but not limited to youth and beauty, to mask the atrocities of humanity

(28). Aestheticism plays a role in chrononormativity, not only due to the aesthetic veil covering the chrononormative lifestyle but also because it is directly connected to homoerotic expression. Muriqi explains this connection:

> Aestheticism can disguise homoerotic feelings between the men. A great deal of the prejudice against the novel is connected with the idea of masculinity - and how men relate to one another without it being considered improper - as well as with the idea of effeminacy. (3)

This subterfuge is the case between Basil and Dorian; Basil contains barely veiled homoerotic affection for Dorian, and uses the aesthetic of painting to mask it- as well as indulge in it. Victorian society's conventional ideals of love, sexuality, masculinity and femininity impact the expression of personal identity for Basil in this case. While Dorian's character undergoes a completely negative transformation as a result of his rejection of chrononormativity, Lord Henry's life stays unaltered, immobile, ordinary, and devoid of any sense of individuality. This demonstrates how rejecting chrononormativity does not result in the ideal life, but maintaining it would not either. Sibyl and the other characters illustrate how maintaining chrononormativity can have terrible consequences and a striking restriction on identity, resulting in othering as well. Wilde creates the figure of a "Victorian outsider" – a precursor to the "Modernist Other" we find in Virginia Woolf's novel. Wilde presents us with the figure of an outsider through the characters of Dorian and Basil; Dorian is described as very effeminate for a male protagonist, while Basil's infatuation and desire for him are clear. Woolf's protagonist Orlando undergoes several sexual orientation changes, as well as a change in gender and gender expression. Straying far from chrononormativity led to Dorian's downfall, the alienation of his character, and eventually his death, indicating that the very nature and definition of chrononormativity have to change in order to avoid this. Consequently, a different solution is needed.

It has already been established that a chrononormative lifestyle means adhering to heteronormative standards and expectations from society and partaking in significant chrononormative life events, such as marriage and children, as per Freeman's comments in *Time Binds*. The fact that the chrononormative life cycle is a temporal order emphasizes that this was what society expected of its members: to follow both unspoken and written rules and not veer too far from heteronormative rules such as heterosexual partnerships, receiving a respectable education, having children, etc., which not all queer people are able to adhere to or desire to follow. Rejecting this means that one chooses a completely alternate lifestyle, and makes no true commitments in romance, instead having senseless temporary relations with a

partner or purely lustful interactions. It also means one does not have children or maintain a conventional sense of morality and partakes in conventionally sinful behaviours as a result. The chrononormative life cycle is strictly limited to those who are privileged enough to fall into the spectrum of heteronormative, which Dorian and Lord Henry appear to fall into, even though it is insinuated that Dorian may be bisexual. While characters such as Dorian and Lord Henry have the agency to disavow chrononormativity, other characters like Basil do not. Though it is clear that rejecting chrononormativity did not have ideal results for Dorian and Lord Henry, it is also evident that neither character achieved their full potential in terms of happiness and personal identity by disavowing it. This indicates that there is a dire need for an alternate solution between chrononormativity and the lack thereof, which I present in my final chapter through a discussion of queer temporality.

In Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* (1933), the protagonist is first allowed the space of rejecting chrononormativity when he is adhering to heteronormativity and gender conventionality but later is no longer given that agency due to their change in gender. In order to confront the impact of chrononormativity on individuals who are unable to adhere to it due to their gender and expressions of sexuality, Woolf's work mocks the pursuit of a core identity within gender by creating such a variegated character. By wearing whatever clothing felt authentic to his/her identity at the time and pursuing a gender that he/she chose, whether that be a homosexual urge or a heterosexual one, Orlando completely voids heteronormative behaviour following his/her transition. Due to the fact that heterosexuality is the norm and does not carry the risk of being perceived as the "other," queer theory contends that sexuality is a privilege. When he was allowed the choice of rejecting chrononormativity, he desired to journey around the world for self-pleasure, quite the opposite of the picture that chrononormativity paints. When he was living with the queen, he was given the opportunity to fully encompass the chrononormative lifestyle – he dressed ostentatiously, could have pursued an education, married and had children. Instead, he angered the queen, often visited bars and indulged in lustful relations with multiple women. Orlando refused to be restricted or limited in life by chrononormativity, gender, society's expectations, sexuality or even fantastical realities, pursues a life of pleasure in aesthetics and asserts what Mcloughlin refers to as "a prevaricating, non-committal queer lifestyle over a normative, useful trajectory" (1). Mcloughlin considers indulging in aesthetics as useless and digressive from the plot, but they serve as an alternative to chrononormativity that Orlando enjoys initially and becomes a form of escapism further on in the novel. Orlando made the conscious decision to reject chrononormativity:

> Soon, however, Orlando grew tired, not only of the discomfort of this way of life, and of the crabbed streets of the neighbourhood, but of the primitive manner of the people. For it has to be remembered that crime and poverty had none of the attraction for the Elizabethans that they have for us. They had none of our modern shame of book learning; none of our belief that to be born the son of a butcher is a blessing and to be unable to read a virtue; no fancy that what we call 'life' and 'reality' are somehow connected with ignorance and brutality; nor, indeed, any equivalent for these two words at all. It was not to seek 'life' that Orlando went among them; not in quest of 'reality' that he left them. But when he had heard a score of times how Jakes had lost his nose and Sukey her honour--and they told the stories admirably, it must be admitted—he began to be a little weary of the repetition, for a nose can only be cut off in one way and maidenhood lost in another--or so it seemed to him--whereas the arts and the sciences had a diversity about them which stirred his curiosity profoundly. So, always keeping them in happy memory, he left off frequenting the beer gardens and the skittle alleys, hung his grey cloak in his wardrobe". (Woolf 17-18)

The phrase "grew tired" used in this context indicates Orlando's dissatisfaction with the crime and poverty associated with the chrononormative life and the lack of joy it brought him, including the mannerisms and interactions within the Modernist society and what they expected of him. He describes the behaviour of the chrononormative lifestyle of society as "primitive", unsophisticated and behind the times. He struggles to comprehend their understanding and enjoyment of life as something likened to brutality and laced with ignorance, for he felt that the chrononormative lifecycle was one lived in ignorant bliss; he considered it repetitive, whereas rejecting it entailed the indulgence in the arts, more colourful clothing, interesting conversation and overall satisfaction and pleasure. Orlando can also be seen rejecting chrononormativity, not only in his romantic interactions, but also in finding relief in solitude, "Orlando naturally loved solitary places, vast views, and to feel himself for ever and ever and ever alone" (8). An alternative lifestyle opposing chrononormativity would reflect the enjoyment of solitude and the sense of being alone with one's thoughts. This is quite contradictory to chrononormativity, which encompasses a life of partnership. Furthermore, his rejection of chrononormativity can also be seen when he becomes an artist, a writer and a poet, instead of undergoing a traditional education. Orlando mentions a "modern shame of book learning". Woolf criticises the 1920s class attitude with satirical malice with the "modern shame", which can be compared to Orlando's Elizabethan society. This can refer to the idea that artistic pursuits are shameful in the new

chrononormative society he lives in, and partaking in anything other than academia or a 'respected' career is looked down upon; this also relates to the earlier discussion about Wilde and showing the world its own shame. It creates a power dynamic, wherein society's opinions become a dominant force over the lives and identities of its people. In the society that Orlando grew up in, he believed that being unable to read was a "virtue", thus at the time, society appreciated more simplistic and artistic pursuits. By the same token, he is drawn to concepts and ideas that society does not quite value in a social situation, as he states that "the arts and the sciences had a diversity about them which stirred his curiosity profoundly". The fact that he essentially parts from those repetitive social interactions in order to pursue science and knowledge indicates that society cannot provide him with the satisfaction and happiness he achieves in solitude. The diversity between art and science is what intrigues him, which reads as a contrasting note in comparison to the difference between "'life' and 'reality". He compares the concepts of life and reality to "ignorance" and "brutality", whereas the diversity between art and science is described as something that piques his curiosity. The contrasts in description stand out with two extremely different sets of imagery; there is a certain negative connotation assigned to what society might call life or reality, indicating that Orlando does not believe they are living practically or 'aware' of the world around them. On the other hand, the contrast in the descriptions points to how science and art could provide that same 'awareness' that is missing from society. In terms of time, Orlando is technically considered a fictional biography that defies the regular static nature of a biography by ignoring all laws of time and age present in chrononormativity. He turns his focus to writing after having his heart broken and then eventually, his mysterious change in gender occurs. Once his gender changed to that of a female, although she is not shocked by this fantastical occurrence, she struggled with clothing and appearance as society's expectations of conventional standards of beauty and expectations of women crippled her.

Restrictive identity symbolised by conventional clothes is further explored when she felt constricted by these clothes and by the way men treated her in a condescending way, which they absolutely did not do when she was a man.

> Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us. For example, when Captain Bartolus saw Orlando's skirt, he had an awning stretched for her immediately, pressed her to take another slice of beef, and invited her to go ashore with him in the long-boat. (Woolf 132)

Her clothes, in this case, act as an advantage for her in terms of favour with men. However, she makes it clear that if her outfit was less flattering, she would receive an unpleasant reaction and mistreatment. This also runs in parallel with the themes of hedonism present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; when she states that they "change our view of the world and the world's view of us" it resembles Lord Henry's musings on beauty, that it can make royalty from mortals, the importance of youthful beauty and the influence it has. Orlando gains power through clothing in the same way that Lord Henry and Dorian gained power through beauty. She is also of the understanding that men do not take her opinion and intellect seriously anymore as a female, and any favourable attention is not laced with respect, even though it is clear that aside from a change in sex, Orlando's identity remained exactly the same:

> A woman knows very well that, though a wit sends her his poems, praises her judgment, solicits her criticism, and drinks her tea, this by no means signifies that he respects her opinions, admires her understanding, or will refuse…. (Woolf 151)

Orlando struggles to disregard social norms and expectations regarding dress, as well as gender and sexuality since she is no longer adhering to chrononormativity as a result of her lack of agency. She struggles to maintain her vice of written form because she is experiencing so much pressure, and as a result, she creates what she refers to as a badly written parody of Victorian poetry. This creates an interesting connection between *Orlando* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in that both books' protagonists reject chrononormativity and suffer greatly as a result of it, with an aestheticism link. Her written art declines in quality as she rejects chrononormativity, and Dorian suffers greatly as well. Legally, she cannot inherit the home which should have been passed down to her as she is no longer a male. There is clearly a need and desire to be a part of a societal whole, and to be accepted into chrononormativity, which is not being satisfied due to alienation as per the gender change. Even when Orlando presented his obvious disavowal of chrononormativity, there were consequences – he fell into a deep depression and he was even hospitalized and put into care, which is where he pursued his more aesthetic desires of writing. During his disavowal of chrononormativity, he was understandably depressed, and later when he is no longer given the choice to reject it, he suffers from othering and alienation. This once again emphasises the argument that the nature of chrononormativity and the way it is defined has to change in order to avoid the desire to stray from it and the consequences of other lifestyles by *including* those other lifestyles. When Orlando is disallowed it by society after having originally disavowed it, he suffers greatly, which is discussed later in this thesis.

This period reflects homosexuality as a sin and a stray from chrononormativity. These were actions which were disapproved of by society. There is a point in the novel after Orlando has changed genders and is about to engage in sexual relations with a woman who was unaware of Orlando's gender change:

> When all was ready, out she came, prepared—but here Orlando could stand it no longer. In the strangest torment of anger, merriment, and pity she flung off all disguise and admitted herself a woman. (Woolf 107)

Orlando appears to feel guilty about the gender change in this situation. She wants to romance this woman but is worried about how people will react, so she admits her gender instead. The mere act of confession emphasises the regard for the gender change as a sin, as well as the use of the word "admitted" with a shameful tone attached. Orlando was not on the chrononormative path and felt anger at her own indoctrinated guilt for straying.

Scholar Aimee A. Wilson notes in "Holding Hands with Virginia Woolf: A Map of Orlando's Functional Subversion" the confusion of *Orlando's* genre while still addressing its main concerns:

> Although she viewed Orlando as fun and fantasy, her interest in the issues it addresses – gender and definitions of the novel, for instance – continued to inspire her through the writing of A Room of One's Own, a decidedly serious social critique. (5)

In the same way that *A Room of One's Own* (2004) addresses feminist issues and the status of females in society as well as society's gaze upon women as outsiders and its act of othering upon women, Orlando critiques the Modernist society for its perception of gender and sexuality and its rejection of alternatives to chrononormativity. In an analysis of the aesthetic literary devices in literature, Nasr-Edine Ouahani comments on modern aesthetic devices:

> By doing this, the writer indulges in an escape from reality, from the confines of society, religion, and materialism. Her imagination, her flaw of thought, keeps going back and forth questing, questioning, analyzing and interpreting with no limits or boundaries. The writer becomes her own psychiatrist. The language of the narrative is a chaotic one describing a chaotic and haphazard self or inner represented by an informal colloquial style; interconnected, long-winding structures and stylistic deviance. (52)

Woolf took great joy in her other aesthetic passions besides literature, such as paintings. She gained inspiration from controversial art and used this as a muse for her writing about controversial topics, conflicts and issues. The seeking of alternative art indicates her sense of being the other or outsider, and a desire to fill the gaps within herself and pursue

controversial topics from an outsider artist's perspective, creating a parallel between herself and her characters in the enjoyment of aesthetic pursuits as well as the use of aestheticism as a form of escapism from her own struggles, such as with sexuality and the suppression of feminism. E.M. Forster notes Woolf's connection to aesthetics in "The Art of Virginia Woolf":

> She liked receiving sensations, — sights, sounds, tastes, — passing them all through her mind, where they encountered theories and memories, and then bringing them out again, through a pen, onto a bit of paper" (1)

This indicates that indulging in aestheticism as part of her nature, however as an avid reader herself, Woolf knew the importance of escapism from struggle in books and used it in her writing as well. As a writer and a woman adhering to chrononormativity in a traditional sense – she was married and obtained a higher education - she chooses to reject it in other ways, as seen in her forbidden romance with Vita Sackville-West (for whom *Orlando* was written and of whom there are pictures of in the novel). Woolf and Sackville-West's intense love affair did not align with the societal ideals of chrononormativity, and as a result, had to be hidden and restricted both of their homoerotic expressions. In fact, similar to how Orlando could not inherit the home she was entitled to due to her gender change, Sackville-West, the inspiration for *Orlando*, was not allowed to inherit the family home in Knole, just like Orlando, due to her gender. Nina Kellerová and Eva Reid's "Motifs of Homosexuality in Virginia Woolf's Orlando" expresses the consequences of homoerotic expression in the Modernist period:

> as a result of years suffering from severe depression, Virginia Woolf filled up the pockets of her coat with rocks on 28 March 1941 and let the ebb and flow of the river Ouse dissolve her life (…) the unfulfilled love to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's homosexual orientation, its suspicion in society, inability to completely enjoy the beauty that love offers, leading to her despair and death. (85)

Although their affair spanned several years, neither could enjoy expressions of love and affection openly without suffering alienation, discrimination and essentially banishment from society. Woolf ultimately resorted to suicide due to what would today be diagnosed as bipolar disorder, as she found life in the limbo of chrononormativity and the alternative unbearable. While it is clear that Woolf committed suicide after her homosexual affair ended due to her own mental health struggles, there was still an internal conflict in regard to her sexual identity that may have contributed to her suffering. Though there may not be a direct link between her suicide and her affair, it may have, at some degree, influenced her well-being. The parallels between *Orlando* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as the respective authors become

clear here; not only does chrononormativity place limitations on people by restricting personal identity, creating an environment of alienation, it can essentially have extremely dire consequences. After Wilde was imprisoned due to his homosexuality, he would soon die from infection, not long after his spirit had left him as well. Both authors and characters suffer similar fates; chrononormativity has many unforeseen consequences for those who disavow it and those who are disallowed it.

Chapter 2: Disallowing Agency in Chrononormativity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*

It has already been established that the characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando* disavow a chrononormative lifestyle to a certain extent, largely as an act of rebellion in the pursuit of materialistic pleasures. I have noted that chrononormativity is a temporal order; in this context, it means that society expects individuals to not stray too far from heteronormative rules. It is important to consider the beliefs and practice of aestheticism in the Victorian and Modern periods as a form of resistance to chrononormativity. For the Victorian era, Benjamin Joseph Morgan summarises aestheticism as:

> As formulated by both writers and scientists, Victorian theories of aesthetic pleasure highlight ways in which the experience of beauty intensifies and renders enjoyable our connection to the material world rather than depositing us in a solipsistic well of subjective impressions. (ix)

With this definition of aestheticism beliefs being a connection between the material world and the self, the Modernism definition of aestheticism may differ slightly. When analysing the works of Woolf, it is clear that she uses aestheticism as not just a connection to the natural and material world, but as a form of social criticism. There are parallels in this definition, as Wilde's novel can also be intended as a criticism of Victorian conventions. However, not all queer people are able to adhere to these expectations and demands. As previously discussed, characters like Basil from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reflect compulsory heterosexuality as a form of survival. His agency in regards to chrononormativity is limited, as this does not reflect true chrononormativity, but rather exists as a mask of survival. Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" expands on this concept from the context of lesbian existence:

> Women have married because it was necessary, in order to survive economically, in order to have children who would not suffer economic deprivation or social ostracism, in order to remain respectable, in order to do what was expected of women, because coming out of "abnormal" childhoods they wanted to feel "normal" and because heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty, and fulfillment. We may faithfully or ambivalently have obeyed the institution, but our feelings—and our sensuality—have not been tamed or contained within it. (31-32)

For queer people, adopting compulsory heterosexuality can be a way to safely exist in a society that predominantly values and affirms heteronormative experiences. It can be

suggested without generalization that queer people use this in an attempt to shield themselves from stigma, prejudice, and social marginalization by adhering to these standards. Compulsory heterosexuality can be considered a survival strategy used by people who feel obligated to conceal their actual identities and relationships in order to find acceptance and security within the boundaries of a chrononormative society, eliding by degrees the innate emotions, desires, and true identity of queer people. The demands of the heteronormative and chrononormative societal expectations do not just affect individuals in the realm of love and romance, but in all spheres of life, even in a professional working environment:

> This raises a specific difference between the experiences of lesbians and homosexual men. A lesbian, closeted on her job because of heterosexual prejudice, is not simply forced into denying the truth of her outside relationships or private life. Her job depends on her pretending to be not merely heterosexual, but a heterosexual woman in terms of dressing and playing the feminine, deferential role required of "real" women. (21)

This draws attention to an important contrast in how queer people, especially lesbian women, deal with social expectations and discrimination, in comparison to heterosexual people. Not only must same-sex relationships and personal lives be kept secret, but one is also required to adhere to a particular gender role. Queer people must not only present themselves in public as heterosexual but also follow standard gender norms in order to keep stable employment, in this specific case, and prevent being branded as a criminal. This highlights the extra burden forced on queer people, - they not only have to deal with homophobia but also have to cope daily with a struggle for identity due to gender norms. It is important to understand that Freeman's chrononormative life cycle is restricted to those who have the privilege of entering the heteronormative spectrum. Stevi Jackson's "Gender, sexuality and heterosexuality: The complexity (and limits) of heteronormativity" touches on the institution of heteronormativity:

> Adrienne Rich (1980) and Monique Wittig (1992), who related heterosexuality to the perpetuation of gendered divisions of labour and male appropriation of women's productive and reproductive capacities. Indeed, Rich's concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality' could be seen as a forerunner of 'heteronormativity' and I would like to preserve an often neglected legacy of the former concept: that institutionalized, normative heterosexuality regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalizing and sanctioning those outside them. (105)

Most people falling into the LGBTQI+ category do not have this privilege and are not given the agency to even rebel against chrononormativity. The cycles of chrononormativity

are fixed and heteronormative, forcing a predetermined life path for many "normal" life events, such as partnerships, employment, and family, which conflict with the lived experiences and identities of queer people. Disavowing chrononormativity for queer people is rejecting these conventional ideas about time and their demands to adhere to them. It means challenging the idea that everyone's life should go according to a certain number of strict heteronormative rules with milestones like getting married, having children, or succeeding in their careers by certain ages. Queer people can also be disallowed chrononormativity due to external pressures or social expectations that invalidate their experiences and aim to dictate conformity. Being disallowed chrononormativity by society for queer people often means facing social, cultural, and legal limitations that hinder their ability to live their lives authentically and express their identities. These restrictions marginalise queer people further, forcing heteronormative norms and creating a sense of isolation. They have no agency in choosing chrononormativity, or the rejection of it, because of their sexual identities and expressions.

Rich goes on to note some of these consequences as a result of a lack of heteronormativity, or even a shield of compulsory heterosexuality:

> The lesbian, unless in disguise, faces discrimination in hiring and harassment and violence in the street. Even within feminist-inspired institutions such as battered-women's shelters and Women's Studies programs, open lesbians are fired and others warned to stay in the closet. The retreat into sameness—assimilation for those who can manage it—is the most passive and debilitating of responses to political repression, economic insecurity, and a renewed open season on difference. (11)

Even in settings where feminism is valued, openly queer individuals either risk being fired, while others are told to keep their identities a secret. This highlights the idea of chrononormativity creating spaces with a lack of individuality, where some queer people follow chrononormative rules to a certain extent to avoid legal and social consequences and survive in society. Compulsive heterosexuality can even be noted as a reaction that happens subconsciously from an innate desire to be accepted by society, fit in, and prevent rejection. In today's society, an example of subconscious compulsive heterosexuality could be a lesbian woman striving to be considered bisexual in an attempt to navigate societal norms and find a sense of acceptance.

This could also be due to internalised homophobia, in which queer people develop a negative attitude towards their own sexual identities and expression over time as a result of

societal opinion. Iain Williamson's "Internalized Homophobia and Mental Health Issues Affecting Lesbians and Gay Men" expands on this:

> In common with research into other forms of prejudice, many individuals within lesbian and gay communities may internalize significant aspects of the prejudice experienced within a heterosexist society. This process is consistent with Allport's (Allport, 1954) theory of 'traits due to victimization'. He argues that stigmatized individuals engage in defensive reactions as a result of the prejudice they experience. These mechanisms may be extroverted, including exaggerated and obsessive concern with the stigmatizing characteristic, and/or introverted, which include self-denigration and identification with the aggressor. The second of these mechanisms equates more readily with contemporary understandings of internalized homophobia. Many writers believe that this is a normative or inevitable consequence because all children are exposed to heterosexist norms, and research suggests that most gay men and lesbians adopt negative attitudes towards (their) homosexuality early in their developmental histories. (97)

Internalised homophobia has been experienced by a large majority of people in the LGBTQI+ community; it can be an excessive and obsessive concern with one's queer identity and can include self-loathing and agreement with the discriminator, in which queer people internalize negative opinions about their own queer identity. A lot of the time, this can present as a homosexual person obsessively partnering in a heterosexual manner, or speaking from personal experience, a homosexual person identifying as bisexual in order to have some semblance of heterosexuality in one's identity (it is important to note here that bisexual identities are just as valid as homosexual and heterosexual ones, and only in certain cases will compulsive heterosexuality present in this way). Basil's character is an example of internalised homophobia; he struggles with his identity and desires throughout the novel, represses his homosexuality and takes on compulsive heterosexuality. He is aware that his homoerotic feelings are expressed in the painting of Dorian, and refuses to show it to the public out of shame and dread. He suppresses and rejects his homosexuality out of a fear of rejection and a desire to fit into a chrononormative lifestyle, which eventually leads to his untimely death. In *Orlando*, the protagonist mysteriously turns into a woman, and she lives for centuries. When it comes to her same-sex desires, Orlando battles with internalised homophobia and feelings of guilt and shame. As a result, Orlando attempts to repress her desires in order to live up to chrononormative ideals. Orlando does not accept her actual identity until later in the novel when she eventually feels liberated from the limitations of

chrononormativity. Queer temporalities, such as homosexual life partnerships and gender-change operations, do not align with chrononormative standards, making it extremely difficult for any queer individual to act in accordance with chrononormativity. This will be discussed later in the thesis.

Victorian and Modernist societies, though many years apart, share similar thought patterns, opinions, and definitions of normative or chrononormativity. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "queer" originally meant something or someone that was eccentric, strange, and non-normative. Scholar Jung Sun Choi's "Victorian Queer: Marginality and Money in Nineteenth-Century Literature" discusses how the Victorians used the word "queer" to mean non-normative (or, against the grains of chrononormativity):

> the Victorians used the word "queer" widely in conversation to describe anything related to the inarticulable and indescribable, such as "strange," "odd," "peculiar," "eccentric," or in appearance or character of "non-normal" condition. More generally, Victorian novelists relied on the word "queer" in representing the counternormative categories that describe a difference from the ordinary, the majority opinion, the casual, the traditional and customary, and the normal in areas of political opinion, religious choice and practice, fashion, and the body (or body parts). (2)

The Victorians often used the word "queer" to describe things that were difficult to articulate, particularly those that went against conventional understandings and expectations. It was usually used to point out and exclude anything non-normative, things/people/opinions that did not follow the opinion of the majority of society and traditional mindsets. In Victorian literature, writers turned the word "queer" into a way to show characters that strayed from societal norms and expectations, usually in the shape of ideologies, religion, and sexual expression. This was a way to challenge chrononormativity, as well as a form of aesthetic escape for writers experiencing these emotions and opinions, but were afraid or legally unable to express them. As time went on, and in today's society, it is a general term used in the LGBTQI+ community to cover a range of sexual expressions and identities, and I use it as such throughout the thesis. In the Victorian period, the word had a derogatory connotation, reflecting the discrimination experienced by those with queer identities and expressions. In fact, interestingly enough, the first (known) use of the word "queer" in a homosexual sense, as well as a derogatory one, was used by Oscar Wilde's lover's father, John Douglas. Douglas had two queer sons: Francis and Lord Alfred Douglas. Francis was having a homosexual affair with his employer, Lord Roseberry, and sadly passed away under strange circumstances. His father, John Douglas, found out about this homosexual relationship and

blamed Roseberry and their homosexual relations as the reason for his untimely passing. He does this in a letter to his other son, Lord Alfred Douglas, stating that "snob queers like Roseberry" were to blame, as noted in Lord Alfred Douglas' biography, *Bosie: A Biography of Lord Alfred Douglas* (Murray). What John Douglas did not know was that Lord Alfred Douglas himself was homosexual and in a romantic relationship with Oscar Wilde. In fact, they had been involved for many years by that point, as noted in his biography. The love letters between Wilde and Douglas were heartbreakingly beautiful; a tragic parallel between the love letters of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. In Gardiner's *The Illustrated Letters of Oscar Wilde: A Life in Letters, Writings and Wit,* one can see the letter written by Oscar Wilde and addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas on the evening of his last trial on 29 April 1895:

> My dearest boy,
>
> This is to assure you of my immortal, my eternal love for you. Tomorrow all will be over. If prison and dishonour be my destiny, think of my love for you and this idea, this still more divine belief, that you love me in return will sustain me in my unhappiness and will make me capable, I hope, of bearing my grief most patiently…I stretch out my hands towards you. (144)

By using words such as "immortal," and "divine belief", the letter presents their love with spiritual connotations: pure, beyond realistic boundaries, and *real*. Wilde was about to face the alienation forced by Victorian society towards anyone considered an outsider, and relied on that connection with Lord Alfred Douglas as a foundation of strength and survival. Wilde's fear of "prison and dishonour" reflects the legal consequences, social (and personal) shame and discrimination that are common with queer relationships. The media glorified Wilde's trial and imprisonment, as noted by Professor Dr. Peter Paul Schniererhe's comments on the trial, making the case that much more widespread and popular. The letter reflects their sense of alienation and loneliness as two men in love.

When reading the correspondence between Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, the letters between Sackville-West and Woolf represent a parallel in homosexual experience. Even though the letters are separated by almost three decades, Sackville-West echoes the struggles faced by queer people like Wilde. Wilde's letter to Lord Alfred was written during a time when homosexual expressions were seen as immoral and illegal - when there were harsh consequences for homosexuality. With Sackville-West's letter to Woolf in 1926, there is a similarity to Wilde's suppressed emotions:

> I am reduced to a thing that wants Virginia. I composed a beautiful letter to you in the sleepless nightmare hours of the night, and it has all gone: I just miss you, in a quite simple desperate human way. You, with all your un-dumb letters, would never write so elementary a phrase as that; perhaps you wouldn't even feel it. And yet I believe you'll be sensible of a little gap. But you'd clothe it in so exquisite a phrase that it would lose a little of its reality. Whereas with me it is quite stark: I miss you even more than I could have believed; and I was prepared to miss you a good deal. So this letter is just really a squeal of pain. It is incredible how essential to me you have become. I suppose you are accustomed to people saying these things. Damn you, spoilt creature; I shan't make you love me any the more by giving myself away like this — but oh my dear, I can't be clever and stand-offish with you: I love you too much for that. Too truly. You have no idea how stand-offish I can be with people I don't love. I have brought it to a fine art. But you have broken down my defences. And I don't really resent it. (quoted in Woolf et al 44)

One of the most striking intimations to pull from this letter is when Sackville-West states, "I am reduced to a thing that wants Virginia." It poetically encompasses how powerful their love was in a society that rejects homosexual expressions. Her entire identity is encompassed in the devotion and love she feels for Woolf, to the point where it consumes her – in fact, I'd go so far as to call it an unhealthy obsession in the context that queer relations were governed so strictly, that suppressed passion can get out of control. When she declares, "I miss you even more than I could have believed; and I was prepared to miss you a good deal," it indicates her longing for an authentic connection within the confines of a chrononormative society and suggests that she was prepared for this relationship to end a lot sooner than it actually did. The language in this letter is rife with the rawness of her feelings, exposing a sense of "stark" pain. When Sackville-West claims that Woolf has "broken down (her) defences", it draws a parallel to Wilde's pain at being separated from his lover, as well as his imprisonment. Both letters have a shared feeling of alienation and loneliness—a shared pain from the inability to openly and fully embrace their homosexuality due to the constraints of chrononormativity. Both Woolf and Wilde were in publicly heterosexual marriages; it could be possible that they entered into a heterosexual marriage to blend into societal norms within chrononormativity (while still being able to express their homosexual identities secretly), coupled with genuine affection for their partners.

Wilde married Constance Lloyd in 1884; in essence, this marked the beginning of a relationship that aided in hiding the complexities of his homosexuality. Marrying a woman,

for Wilde, meant societal conformity, as well as having children - they had two sons, Cyril in 1885 and Vyvyan in 1886. It is unknown whether Constance was fully aware of her husband's homosexuality, but this was a common scenario in a time when discussions of such matters were taboo. It may have been that Constance consciously acted as Wilde's "beard" – if this was the case, it highlights how difficult it was to presume a heteronormative life, and shows that at least some people had empathy toward the queer community, though this cannot be confirmed. However, she did meet Lord Alfred Douglas in 1891 when Wilde introduced him to their home, which means that it is likely she had suspicions of his sexual identity. The turning point came in 1895 when Wilde was imprisoned, and following his conviction, Constance fled to Switzerland with their sons, distancing herself from the scandals and shame associated with being married to an imprisoned homosexual man. She later changed the family name to Holland as a way to escape the stigma attached to the Wilde name. This, in itself, showcases the effects of straying from chrononormativity. Constance never got a divorce – it was too complicated, and she would have suffered from the consequences of negative public speculation. However, the mere act of leaving with their children and changing their surnames reflects the shame and discrimination inflicted upon anyone falling outside of the chrononormative arc and expressing sexual identity in a non-heteronormative sense. There is one surviving grandson of Wilde, Merlin Holland, who emerges as an important figure. Holland was (and still is) on a mission to protect Wilde's legacy, work, and public image. He intended on (and currently, still does) sharing true information about Wilde's life in order to preserve the reputation of his work – especially so that each new generation can benefit from it. This shows how powerful Wilde's work was – both in the past and the present – and the importance of spreading awareness about the injustices queer people dealt with, and still have to deal with, in today's society.

One can only make reparations after awareness is spread, and once disinformation slows down. At the time of writing, Merlin Holland is currently 77 years old and was unable to interview with me due to the fact that he is scrambling to complete yet *another* book about Wilde, in an effort to continue his legacy for the next generations. Wilde's hidden life and Constance's response (which only added to the alienation Wilde was experiencing) encapsulate the loneliness experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals during the Victorian period. While Wilde followed societal norms externally and on paper, his personal truth was hidden. The relationship between Constance and Wilde is only one example from a much larger struggle for the LGBTQI+ community who are forced to obey societal guidelines of heteronormativity in order to avoid discrimination and imprisonment. Secrecy is used as a

form of survival and shows the strong differences between the public image and the private reality of queer people.

Even though Wilde's life was complicated, it is important to note that he did have genuine feelings for his wife, Constance, as can be seen throughout her biography, *Constance: The Tragic and Scandalous Life of Mrs. Oscar Wilde*, by Franny Moyle. Wilde had many romantic heterosexual relationships and interactions before he married Constance, which has created some confusion about his sexual identity and expression. However, it also highlights how intricate sexual identity and expression really are – it is never one or the other, it is layered. While some scholars argue that Wilde's sexual identity extended beyond men, possibly indicating bisexuality, it is also plausible that his homosexual orientation was overshadowed by compulsive heterosexuality. The Victorian period's negative attitudes towards homosexuality resulted in Wilde's struggling to appease the societal expectations of the time, often leading to secret expressions of his true desires – expressions which, behind closed doors, bring about their own complex feelings of shame and guilt. This struggle to conform to chrononormativity compelled Wilde to seek relationships with women and maintain the appearance of conventional family life. His love for Constance should not be written off as completely false, as it represents a real connection within a heterosexual marriage formed from societal restrictions, and yet, he still pursued her. The contrast between his heterosexual love for his wife and his hidden homosexual desires (which soon became a public matter) reflects the pressure of chrononormativity. His attempts to fit into the accepted framework of heteronormativity were driven by a need for personal safety, evading discrimination, imprisonment, and harassment. This complicated mix between Victorian societal expectations and demands, personal emotions and desires, and the need to survive (both socially and legally) demonstrates the complications that queer people experienced when navigating their true identities and how this was expressed. When looking at Oscar Wilde's marriage to Constance, it is possible that his relationships were not *just* a way to blend in, but also showcase a web of real emotions that must have been quite confusing and overwhelming, especially when considering societal pressures. Herein lies the conflict between authenticity and survival.

During the Victorian period, queer individuals experienced an unwelcoming environment, which was marked by intense mistreatment and discrimination. The prevailing social norms of the time included strict adherence to conventional values, which involved a narrow understanding of gender and sexuality. Non-heteronormative identities were obviously rejected, and anyone who did not conform to chrononormativity and

heteronormative norms faced severe consequences. In this context, chrononormativity was a strict set of rules that queer individuals often did not fit into; this was mainly due to societal rejection of their identities and relationships, and the pressure to conform was suffocating. The lack of recognition and acceptance of alternative life paths left queer people marginalized, alienated, excluded, and ashamed of themselves. Their identities were not just dismissed – they were actively suppressed and condemned as immoral and unnatural. These attitudes were backed by laws that criminalised same-sex relationships and behaviours (hence Wilde's imprisonment). Having such disinformation coupled with laws to enforce them can have extreme consequences for the LGBTQI+ community. The lack of understanding and empathy toward queer experiences resulted in widespread ignorance and prejudice. In fact, Victorian media approached homosexuality in such a delicate manner that it cast them out of society, to the point where homosexual expressions were unspoken of, as noted in Riley McGuire's "The Victorian Unspeakable: Stammering and Same-Sex Intimacy between Men":

> Similarly, the social sanction on articulating non-normative sexual behaviours like those associated with homosexuality is more accurately conceived of as a generative impediment, as an extremely vocal silence. In the nineteenth century, homosexuality – specifically, the act of sodomy – was something to be prevented, though left unsaid. Court cases against sodomites and the press articles that reported on them struggled with convicting sodomy without naming it and thereby imbuing it with a form of seductive appeal for the general populace. As such, sodomy indictments were often couched in the language of "misdemeanour", "assault with intent", "infamous" or "unnatural" crimes, and other phrases gestured to under the title of H. G. Cocks's book on the subject, Nameless Offences (2003, pp. 78-9). To avoid becoming contagious, homosexuality had to be censured without being spoken. (45)

From the beginning, it is clear to see the framework for Victorian society's treatment of homosexuality with the phrase "social sanction,", which emphasises the authoritative control over the discussion of non-normative sexual behaviours. The word "articulating" used here infers a deliberate act of expression and communication that is suppressed, meaning that there was a shocking amount of thought put into these actions, which shows a larger strategy to curb homosexuality. Describing these behaviours as "non-normative" places them outside the accepted societal boundaries, reinforcing the strict expectations and demands of the Victorian period. The concept of a "generative impediment" shows the mechanism by which the silence surrounding homosexuality actively prevents its open discussion and recognition, further

contributing to the spread of disinformation. The phrase "extremely vocal silence" presents a paradox; homosexuality was silenced, and although readers at the time could tell that it was homosexuality being spoken of, it was being actively dissuaded, even in that silence. This was a strategy used by Victorian society, authorities, and the press: intentionally silencing instances of same-sex relationships while also criminalising them quietly. The idea of "convicting sodomy without naming it" reflects Victorian society's fear that articulating these acts as "homosexual" might give same-sex relationships a forbidden allure. Using legal terminology such as "misdemeanour," "assault with intent," "infamous," or "unnatural" to describe homosexuality as a crime illustrates society's desperation to condemn these relationships without openly acknowledging their nature. The fact that homosexuality needed to be "censured without being spoken" shows just how much Victorian society was obsessed with silencing homosexuality, and it indicates that they had the incredulous fear that acknowledging homosexuality in public might create more homosexual people.

There are many cases in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* wherein, through subtle language, one can detect queer expression, as well as events where queer characters are disallowed chrononormativity. When Basil talks about the real meaning and emotion behind his painting of Dorian and he reveals the essence behind the art, he subtly releases a deeply buried part of himself as well – a form of quiet queer expression in a community attempting to silence homosexuality. In a society that follows strict chrononormative standards, Basil's homoerotic feelings for Dorian go beyond these restrictions. His confession of an intimate queer connection that defies the temporal heteronormative boundaries challenges the very core of societal norms and expectations:

> I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me, you were still present in my art.... Of course, I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it. I hardly understood it myself. I only knew that I had seen perfection face to face, and that the world had become wonderful to my eyes—too wonderful, perhaps, for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them, no less than the peril of keeping them. (Wilde 124)

There is an interesting parallel here to Sackville-West's earlier comment about being reduced to a thing that wants Woolf – Basil's statement of "I became dominated, soul, brain,

and power, by you," shows that, like Sackville-West, his entire being was absorbed by his feelings for Dorian. This can again be likened to an unhealthy obsession, as the suppression of these feelings can evoke intense emotions. Basil mentioning that Dorian became "the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal" highlights an intense adoration and longing that clearly exceeds the boundaries of friendship. Dorian becomes a physical manifestation of the things that Basil craves most in life, that being able to express his queer identity and be a part of chrononormative society without being alienated. The term "unseen ideal" shows that queer expression falls into a realm of desire that lies hidden beneath the surface, relating to the concept of queerness as a part of identity that is usually concealed due to societal norms, as it falls outside of the constraints of chrononormativity. Basil's feelings for Dorian are further elaborated on by his confession of "worship"—a word with deep spiritual connotations. He idealises Dorian to the point of god-like worship. Basil's jealousy, highlighted in the line "I grew jealous of everyone to whom you spoke," shows an intense emotional attachment that goes beyond friendship or the platonic relationship between a painter and his subject, and relates again to an unhealthy obsession caused by suppression of emotions to achieve that ideal. His desire to have Dorian all to himself is not just a longing for companionship, a friend to have by his side, but rather a reflection of his yearning for a more intimate connection that society would not approve of, and one that falls outside of chrononormative bounds. The jealousy that Basil expresses is not solely about Dorian being romantically involved with anyone else – it is jealousy that Dorian is able to engage in chrononormativity in ways that Basil cannot. The extract also demonstrates Basil's struggle to articulate his feelings, which is something the queer community often struggles with, now as well as in the Victorian period, because of incredibly strict norms. This also draws a stark parallel to the earlier mention of articulation from the Victorian press, which has no problem strategizing their articulation to silence homosexuality. Basil acknowledges that he could not have conveyed these feelings to Dorian, which implies that he recognizes a societal construct that would prevent Dorian from understanding. Basil's own lack of understanding is reflective of how deeply ingrained chrononormativity is, stemming from societal conditioning for heteronormativity from birth. Growing up in a heteronormative society is incredibly overwhelming, and influences thought patterns and actions for the rest of one's life. The statement that "the world had become wonderful to my eyes—too wonderful, perhaps" shows both the ecstasy of his feelings and the pain that follows.

This is the fear of losing Dorian due to societal rejection and the pain of experiencing a love that is not accepted by one's community. This is emphasised when Basil continues his confession:

> I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it. Then it was that I resolved never to allow the picture to be exhibited. You were a little annoyed; but then you did not realize all that it meant to me. (Wilde 125)

Basil's fear of his queerness being exposed to the world is clear, reflecting the common societal attitudes towards homosexuality at the time. His apprehension comes from him realising that his feelings and desires for Dorian defy the norms of chrononormativity. Basil's use of the word "idolatry" here yet against suggests a worshipful admiration for Dorian that is certainly not platonic. However, the word has a sense of the forbidden, specifically in a monotheistic religious context, as idolatry can also be seen as breaking the boundaries of accepted norms, and a terrible sin – this once again relates to an unhealthy obsession stemming from the limitations on identity placed by chrononormativity. This mirrors the negative attitude attached to queerness in the Victorian period and how it was usually condemned as unnatural or criminal behaviour. The phrase "too much of myself into it" implies that Basil regards his feelings as personal and intimate, and describing these feelings as "too much" shows just how much society has influenced him, to the point where there is fear attached to expressing even the slightest bit of his homosexuality. His fear is not just about exposing his homoerotic feelings for Dorian but also about revealing a part of himself that he understands is unacceptable within the confines of a chrononormative society. He is aware that his feelings break away from the norm and do not fall into chrononormative cycles, making him vulnerable to discrimination and rejection.

Basil's decision to never exhibit the portrait can be seen as an extension of his fear – the portrait may not even exude homosexuality to the public eye, but he is so paranoid about being discriminated against, that even a painting has to be hidden. By not displaying the portrait, he attempts to hide the depth of his feelings and the vulnerability of his queerness from the public eye. This choice is made with the understanding of the potential consequences - a fear shared by many queer people in history (and today) who have had to hide their true identities due to societal prejudice and lack of agency. "You were a little annoyed but then you did not realize all that it meant to me" highlights Basil's internal turmoil and sense of isolation. He could not share his feelings with the chrononormative society, but he also could not even share them with Dorian. He believes that Dorian's

annoyance at the decision to keep the portrait hidden is because he has a lack of understanding regarding the intensity of Basil's emotions, nor would he understand the societal ostracism and alienation that Basil would feel if it were revealed. This disconnect and lack of understanding reflect the inability of society (and even queer individuals themselves) to comprehend and accept queerness in the context of chrononormativity. What is interesting, though, is that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition* (2011) there are many instances of homosexual expression that are much more explicit, including the description of the above confession by Basil, as seen in "It is quite true I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend. Somehow I have never loved a woman" (172). While this was first published as a serial story in 1890 as part of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, it was censored and then revised to create the final version of the novel I am analysing exclusively throughout this thesis.

This original confession in the serial story clearly shows Basil's sexual orientation and other passages work the same for Dorian. However, it is clear that Dorian felt compelled to adhere to chrononormativity, and sought it out against Lord Henry's advice (with a return to the original censored version):

> Yes, Dorian, you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit." "What nonsense you talk, Harry!" cried the lad, taking a light from a fire-breathing silver dragon that the waiter had placed on the table. "Let us go down to the theatre. When Sibyl comes on the stage you will have a new ideal of life. She will represent something to you that you have never known." (Wilde 87)

Lord Henry's claims about Dorian all sound incredibly confident, and matter-of-fact – in contrast, Dorian's response seems emotionally charged, and less certain, as seen in the word "cried". This is interesting because it places a contrast between the factual nature of Dorian craving an alternative life path, and Dorian's actual uncertainty and disbelief about this, as stemming from societal conditioning. Lord Henry's assertive statement of, "Yes, Dorian, you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit," reflects the differences between their lives. Lord Henry is generally unconventional, in the pursuit of self-pleasure as a hedonist, and he does not follow chrononormative expectations, while Dorian is still young and has an impulse to adhere to Victorian society's demands. The word "represent" highlights his role in Dorian's life as a mentor, which is fixed. The term suggests that Lord Henry is a symbol of the unconventional

and morally daring actions that Dorian secretly desires, and under the surface, already embodies. Throughout the majority of the novel, Dorian rejects chrononormativity.

However, this may not be the case under the surface, as his queer undertones will be discussed. By making himself a symbol of uncommitted "sins," Lord Henry challenges the constraints of chrononormativity by showing Dorian a different path that rebels against societal norms. The phrase "the sins you have never had the courage to commit" contains that same sense of rebellion, indicating that Dorian's desires do not fall within the confines of chrononormative behaviour. Lord Henry noting that Dorian lacks the "courage" to commit these sins suggests that these desires are repressed due to societal pressure. Dorian's response, "What nonsense you talk, Harry!" shows his initial resistance to Lord Henry's ideas. Dorian's use of the word "nonsense" indicates that he is feeling uncomfortable with the unconventional ideas that Lord Henry is expressing to him (and possibly aware of his own unconventional desires on a subconscious level), which also shows his inclination toward a more conventional worldview, aligning with chrononormativity. When Dorian mentions Sibyl, he is essentially arguing for conventional values, and he suggests that Sibyl's performance on stage will introduce Lord Henry to a new, more conventional ideal of life. The phrase "She will represent something to you that you have never known" shows Dorian's socially-driven desire for a normative, accepted relationship – something that Lord Henry does not seem interested in, even though he is married! In fact, one only reads of Lord Henry's wife *once* in the entire novel, and briefly at that. Afterwards, he is rather moody and tells Dorian to never get married, further indicating that although technically he follows chrononormativity, it is not something he truly desires or is content with. The use of "represent" is interesting, as it shows the contrast between Henry's representation of rebellion and Sibyl's representation of a more traditional life path. The repetition in this later use of the word "represent" by Dorian seems to be an attempt to counter-argue Lord Henry's claims, as Dorian is ferociously attempting to adhere to chrononormativity, and perhaps convincing his mentor to do the same will make him feel more confident in the decision. This conversation captures the differences between the unconventional and the conventional, as well as the conflict between Dorian's need for societal acceptance (shown by his interest in Sibyl) and his suppressed desires for unconventional experiences (represented by Henry). Chrononormativity, though the societal norm, is often quite hollow. Within the pursuit of a strictly structured life path, there is a reduction in individuality and diverse experiences. This concept of a structured, chrononormative life as per Freeman's theoretical framework can lack true depth and honest expressions of identity, even though its essential goal is to guide

people along an accepted trajectory that should lead to happiness and satisfaction. However, this can turn into a monotonous existence, regardless of the feeling of being accepted.

Later, Dorian watches Sibyl's performance and is disappointed. He admits to her that he is no longer interested in her, and finds her boring – most likely a result of internal admittance to Lord Henry's claims. Her response:

> The common people who acted with me seemed to me to be godlike. The painted scenes were my world. I knew nothing but shadows, and I thought them real. You came—oh, my beautiful love!—and you freed my soul from prison. You taught me what reality really is. To-night, for the first time in my life, I saw through the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played. (Wilde 94-95)

When Sibyl reflects on her relationship with Dorian here, it feels desperate – she is determined to convince Dorian that he should feel otherwise for her. What's interesting here is that another parallel presents itself between Sackville-West, Basil, and Sibyl – there is an unhealthy obsession attached to her affection, as seen in the line "you freed my soul from prison" which creates an intense emotional attachment and dependency on Dorian. At the same time, she realises that societal norms are quite hollow, and do not allow room for unconventional experiences. Sibyl's description of her romantic experience with Dorian is in itself unconventional, even though it technically aligns with chronological norms. This shows that in her perspective, Dorian represents an alternative to the conventional men she had encountered before – much like Lord Henry represents an alternative for Dorian. Dorian has qualities and traits that are different from chrononormative guidelines, and that suggests that Dorian has possible hidden homosexual desires, which will be explored later. "The common people who acted with me seemed to me to be godlike" highlights Sibyl's sense of isolation from her cast, which further emphasises her feeling of being different from the norm. The theatrical world she lived in, seen as unconventional by societal standards as a distinct form of art, was a sanctuary that provided an escape for her from the conforming influence of chrononormativity.

Sibyl states that Dorian "taught me what reality really is", an epiphany that suggested her relationship with him helped her understand the limitations and shallowness of chrononormativity. This clarity leads her to recognise the "hollowness, the sham, the silliness" of the societal constructs she had always followed. She sees how hollow chrononormativity really is, and wants to reject it. However, when Dorian rejects her after her disappointing performance, it shows the tragic consequences of her alternative perspective,

even though it is not a homosexual one. Sibyl's story is a testament to how complicated societal norms can be and how unconventional relationships cannot fit into them. After Sibyl commits suicide due to Dorian's rejection (and the sense that without being able to depend on him for connection, her life would be chrononormative and hollow as a result), almost a rejection from society itself, Dorian's emotional response to her death seems quite hollow, too:

> As a rule, people who act lead the most commonplace lives. They are good husbands, or faithful wives, or something tedious. You know what I mean—middle-class virtue and all that kind of thing. How different Sibyl was! She lived her finest tragedy. She was always a heroine. The last night she played—the night you saw her—she acted badly because she had known the reality of love. When she knew its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died. She passed again into the sphere of art. There is something of the martyr about her. Her death has all the pathetic uselessness of martyrdom, all its wasted beauty. But, as I was saying, you must not think I have not suffered. (Wilde 119)

Dorian takes the time here to step away from his previous attachment to Sibyl – which, in itself, was quite obsessive in nature as he proposed to her quite hastily. In fact, his intentions to hasten their relationship can even be seen as a desperate attempt to prove that he adheres to chrononormativity. However, now it seems that the rose-coloured glasses have been removed, and he reflects on his relationship with Sibyl, her nature, and his newfound understanding of the consequences of straying from chrononormativity and societal expectations. Dorian's statement that people who lead dramatic lives are usually quite boring in reality shows his understanding of the differences between appearances and reality. The term "commonplace lives" capture the typical heteronormative existence that lives up to chrononormative expectations, with the word "commonplace" having dull and hollow undertones.

Dorian's contrasting description of Sibyl as someone who "lived her finest tragedy" highlights her rebellion from societal norms, and shows that at first, he used her as an escape and viewed her in an admirable light, as seen in "finest", which is then contrasted with the "tragedy" of his newfound understanding of reality and society. The idea that she "acted badly" on her final night due to her knowledge of love's unreality speaks to the disillusionment that can result from not following conventional expectations. When he mentions that Sibyl is passing "again into the sphere of art" it moves her to a space where her actions are no longer mundane and more truthful, and in her death, she regained her "finest"

qualities, which is quite harsh. Her death is kind of similar to martyrdom, and it shows the tragic consequences of moving away from Victorian conventions – she commits suicide from the pain of losing Dorian and being committed to the cause of an unconventional life that seems out of reach. The idea of "wasted beauty" further indicates this sense of loss, suggesting that her potential was lost due to her straying from the expected path. Dorian's statement that Sibyl's death has the "pathetic uselessness of martyrdom" shows that he understands that society's expectations of her, and her own personal pain, ultimately lead to her death. When Dorian confesses that he briefly suffered, it marks an important turn in the novel. His suffering comes from the pain of her death and the guilt he must feel – but it is also the shame of his hidden non-conforming desires and the pressure of chrononormativity. He realises that he will never fully be satisfied with chrononormativity and does not have the agency to follow it fully due to his own alternative identity, even though he initially rejected it.

This is quite interesting in comparison to Orlando, who also initially rejected it, and then was no longer given agency in the choice. Dorian's alternative identity lies on the outskirts of chrononormativity, and has homoerotic undertones, though never outrightly stated himself, as shown earlier in the novel through a conversation between Basil and Lord Henry:

> "He likes me," he answered after a pause; "I know he likes me. Of course I flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said. (16)

This is an extremely important quote in the novel, as it is one of the few mentions of Dorian possibly exuding a queer identity. In the original version of the novel (a serial story), there were a lot more explicit paragraphs about homosexuality that were cut by Wilde's editor, and this section originally included the line "I give myself away. As a rule, he is charming to me, and we walk home together from the club arm in arm, or sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things" (Wilde 85) that followed after, which creates the sense that Dorian is indeed connected to queer identity, as seen in the "arm in arm" form of romantic affection. Regardless, here in the censored version, Basil considers Dorian's feelings towards him, with a sense of secrecy and discomfort, as seen in the pause after revealing that Dorian likes him. There's a mix of homoerotic desire, society's expectations, and self-restraint at play here. Basil is confident that Dorian "likes" him, which has a connotation of intimate affection, suggesting the possibility of a queer expression.

This possibly could have been the unconventional trait that Sibyl sensed in Dorian. The tone here is one of hesitance, as he is afraid to openly acknowledge the nature of their bond. This is because chrononormativity disallows expressions of homosexual desire. Basil notes the different power dynamics between himself and Dorian by stating that he "flatters him dreadfully", indicating possibly conscious desperate actions to gain Dorian's interest. This desperation for connections comes from Basil's longing to find a space between his suppressed queer expressions and the limitations of chrononormativity. By using flattery, he finds a way to express his feelings within the boundaries of what is accepted by society, without flagging scrutiny. The phrase "strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said" shows the internal conflict he is facing. Basil knows that he can find joy in temporarily breaking the boundaries of chrononormativity and societal expectations, but he also feels a sense of regret for the fear of his true identity being revealed. Basil's inability to openly express his homosexual love for Dorian due to societal disapproval leads to his need to escape through aesthetics. To return to the uncensored version of the novel, there is actually another statement that was altered, that originally alluded to Dorian's sexuality in the form of sexual homosexual acts, "A man with curious eyes had suddenly peered into his face, and then dogged him with stealthy footsteps, passing and repassing him many times" (Wilde 257). This picture that this exchange brings to mind is what is known as 'gay men cruising' in contemporary understanding, which is when men walk around at night hesitantly looking for another gay man to have a sexual encounter with. The fact that this man was curiously staring at Dorian, and kept passing him, indicates that he sensed that Dorian was queer, and it alludes to the idea that Dorian himself used to cruise at night.

Back to the censored version, Lord Henry's response to Basil is quite caustic in nature: "What you have told me is quite a romance, a romance of art one might call it, and the worst of having a romance of any kind is that it leaves one so unromantic." (17) This reaction to Basil's heartfelt expression shows his own thoughts on the relationship between Basil and Dorian. He understands the situation to be a "romance of art", which is quite interesting. The term "romance of art" shows that he views their bond as an idolised, nearly fictional connection, with a focus on the artistic and emotional intensity involved. This perspective also clearly defines the differences between their relationship and conventional chrononormative romances. He is essentially suggesting that their relationship, and the emotions attached, are incompatible with chrononormativity. The phrase "the worst of having a romance of any kind is that it leaves one so unromantic" is one of the most striking comments here. Lord Henry points out that the experience of a romance, whether

chrononormative or not, often is not very romantic in nature. This speaks to a different kind of pain present in non-chrononormative relationships, where the need for secrecy results in little to no honesty and authenticity. This can result in a lack of emotional connection because authenticity is one of the defining factors of a successful relationship. By making this the "worst" aspect of the romance, Lord Henry is speaking to the emotional toll that secrecy takes on queer couples. The choice to keep their feelings hidden, as per society's expectations, leads to less passion and more discomfort and confusion about identity, and this is not present in more openly acknowledged romances, such as chrononormative ones. Queer people did not have the agency to adhere to chrononormativity and experience the benefits that accompanied it. Lord Henry's thoughts on their relationship essentially critique chrononormativity, because it creates limitations.

An essential consequence of not having the agency to experience chrononormativity, or even the agency to reject it, is the suffering faced by queer people as a result of scrutiny from a conventional heteronormative society. Mcloughlin comments on the similarities between Wilde's and Woolf's novels in terms of chrononormativity, as well as in aestheticism. In fact, he claims that the artistic expression in both novels is redundant and a digression from the plot:

> Wilde's narrator digresses from the plot of the novel to revel in a 'decadent' aestheticism which spurns the idea of the useful, the fruitful and the productive and celebrates the luxurious, beautiful and, by implication, useless. (Mcloughlin 1)

This statement implies that moments of aesthetic indulgence in the novels are quite useless, and move away from the main plot. This perspective of the novels overlooks the important role that aestheticism plays in the lives of characters who cannot fully adhere to chrononormativity due to their queerness. Rather than being a digression, the aestheticism in both novels works as a powerful tool for the characters who find themselves marginalized by chrononormativity, or engaging in chrononormative acts on the surface in an effort to protect themselves.

Characters like Dorian and Basil use aesthetic pursuits as a form of imaginative escape from the pain of their suppressed queer desires. Dorian's pursuit of beauty and pleasure allows him to avoid the constraints of chrononormativity, even though it is just temporary. Basil's artistic expressions become a medium through which he can show his queer feelings for Dorian. This is a way of communicating queer expression through aestheticism that is not allowed in a conventional society. By naming these instances of aestheticism as digressions, one is not taking note of the important ways in which these

artistic and imaginative acts work as coping mechanisms. The aesthetic indulgences are a form of relief and a break away from the conventional society that oppresses the characters. It is an alternate artistic realm, free from the bounds of chrononormativity, and it cannot truly be controlled by society. These aesthetic moments are, therefore, essential to the characters' journeys of self-discovery in identity, and even a form of resistance against chrononormative constraints; a quiet rebellion through art.

Chapter 3: **Aestheticism as an Escape in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando***

In continuation of the exploration of the lack of agency in chrononormativity and aestheticism, Wilde's novel demonstrates queer temporality through aesthetics like painting, reading, luxurious outings, and more because Victorian society dictates that they cannot be allowed chrononormativity. Both Wilde and Woolf's characters turn to aesthetics when they are disallowed chrononormativity (or adhere to it as a method of survival) as a form of imaginative escape, rather than a digression from the plot because they are not given any other alternative space of expression. The characters in Wilde's novel all express this imaginative escape in different ways.

Basil finds his imaginative escape through his art. His paintings of Dorian are used as a healthy outlet for the pain associated with his suppressed homosexual feelings. The portrait gives him the opportunity to express the way he is feeling and his secret desires without society finding out:

> In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, and in front of it, some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward, whose sudden disappearance some years ago caused, at the time, such public excitement and gave rise to so many strange conjectures. As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake. (Wilde 5-6)

The opening sentence of the novel immediately draws the attention of the readers – and the guests in Basil's home - to a specific aesthetic focal point, the painting of Dorian. This also relates to the earlier mentions of unhealthy obsession, as Basil has essentially made Dorian the centre of his universe, emotionally as well as physically in the room. The physical distance between Basil and the painting works as a metaphor for the complicated relationship between the artist and his painting, alluding to the distance in their relationship further on in the novel, and the distance between Basil's desires and society's expectations. The words "extraordinary personal beauty" and "full-length portrait" create the sense that the painting of Dorian is incredibly detailed, stunning, and *large* - giving one the sense that its impression is larger than life. When Basil looks at it in "As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and

seemed about to linger there" it captures how he responds emotionally to the painting – and subsequently, Dorian. The words "gracious," "comely," and "skilfully mirrored" show how deep his connection to Dorian is, and it creates a sense of artistic achievement within him, as he is clearly proud of his creation. Describing the painting as gracious implies a god-like figure is present, again referring to the idolatry Basil feels toward Dorian, and the fact that it is a mirror of the real figure of Dorian shows just how much time Basil spent working on it. The phrase "a smile of pleasure passed across his face" highlights the intimacy between Basil and Dorian, showing where Basil's desire is starting to physically manifest. However, the statement that stands out is "But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake." (6) This series of jolting information creates an unexpected shift in mood. Firstly, the fact that Basil previously disappeared from chrononormative society could possibly mean that he had attempted to escape from society, because he could not bear his queerness, or he was about to be exposed. Basil's sudden movement and the imagery of "closing his eyes" and "placing his fingers upon the lids" show a moment of internal conflict and sorrow, as if the causes of the pain that he was trying to escape from through his painting have suddenly entered his thoughts again. Perhaps his connection to Dorian is a similar "issue" that caused him to disappear initially. The phrase "imprison within his brain some curious dream" indicates how fragile his imaginative escape is, and his fear that it might be temporary. It shows Basil's desire to have a precious moment of emotional refuge from his pain at not being able to adhere to chrononormativity due to queerness, suggesting a tension between the limitless chrononormative world he desires that would include queer temporalities, and the reality of secrecy he faces. This shows exactly how important aesthetics are in the novel as a form of escape from reality; without this, the plot would suffer.

As for Dorian, his pursuit of materialistic pleasure and his obsession with youth is in itself a form of imaginative escape through aesthetics. He is quick to embrace the magical effect of the painting to maintain his youthful beauty and avoid the painful aspects of time on his physical beauty. He finds pleasure in seeking out a luxurious life, which is an attempt to escape the pain that comes with the limitations of chrononormativity:

> Well, I am not like that young man you told me of when we were down at Marlow together, the young man who used to say that yellow satin could console one for all the miseries of life. I love beautiful things that one can touch and handle. Old brocades, green bronzes, lacquer-work, carved ivories, exquisite surroundings, luxury,

> pomp—there is much to be got from all these. But the artistic temperament that they create, or at any rate reveal, is still more to me. To become the spectator of one's own life, as Harry says, is to escape the suffering of life. (Wilde 120)

Dorian creates a distance between the person he is at the present moment, and the "young man" he was before, who found happiness in the simple things – before he was exposed to the harsh realities of life. This distance is similar to the one Basil creates with his painting. Using "yellow satin" as a symbol for the opposite of luxury and aesthetic pursuits reflects his distaste for his prior life, and shows his new hedonistic ideals (courtesy, in part, to Lord Henry), along with the power he finds in aesthetics. Dorian's sentiment that he "loves beautiful things" shows that he is emotionally attached to the physical manifestations of beauty. For clarity, he names examples such as "old brocades," "green bronzes," and "carved ivories" which further indicates his love for aesthetics. It is quite interesting that he names "carved ivories" here, as later in the novel, just before he dies, he reads a letter written to him with the statement, "The world is changed because you are made of ivory and gold. The curves of your lips rewrite history" (238). The fact that he was likened to the same things he adored in life shows that he, in essence, lost himself in aesthetics during his attempts at imaginative escape, as he *becomes* the things he uses for aesthetic escape, i.e. ivory and gold. The phrase "there is much to be got from all these" from the initial quote conveys his belief that these aesthetic experiences offer a form of tangible escape from pain, in which he gained a lot.

He delves deeper into his appreciation for aesthetics in "But the artistic temperament that they create, or at any rate reveal, is still more to me." He acknowledges the power of their influence and refers to the emotional and psychological response given to him by beautiful objects. He sees the creation of the "artistic temperament" as an even more important result of indulging in beautiful things. When he refers to his mentor in "To become the spectator of one's own life, as Harry says, is to escape the suffering of life" it speaks to the idea of becoming a spectator to life – a central theme for escapism. By becoming more detached from his own life, Dorian's goal is to distance himself from the suffering in life, particularly the struggles that coincide with the agency in chrononormativity. Dorian creates environments where he can temporarily escape from the societal expectations and moral judgments that are caging him in. His focus on beauty and luxury is an effective way to distract himself. It is the same for his physical appearance – he is obsessed with preserving his youthful beauty and works hard to ensure that he always looks beautiful. His focus on appearance and the painting symbolises his supernatural way of rebelling against the natural

ageing process, and this detaches him from the conventional expectations of growing older. He actively searches for pleasurable experiences, which include intellectual conversations while fine dining and going to lavish parties, similar to Lord Henry. In some ways, his aesthetic escape is similar to Basil's, as Dorian's admiration for art and beauty allows him to interact with the artistic realm. He finds comfort when taking in art, allowing himself to enter a space where he can temporarily forget the limitations that society forces on him. Furthermore, Dorian's romantic relationships show that when he embraces sensuality as he did with Sibyl, he can also temporarily escape. When Dorian occasionally retreats to the room he locked the portrait in, this can even be seen as an extreme form of aesthetic escape. No one else is allowed to enter this room, meaning he is completely alone and experiences a certain kind of relief, away from the prying eyes of society. It is a place where he can reflect on who he really is, the person he used to be, the person he had grown to become, rife with sin, and the mask he presents to the world.

The other characters in the novel all express their need to escape through aestheticism in different ways. For Sibyl, she throws herself into her acting career as a form of escape from her common life, as Dorian so cruelly pointed out. Through acting she could become a totally different person every single day – a person not bearing the weight of societal constraints. Her romantic ideals are also a form of escape from her reality until she realises the harsh truth about the differences between her dreams and reality – the way she idealises Dorian quickly comes to an end. Up until her final performance (which was less an escape and more of a job to her), she escaped from the limitations of chrononormativity through art. As for Lord Henry, his aesthetic pursuit mainly contained philosophical discussions. They allowed him to intellectualise and detach himself from the emotional and physical limitations of chrononormativity. His hedonistic outlook on life, the same views he bestowed upon Dorian, guided him through a life of self-pleasure and luxury that served as a form of escape from chrononormativity. It is clear that he is not particularly fond of his wife, and the chrononormative boundaries she represented.

Ultimately, aesthetics in the novel are certainly not a digression from the plot. In fact, I would argue that they are instrumental in the success of the novel. These pursuits of beauty, art, and luxury appear to be materialistic and useless on the surface. However, underneath the glamour and pleasure of it all, there is immense pain. Every character in the novel is attempting to escape from their pain, most of which is directly linked to agency in chrononormativity. Even the seemingly heterosexual characters in the novel seek an imaginative escape from their own sorrows and a different kind of societal pressure they are

facing. Without these aesthetic pursuits, the characters would descend into complete madness, and there would be no story to tell.

On the other hand, during the Modernist period, homosexuality was slowly becoming more publicly acceptable. Although it was still criminalised, the gay community and movement was growing. During Woolf's time, homosexuality and homosexual expression were described as a perversion legally, with mental illness being the root cause of homosexual desires. This is emphasised in Sara E. McHenry's "Gay Is Good": History of Homosexuality in the DSM and Modern Psychiatry":

> In the first edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published in 1952, homosexuality was classified under "sociopathic personality disturbance" (1). The last 70 years have brought psychiatry a long way, but it is only in the most recent version of the DSM that the last pieces of evidence of pathologizing homosexuality were removed. (McHenry 1)

The reason I have included a section of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is because it essentially shows the way LGBTQ+ identities were understood within a psychological context, and therefore understood from society's perspective. As Modernism began near the beginning of the 20th century and continued until around the 1940s, the inclusion of homosexuality under the category of "sociopathic personality disturbance" in the 1952 edition of the DSM still shows the stigmatisation that queer people had to deal with from a psychological perspective from the Modernist period, as well as after it. This psychological perspective of homosexuality reflects the chrononormative society's opinion. Categorising homosexuality as a mental illness only helped spread disinformation, which contributed to the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ communities. The de-stigmatisation process was helped along by legal developments like the Sexual Offences Act 1967, but it was still a long, complicated process. While the Act decriminalised certain homosexual acts in the UK, it did not immediately remove social biases or discriminatory attitudes. Even as society evolved, people like Virginia Woolf would have still grappled with discrimination, as the stigma attached to homosexuality was beyond legal changes. Woolf's time also saw the emergence of the 'roaring twenties', when gay communities started emerging more prominently. Even though this meant less disinformation and more support, it was still a constant struggle against norms. Juan Antonio Suárez's "Modernism and Gender Trouble" offers a more societal view of homosexuality in the Modernist period with references to Foucault:

> homosexuality was largely a nineteenth-century invention. Its basis was the reconceptualization of same-sex eroticism from random deviant behavior - legally akin to bestiality and masturbation- into a principle of identify, a defining trait of some individuals. This remapping brings into existence a social collective that cuts across class and geographical difference, a collective prosecuted not for some accidental slip into prurience, but for an innate personal trait. All the homophile movement had to do to defend its claims was to reverse the direction of the arguments for pathologization and oppression. (Foucault 1978: 100-102)

Because homosexuality was an inalienable core of identity, homophiles reclaimed it as natural, legitimate, and deserving of civil rights protection (Suárez 19). Here, one can see the way that Freeman's arguments concerning chrononormative society reflects the views of psychology in the sense that the sociopathic behaviour homosexual people expressed was deviant. The phrase "homosexuality was largely a nineteenth-century invention" shows that the idea of homosexuality as an important part of identity only started becoming more commonly understood in the 1900s. The fact that it was seen as an "invention" rather than a naturally occurring part of identity is in itself problematic. The shift from viewing homosexuality as random deviant behaviour to an actual, natural personal trait is important. The new understanding of homosexuality brought about a societal shift, meaning that Modernist society began to break traditional beliefs near the end of the period. The phrase "cuts across class and geographical difference" emphasises the idea that homosexuality became understood as something that was common all over the world. This development meant that the focus moved away from isolated acts of homosexuality (often deemed criminal offences) to a condemnation of an actual part of one's identity – essentially moving discrimination to a wholly, more problematic, area. It meant that discrimination wasn't placed upon a singled-out action, but against an entire personality, leading to a different kind of alienation, including feelings of guilt and shame. The idea that homosexuality was criminalised "for an innate personal trait", again a reflection of a mental illness, shows the shift in focus from simple behaviour or homosexual acts to an essential part of identity. The reference to the "homophile movement" shows that organised efforts to fight for gay rights were becoming more common and popular, especially after the Roaring Twenties. The concept of reversing the arguments for pathologisation helped this movement in redefining society's understanding of what homosexuality is, how it is not simply an isolated criminal act, but a part of identity as "natural, legitimate, and deserving of civil rights protection". By clearly defining homosexuality as part of the core of identity, the homophile movement

aimed to fight against the prevailing prejudices from a chrononormative society and advocate for the naturalness of homosexuality as part of one's identity.

When considering Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, it is interesting to note that the novel was originally written as a kind of love letter to Sackville-West. It is quite a personal expression of their connection, with many obvious references to Sackville-West. The character Orlando changes from a man to a woman across centuries, which completely defies the regular, linear, constraints of time. This shows Woolf's own defiance of Modernist society's expectations and the fixed limitations for gender and sexual expression, as posed by chrononormativity. By giving Orlando gender fluidity, Woolf challenged the nature of chrononormativity, exposing its limitations when it comes to identity. The relationships Orlando experiences ultimately destroy conventions, which, in turn, highlights the connection Woolf shared with Sackville-West. It expresses queerness in a positive manner from Orlando's perspective, beyond the restrictions of chrononormativity, much like the love that Woolf and Sackville-West shared in their own lives. One interesting parallel that runs between Sackville-West and Orlando is in regard to property ownership – Sackville-West was unable to inherit her childhood home because she was a woman, which brought her great pain, as noted in the *Love Letters* between Woolf and West (144). In order to rectify this through art, Woolf writes a similar story about Orlando – Orlando gets to keep her ancestral property, but not without some difficulty. In this way, Woolf pays tribute to Sackville-West, and it can be seen as a grand gesture of love:

> But now Orlando was to learn how little the most tempestuous flutter of excitement avails against the iron countenance of the law; how harder than the stones of London Bridge it is, and than the lips of a cannon more severe. No sooner had she returned to her home in Blackfriars than she was made aware by a succession of Bow Street runners and other grave emissaries from the Law Courts that she was a party to three major suits which had been preferred against her during her absence, as well as innumerable minor litigations, some arising out of, others depending on them. The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing; (3) that she was an English Duke who had married one Rosina Pepita, a dancer; and had had by her three sons, which sons now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them. Such grave charges as these would, of course, take time and money to dispose of. All her estates were put in Chancery and her titles pronounced in abeyance while the suits were under litigation.

> Thus it was in a highly ambiguous condition, uncertain whether she was alive or dead, man or woman, Duke or nonentity, that she posted down to her country seat, where, pending the legal judgment, she had the Law's permission to reside in a state of incognito or incognita, as the case might turn out to be (Woolf 118-119).

This legal battle shows the kind of strict heteronormative expectations from a chrononormative society that is still prevalent, as well as the effects of gender discrimination. Society rejects her new identity as a woman – even though she is essentially still the exact same person as before – and attempts to deny her the rights to her property. "Orlando was to learn how little the most tempestuous flutter of excitement avails against the iron countenance of the law" indicates that the excitement and contentedness she is experiencing when exploring her identity and living her life can be destroyed by chrononormativity and social norms incredibly quickly. The phrases "how harder than the stones of London Bridge it is" and "iron countenance of the law" both have strong, resistant properties to them, in the sense that society and law can be seen as the ultimate authority – it is near impossible to rebel against it, and doing so will result in pain from the "stones" and "iron" – also reflecting a strong boundary. This is the pain experienced by those who stray from chrononormative standards and demands. Orlando's identity is being questioned by the law, and society claims that she is dead or she is a woman and therefore does not qualify to inherit. The fact that society tried to claim her as deceased in the first place indicates just how far chrononormative societies will go in order to enforce the law and conventions. These charges show how the system had a bias against women and non-normative gender identities, shown in the phrase "that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing" – the mere fact that death and being a woman were considered the same thing in the eyes of society and the law is quite shocking.

This rejection and legal battle show how chrononormative society denied Orlando, both for being a woman and for straying from societal norms. Orlando eventually wins the case for her property, but this takes an incredibly long time and much effort. Her victory is quite symbolic and can be seen as a victory over an oppressive chrononormative system. In this sense, Orlando's success can be seen as a grand gesture of love and empowerment from Woolf to Sackville-West, as a way for Woolf to address the gender-based discrimination and property rights issues that Sackville-West herself faced. It shows exactly how much persistence, strength, and determination is needed to challenge chrononormativity and gender/sexual identity expectations, while also serving as a method of imaginative escape away from the struggles of real queer women, like Sackville-West. Unfortunately, many

queer people – as well as those who simply do not fit into chrononormative society or have the agency to choose it – do not have the same resilience to challenge society, due to feelings of alienation, shame, and a loss of identity. The challenge should not *have* to occur in the first place. Society should make allowances for these kinds of figures. It is important to note that Orlando originally disavows chrononormativity; after his mysterious sex change, she is not allowed it. Thus, Orlando no longer has the agency to reject chrononormativity, as she is automatically rejected from society. Just before Orlando changes genders, there are certain personifications of characteristics – in this case, Chastity – that comment on the transition:

> Then OUR LADY OF CHASTITY speaks: 'I am she whose touch freezes and whose glance turns to stone. I have stayed the star in its dancing, and the wave as it falls. The highest Alps are my dwelling place; and when I walk, the lightnings flash in my hair; where my eyes fall, they kill. Rather than let Orlando wake, I will freeze him to the bone. Spare, O spare!' (94)

"Chastity" indicates a sense of traditionalism, a chrononormative society, and its expectations of "cleanliness" and purity, which Orlando is betraying. Because Chastity is personified here, it creates a manifestation of that chrononormative society into a single being. Furthermore, that single being is given feminine qualities, hence the "OUR LADY" descriptor, and can represent femininity within that society. By giving Chastity human-like traits and her own voice, she is given an almost supernatural power as a guardian for Orlando, an enforcer of societal and moral norms, and also follows the theme of the supernatural throughout the novel. The tone of voice given to Chastity is authoritative and determined to have her authority known, trusted, and obeyed. This authority over the natural world is shown in, "'I am she whose touch freezes and whose glance turns to stone. I have stayed the star in its dancing, and the wave as it falls. The highest Alps are my dwelling place; and when I walk, the lightnings flash in my hair; where my eyes fall, they kill". It creates the sense of a divine figure who has intense control over the physical world. She is capable of freezing stars and waves, and she lives above the world in the Alps, almost looking down upon humanity, indicating a sense of judgment followed by punishment. The imagery of lightning flashing in her hair and her eyes having the power to kill also highlights her authority – a control that is feared by humanity, rather than a loving and understanding deity. This personification shows how society's expectations and values can place limitations on identity in a forceful manner. Chastity can even be seen as a representation of the way society forcefully pressures people into fitting into the norms of chrononormativity, especially regarding gender and sexuality. When she mentions freezing Orlando, and her determination to stop his awakening as a

woman, it shows that she opposes the gender change he is about to face, as well as his true identity. This can be seen as a direct ostracism against Orlando from the femininity within chrononormativity, as both men *and* women oppose Orlando's new identity and sexual expression – and will go so far as to threaten his life to stop it from happening, similar to the case of Oscar Wilde's imprisonment. This is a direct rejection from a chrononormative society; Orlando does not have the agency to adhere to chrononormativity, as society opposes the very essence of her new identity. This speech reads poetically, similar to a religious text, and emphasises the authority that Chastity has in the physical world. Essentially, it works to show the emotional struggle Orlando experiences when attempting to juggle her real identity and sexual expression against society's demands. This new identity is clarified after these events:

> We may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain statements. Orlando had become a woman--there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory--but in future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he'--her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. Some slight haziness there may have been, as if a few dark drops had fallen into the clear pool of memory; certain things had become a little dimmed; but that was all. The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it. Many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove (1) that Orlando had always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man. Let biologists and psychologists determine. It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since. (96)

The tone in this statement "We may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain statements" is thoughtful and open, almost as if the narrator is addressing the reader directly, and involving the reader in their thought process and decision-making, as seen in the use of the word "we". The distance created by stepping away from the narrative can be likened to the distance created between Orlando and society due to the gender change. It is emphasised that even though Orlando's gender had changed, their identity remained the same, with a simple change in pronoun; this transition was not simple in the eyes of society.

In fact, using the phrase "for convention's sake" has a tone of reluctance and annoyance, which indicates that even using pronouns as a way to define Orlando's identity is mentioned solely for the sake of convention. This is how important it was to consistently consider the chrononormative perspective, as well as the need society has to understand something in their terms before condemning it – this is seen later when society decides that Orlando is a woman for the sole purpose of attempting to stop her from inheriting property. The phrase "The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" has an assertive tone, and clearly shows the difference coming in Orlando's future due to the gender change as an essential part of her identity. The expression "practically the same" in regard to the physical appearance of Orlando's face shows that the way they look is the same, despite the transition, and yet society sees something different and obscure, anyway. The symbolism of "dark drops" falling into the pool of her memory has a sense of melancholy. These "dark drops" can metaphorically represent the shadow cast on Orlando's identity in society's eyes due to the gender change. The connotation of "dark" suggests that this shadow is linked with society's disapproval and the haziness in memory that Orlando experiences can be an ode to her own struggles with sexuality made more difficult without inclusion in chrononormativity. The narrator goes on to discuss society's attempts to understand Orlando's gender identity with scepticism, as shown in "Many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature." This has a tone of criticism and is quite ironic, actually, as it implies that society's efforts to prove Orlando's gender are more about following societal norms than actually understanding her experiences. The mere fact that society is discussing her gender identity in such depth is alarming; it indicates that each member of chrononormative society strictly observes the others, and is intent on passing judgements in such a way as to prevent agency in chrononormativity if one does not adhere to the norms, or is alternative in any sense. Hence, chrononormativity does not allow for any alternative perspectives or expressions, resulting in a lack of agency and individuality. The last sentence, "Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since," has a tone of finality and independence; it emphasises how simple Orlando's gender change really was, and how it should not be a defining factor in whether or not she can contentedly interact with society and be accepted for who she is.

Orlando, throughout the novel, is struggling to maintain their individuality and continue to be the same person they always was before the transition, but she is now navigating an entirely different world that refuses to accept her identity as a woman who loves women. This struggle of now being a queer woman, while previously he had been a

heterosexual male (the most favourable symbol in a chrononormative society) is expressed later on:

> And as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. For now a thousand hints and mysteries became plain to her that were then dark. Now, the obscurity, which divides the sexes and lets linger innumerable impurities in its gloom, was removed, and if there is anything in what the poet says about truth and beauty, this affection gained in beauty what it lost in falsity. (Wilde 113-114)

The fact that the narrator repeatedly and clearly attempts to make the reader – and subsequently, society – understand her gender and sexuality indicates that there was an obvious issue with the way society understood gender and sexuality and judged it. The phrase "And as all Orlando's loves had been women" creates an essential context for both the reader and Modernist society as a whole for Orlando's romantic past, present, and future. The fact that "women" is repeated speaks to how consistent her sexual expression has been, as well as her newfound queerness; the emphasis is on the female form and feminine expression. For Orlando, it must have been extremely overwhelming to have the experience of a heterosexual man, and then a queer woman – although she wasn't even surprised by the transition, society's reaction was the culprit for her anxiety. The phrase "culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention" is interesting, as the word "laggardry" suggests a slow adaptation to something, which implies that the adaptation to chrononormativity is not a quick process, inferring that it is not a natural one, either. If conventions, such as the ones present in chrononormativity, take a long time to adapt to, it is highly unlikely that this would be the most viable option – an option that does not even offer agency to those living alternative lifestyles. The word "culpable" places blame on society itself for this slow progress, and moves blame away from Orlando – again inferring that society originally placed blame on the queer person, rather than taking responsibility for its own chrononormative limitations.

The statement "though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved" again emphasises her sexual preference, regardless of her gender transition. The idea that "consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings" suggests that Orlando's understanding of her queerness makes her emotions toward women that much more intense. This relates to the concept that those who do not

conform or fit into chrononormativity could develop a better sense of self-awareness, as well as stronger emotional connections. With this in mind, it is peculiar that society condemns this sense of individuality and expression of identity, while still promoting chrononormativity as the superior life path. The concept of "a thousand hints and mysteries became plain" shows that Orlando experienced an epiphany after the gender change – she gained an understanding of her authentic self, and this also speaks to the challenges that queer people are forced to face before receiving even the slightest bit of clarity about their identity. In a chrononormative society, there is little space to learn more about oneself for fear of straying from the expected path and being ostracised, leaving those who aren't given the agency to choose or reject Freeman's ideas on chrononormativity feeling even more lost, alienated, and overwhelmed.

The statement "the obscurity, which divides the sexes and lets linger innumerable impurities in its gloom, was removed" shows clear societal divisions between different genders, which highlights the burdens carried by those who fall under the "alternative". This obscurity was removed from Orlando's perspective, but not necessarily society's. It also draws attention to the consequences of norms which are forced upon queer people. The comment about "this affection gained in beauty what it lost in falsity" shows the large contrast between Modernist society's expectations and demands, and the authenticity of honest expression of identity. The words "beauty" and "falsity" placed so closely together, with contrasting meanings, symbolises the contrast between conforming to chrononormativity norms and expressing genuine emotions, leaving one with the idea that the way chrononormativity is defined does not have much space for authenticity. It also gives the sense that the beauty gained by a true connection to one's queer identity was so powerful, that it acted as an aesthetic escape from the falsities that chrononormativity embodies.

Speaking to society enforcing these kinds of norms, and how it can affect those who fall into alternative lifestyles:

> A man who can destroy illusions is both beast and flood. Illusions are to the soul what atmosphere is to the earth. Roll up that tender air and the plant dies, the colour fades. The earth we walk on is a parched cinder. It is marl we tread and fiery cobbles scorch our feet. By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis waking that kills us. He who robs us of our dreams robs us of our life. (Woolf 143-144)

This entire passage can be seen as a sign of warning for queer people, and anyone else who deviates from the guidelines of chrononormativity. By "deviates", I mean those who do so without choice in the matter (such as queer people do not have the choice to be queer or not),

as well as those who do or say things condemned by a chrononormative society. The beginning statement "A man who can destroy illusions is both beast and flood" shows the duality of society – the images of the "beast and flood" show an oppressive force, that is capable of great destruction. The "man who can destroy illusions" can work to represent a chrononormative society, which can be as destructive as a beast, and as overwhelming as a flood, illustrating the danger that queer people are in, and the sense of drowning without societal acceptance. This shows how pressure from society to fit into conventions can completely ruin the hopes and ideals of those who do not fit into those guidelines. The poetic phrase "Illusions are to the soul what atmosphere is to the earth" is a metaphor that shows the parallels between one's illusions and one's inner, authentic self. If the atmosphere is an essential part of the earth, something that sustains the life force of nature, humans, and animals, then illusions and dreams, too, sustain and keep the soul going. Without the hopes of fitting into chrononormativity, expressing one's true self through homosexual expression, and being able to explore one's individuality, one is losing an essential part of oneself.

When society takes agency away from queer people, they are essentially stripping them away from their sustaining life force. The imagery of "rolling up" in "Roll up that tender air and the plant dies, the colour fades" suggests that social norms can be suffocating and caging in terms of one's identity and individuality, similar to the result of plants without air – there is a loss of joy, colour, and vibrancy in life, along with authenticity, when their hopes are rejected. In fact, besides their sexual expressions being rejected, their imaginative escapes are being rejected, too. The vivid imagery of "The earth we walk on is a parched cinder. It is marl we tread and fiery cobbles scorch our feet" creates a comparison between social conventions and a bland and barren earth – one that lacks true feeling and honest expression, which is also parallel to the earlier descriptions of a hollowness within chrononormativity. The descriptors "Parched cinder," "marl," and "fiery cobbles" all create strong imagery of a harsh and emotionless world without individuality and imaginative escape. The final phrase, "By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis waking that kills us. He who robs us of our dreams robs us of our life" ties it all together. This statement shows the reader that when queer people, or any other groups straying from chrononormative expectations, uncover the truth behind social demands, it can destroy their sense of self. The violent contrast between "Life is a dream" and "Tis waking that kills us" indicates the stark differences between true expression and the limitations of chrononormativity. With true expression, there is a dream-like acceptance and happiness attached. With chrononormativity, there is a violent and unaccepting energy. The violent and criminal-like imagery continues in

"Robbing us of our dreams" as one sees a continuation in the themes of criminality between "kills" and "robbing", highlighting that the actions of society are unquestionably wrong. Therefore, forging one's own, individual life path, is a natural process, unlike the constraints placed by chrononormativity. And yet, to be a part of chrononormativity is to feel loved and accepted by the people around them, and being deprived of the choice to indulge in this can be likened to a "robbing" or a murdering of one's sense of self and peace. This detachment of self can be seen below:

> Orlando heaved a sigh of relief, lit a cigarette, and puffed for a minute or two in silence. Then she called hesitatingly, as if the person she wanted might not be there, 'Orlando? For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not--Heaven help us--all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two. So that it is the most usual thing in the world for a person to call, directly they are alone, Orlando? (if that is one's name) meaning by that, Come, come! I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another. Hence, the astonishing changes we see in our friends. But it is not altogether plain sailing, either, for though one may say, as Orlando said (being out in the country and needing another self presumably) Orlando? still the Orlando she needs may not come; these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name). (Woolf 219-220)

The opening statement describing Orlando's actions "Orlando heaved a sigh of relief, lit a cigarette, and puffed for a minute or two in silence" is informative, as the mere act of sighing and finding pleasure in smoking shows that Orlando is contemplating something important, and suffering from an internal conflict – in fact, it draws a parallel between Lord Henry's insistence on why a cigarette is the perfect type of pleasure – "You must have a cigarette. A cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied." (Wilde 87). Both Orlando and Lord Henry find solace in smoking, a self-destructive aesthetic pursuit as a means of imaginative escape from the confines of chrononormativity because it is enjoyable, but not as satisfying as the ideal society accepting alternative lifestyles. Returning to *Orlando*, the smoking shows that she needs a moment to gather her thoughts before the next poignant moment: "Then she called hesitatingly, as if the person she wanted might not be there, 'Orlando? For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not--Heaven help us--all having lodgment

at one time or another in the human spirit?" The hesitant call of her own name shows a longing for a sense of self; an individualised identity. The very specific statement of "seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once" shows how complicated understanding one's identity can be, and the various aspects of queer life that Orlando is trying to navigate. This shows how difficult it is to process having an alternative identity while aching to feel accepted by a society that values convention. She continues with "Some say two thousand and fifty-two. So that it is the most usual thing in the world for a person to call, directly they are alone, Orlando? (if that is one's name) meaning by that, Come, come! I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another." The same reference to a specific number in "two thousand and fifty-two" emphasises how many identities and traits can be contained within an individual – essentially, this is limitless, which is a contrast to the strict limitations imposed by chrononormativity. The need she feels to call on a different kind of self indicates that she wants to get rid of the limitations of a specific identity – likely the queer identity that is linked to ostracism and disdain. Moreover, it is likely that she wants to eliminate the *consequences* of embracing that identity, rather than the queerness itself. The line "Hence, the astonishing changes we see in our friends" highlights how people can change direly when their true selves are suppressed by society. The idea of "not altogether plain sailing" shows that the challenges faced by those who cannot adhere to chrononormativity due to their core identities certainly do not experience easy, simple lives. This brings one to the conclusion that to make this alternative path easier, the characters in *Orlando* use aesthetic pursuits as a form of imaginative escape.

As mentioned earlier, Woolf herself uses the stylistic device of stream of consciousness to show how Orlando's sense of self and perception of time changes throughout the novel – an aesthetic choice in itself. Woolf destroys one's concept of the norm and uses an artistic approach to create an idealistic world free from the boundaries that she and Sackville-West faced, offering an alternative aesthetic piece of writing that one can use to escape from the reality of chrononormativity and the consequences that accompany not adhering to its rules and guidelines. This unconventional aestheticism creates a way to avoid the alienation that queer people often experience. Woolf uses both the written word and painting to express this idealistic world and uses it as her own form of imaginative escape as a queer person in the Modernist period. Her scandalous (and questionable, in the eyes of society) art was used as a way to rebel against a chrononormative society, and it explores queerness, femininity, and the boundaries set by society. In fact, the entire novel of *Orlando* can be seen as a form of imaginative escape. The novel is, as mentioned elsewhere, a love

letter to Sackville-West, and most editions even have illustrations of Orlando – which are pictures of Sackville-West. The fact that their strong emotional bond is contained within the text further indicates the importance of using aesthetic pursuits, such as writing, as a form of imaginative escape. For Woolf, the chrononormative society that did not fully accept her, coupled with her own mental illness, is the cause for her need to escape. Her character, Orlando, seeks the same kind of refuge in poetry:

> It came; it went; she never shone with the steady beam of an Englishwoman--here, however, remembering the Lady Margaret and her petticoats, Orlando ran wild in his transports and swept her over the ice, faster, faster, vowing that he would chase the flame, dive for the gem, and so on and so on, the words coming on the pants of his breath with the passion of a poet whose poetry is half pressed out of him by pain. (29)

This confession is quite early in the novel – before Orlando experiences the gender change. It captures the idea of how aesthetic pursuits like poetry can be powerful methods for imaginative escape from the emotional disconnection he experiences with society; Orlando never truly felt like he fit into society, even prior to the gender change. Poetry becomes a way for Orlando to understand and process his emotions, meaning it is simultaneously a form of escape from pain and a way to express his real, authentic self. The reference that Orlando makes to her not shining with the "steady beam of an Englishwoman" highlights his forthcoming struggle with gender norms, which essentially foreshadows his eventual gender change, and how he never lives up to societal standards as a "real" woman. The imagery of running wild and sweeping her over the ice can symbolise, in this context, the future longing he would feel to break free from the constraints of chrononormativity, and yet still be accepted. It is acceptable to read the novel in this way, as Woolf uses the stream of consciousness to consistently break linear timelines (including the way Orlando goes on to live for centuries).

The mentions of "pursuit", "flame", and "gem" metaphorically show that Orlando is looking for something elusive, a sense of self beyond the surface. The "pursuit" is an ongoing struggle, and the imagery of "flame" and "gem" is vivid, showing that he is pursuing natural elements, indicating that his own sense of self beyond the surface – his gender and queerness – is, essentially, just as natural. The phrase "the words coming on the pants of his breath" shows the intensity of his emotions at this moment and the urgency he feels to find this evasive sense of self. This kind of urgency is that of a poet who uses writing as a helpful tool to deal with negative emotions. The fact that Orlando is a "poet whose poetry is half pressed out of him by pain" shows that the simple act of writing, an aesthetic pursuit, is a product of

inner pain. It was a way for Orlando to process his emotions, and release his tension back into the world.

This form of aesthetic pursuit as imaginative escape follows him into his change of gender:

> What has praise and fame to do with poetry? What has seven editions (the book had already gone into no less) got to do with the value of it? Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice? So that all this chatter and praise and blame and meeting people who admired one and meeting people who did not admire one was as ill suited as could be to the thing itself--a voice answering a voice. (Woolf 232)

Previously, Orlando had felt as if he did not fully integrate into society. At this point in the novel (the final chapter), she has already changed genders and experienced society's scepticism and disapproval, making poetry a much more impertinent form of escape. The idea of poetry being a "secret transaction", in particular, stands out; it indicates that writing poetry is a type of innate negotiation. This transaction works two ways – for her benefit, she finds escape and relief from her pain, and in return, she offers her poetry for the people to read and relate to (and earn money from, when one thinks of agents, publishers, editors, etc.). It can also be seen as a transaction happening innately, in the sense that she exchanges her pain for relief in aesthetic pursuit. The powerful poetic image of a "voice answering a voice" has the same reciprocal connotation to the transaction, and can be considered in two ways. It is a personal dialogue, so this could be her innate deep, probing questions about identity and expression being answered through her own poetry, or it could be the crying out of other marginalised groups, looking for someone to understand their pain, and Orlando offering this poetry to them as the answering voice. By writing poetry, she creates a space where all societal drama, expectations, and condemnations fade away. The discomfort and disdain that society shows her after her gender change could temporarily fade through her poetic self-expression. Interestingly, the fact that she is contributing poetry to the world is a double-edged sword. Her poetry speaks to those who can relate to her feelings and is helpful to those with alternative lifestyles.

Publishing poetry is in itself an act of contribution to society – the very same society that rejects her and disallows her the agency to choose chrononormativity; one has to consider the need to be accepted by society is incredibly strong, as it can dictate one's general happiness. Even though society may reject Orlando due to her queerness, her poetic creations contribute to that same society. Orlando offers this poetry anyway, despite societal rejection,

because she still desperately wants to engage with society, regardless of the limitations on individuality presented by that society. Her uncomfortable relationship with society causes her to question other, essential parts of her identity:

> She began to think, was Nature beautiful or cruel; and then she asked herself what this beauty was; whether it was in things themselves, or only in herself; so she went on to the nature of reality, which led her to truth, which in its turn led to Love, Friendship, Poetry (as in the days on the high mound at home); which meditations, since she could impart no word of them, made her long, as she had never longed before, for pen and ink. 'Oh! if only I could write!' she cried (for she had the odd conceit of those who write that words written are shared). She had no ink; and but little paper. But she made ink from berries and wine; and finding a few margins and blank spaces in the manuscript of 'The Oak Tree', managed by writing a kind of shorthand, to describe the scenery in a long, blank verse poem, and to carry on a dialogue with herself about this Beauty and Truth concisely enough. This kept her extremely happy for hours on end. But the gipsies became suspicious. (Woolf 101)

After society's scepticism, Orlando goes on a journey of self-discovery that is quite tainted – it can be seen as an exploration of individuality, but it is also the result of the immense doubt she feels as a result of a chrononormative society's expectations. The contrasts between the beauty and cruelty of nature are illuminated, which urges her to try and understand the essence of beauty itself. This eventually extends to trying to understand reality – what is the truth, and what are falsities? To expand: because Orlando's gender identity is so questionable to society, she questions what else could be falsehoods. This is impactful because it shows exactly how influential societal conventions can be – to the point where they can influence the way one thinks about the rest of the world, and one's own unrelated opinions on material and immaterial things. During these meditations, Orlando longs to write poetry – on the surface, this is a way to express her journey. However, it also indicates how overwhelmed she is at questioning the concepts around her that she feels the unstoppable need to write poetry as a form of imaginative escape. Her urgent exclamation, "Oh! if only I could write!" shows her desperation to turn her feelings into words on a page in hopes that the act of writing could bring her some truth, and a refuge. Even though she has no empty pages or a pen, she is simply so desperate to escape her emotions that she finds a way to write anyway – ink from berries and wine, and the blank spaces in the margins of her manuscript. As with all aesthetic escapes, Orlando's newfound happiness did not last long at all, as seen in "This kept her extremely happy for hours on end. But the gipsies became suspicious,". Even though her

happiness is fleeting, she still finds it fulfilling. Unfortunately, this moment is soon interrupted by suspicious gipsies. The gipsies act as a symbol of her marginalization in society as a whole, a constant reminder that she will never truly feel accepted. Even though they *do* actually accept her, they are a small group in comparison to a larger society; this interruption is similar to the earlier poignant notion in the novel when it was stated that the man who robs one of dreams, robs one of life.

Orlando is under so much pressure from society to adhere to chrononormativity that she eventually capitulates, and decides to attempt to find a man to marry. In the process, she meets Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, with whom she is quite taken. In him, she finds the feminine qualities she longed for in a partner. Interestingly, her partner works away at sea for long periods of time, and Orlando does not seem particularly bothered by this. Orlando's intense emotional connection to women, which she expressed earlier in the novel, seems to be a stark contrast with her recent heterosexual marriage. She is settling for a life that she did not initially crave, as even though he has feminine qualities, he cannot fully offer the same strong connection she feels with women. This choice rings with the concept of a means to survival, in the sense that Orlando adapts to chrononormative society and its expectations in order to become a part of it. Even though this is Woolf's imagined, idealistic world – a fictional world of feminine energy, queer love, and no bounds on gender and time - her character still bows under societal pressure and marries a man by the end of the novel. Interestingly, even though this was a conscious choice Orlando made, it does not mean she necessarily had agency in choosing chrononormativity – actions made out of survival do not reflect true agency. Although it is clear that she feels affection for him, it is hard to compare this to her earlier feelings of devotion toward women. The parallel between Orlando's situation and Woolf's personal life is incredibly clear here, as Woolf indirectly admits, even in her fantasy realm, that society's expectations can often take preference over individuality.

Ultimately, the aesthetic pursuits in Wilde and Woolf's novels cannot be read as a digression from the plot; they act as a method of survival for the characters. Without aesthetic pursuits such as painting and writing, these characters would suffer greatly, and the non-chrononormative groups they represent could disappear – this could be a physical and/or emotional detachment. Art is necessary for healing, and much of the plot of these novels would simply cease to exist if the characters did not have an outlet for their emotions. With aestheticism as a form of escape in the context, the characters (particularly queer ones) still experience time in a completely different way than those adhering to chrononormativity.

Chapter 4: The Experience of Time, Queer Temporalities, and Redefining Chrononormativity

For this chapter, I refer back to Elizabeth Freeman's definition of chrononormativity in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) as the organisation of human lives towards maximum productivity following the major milestones of the heteronormative life, including but not limited to education, joining the workforce, marriage and parenthood. This organisation of life towards maximum productivity results in a linear experience of time by all members of society who are allowed chrononormativity, and choose to adhere to it. This infers that queer people, and all those who do not fit into the guidelines of chrononormativity, experience time in a completely, non-linear fashion. Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) comments on the queer experience of time and space:

> Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to understanding Foucault's comment in "Friendship as a Way of Life" that "homosexuality threatens people as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex" (310). In Foucault's radical formulation, queer friendships, queer networks, and the existence of these relations in space and in relation to the use of time mark out the particularity and indeed the perceived menace of homosexual life. (1)

The section of the thesis works to show how queer people experience time differently from heteronormative society (in a non-linear fashion), and Halberstam explores the strange relationship between the experience of time for queer people and the norms dictated by chrononormativity. The idea that "queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" shows the way queer people challenge and resist the norms of conventional life; and not by choice because queer experiences are natural, and not chosen life paths. The fact that time and space develop in opposition to chrononormativity shows that, by a degree, queer experiences are still explained in chrononormative terms – as well as shaped by them – instead of described as their own valid experiences. The choice of the word "opposition" indicates that members of a chrononormative society are of the opinion that queer people actively defy

chrononormativity, whereas, in reality, their sense of time is shaped because they are not allowed the space of chrononormativity due to gender or sexual expression. The concept of "imaginative life schedules" brings attention to the fact that queer lives are not bound by the linear progression of events set out in the major milestones of life according to chrononormativity. As these queer schedules are described as "imagined", it also emphasises the way that chrononormativity does not hold a realistic space for queer experiences and timelines, hence they are imagined. By describing queerness as a result of "strange temporalities," it infers that uniquely queer experiences follow non-linear time patterns, which shall be elaborated on later. This demonstrates the idea that queer people cannot adhere to the specified progression of milestones as laid out in chrononormativity. It also expresses that these milestones are taken for granted as relatively easily achieved in chrononormative societies, which are inherently heteronormative. Instead, queer people have unique, life-shaping experiences that do not fit into the conventional understanding of time as linear and productive. Queer identities and relationships hold significance beyond simple sexual interactions (as society often relates them to sexual actions, rather than actual identities). The word "particularity" shows the unique nature of queer relationships and lives, which, as implied in this thesis, should be held in as high regard and respect as heteronormative relationships. It is followed by the phrase "perceived menace", which further emphasises society's discomfort, and feelings of personal offence to an alternative life path from chrononormativity. This phrasing offers the idea that queer lives have been (and still are) seen as a threat to chrononormative guidelines because they can change the way our societies are structured. If one is afraid to leave their home or express their sexual preferences, there will be a delay in forming romantic relationships for marriage, pursuing education and careers, and having children. This means that the queer experience of time is pushed even farther into the non-linear space, as there are precautious pauses in the progression of life. Furthermore, being imprisoned in itself can completely warp one's sense of time. The terrible conditions and psychological burden of being incarcerated create an environment where days begin to blend into one another, and the disconnection from a linear progression of time becomes deepened. There is also no doubt that homophobia is common in prisons, and queer people are in serious physical and emotional danger while incarcerated. The criminalisation of the 'promotion' of homosexuality silences all attempts to support the rights of LGBTQI+ people by allies and activists, which means that discrimination will continue to spread. Halberstam comments on the connection between a lack of futurity for queer people:

> Queer time perhaps emerges most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic. In his memoir of his lover's death from AIDS, poet Mark Doty writes: "All my life I've lived with a future which constantly diminishes but never vanishes" (Doty 1996, 4). The constantly diminishing future creates a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now, and while the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment and, as Doty explores, squeezes new possibilities out of the time at hand. (2)

This adds yet another layer to the disruption of linear time for the LGBTQI+ community, and subsequently, another reason why adhering to chrononormativity is difficult for them. In addition to isolation and hiding one's identity due to fear of society and law, the AIDS epidemic in the later stages of the Modernist period continuing to the late 1900s also changed the way queer people, especially gay men, experienced time. The idea that "horizons of possibility" were being "severely diminished" relates to how one's potential for life in the future was threatened by the epidemic; this limitation of future possibilities works in contrast to the chrononormative concept of a linear life trajectory. The sentiment from Mark Doty's memoir, "All my life I've lived with a future which constantly diminishes but never vanishes," shows how queer time is consistently diminishing due to a variety of reasons and changes the experience of time to shift to the present moment. Chrononormative milestones are governed by a linear progression of events, focusing solely on the present, the "here," and the "now" (for fear one has no future) delays this pattern further. Stating that there was (and still is, to a certain degree) an urgency for "being" suggests that queer people may value simply existing, even with an uncertain and frightful future. The metaphor "the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud" quite vividly illustrates the anxiety hanging over the LGBTQI+ community as a result of the things warping queer time, such as criminalisation, the death penalty, lack of acceptance in society, and AIDS. This idea of futurity being a core concept of chrononormativity is interesting if one considers reproduction to be one of the main functions of chrononormative relationships. Queer couples in the Victorian and Modernist periods did not get married, as it was illegal, and subsequently did not reproduce, nor adopt. With this in mind, it becomes clear that chrononormativity does not have a space for queer people, nor does it lend agency of choice to conform to it. This brings my analysis back to the concept of compulsive heterosexuality as an attempt to adhere to chrononormativity.

Previously, I noted that in the censored, widely-known version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Basil reflects internalised homophobia and compulsive heterosexuality; he represses his queer identity out of fear of rejection and in a desperate attempt to be accepted by a chrononormative society. The combination of compulsive heterosexuality and internalised homophobia contributes to the non-linear way that queer people experience time. The pressure he feels from society causes him to suppress his authentic, queer identity, much in the same way that Wilde was pressured to remove the initial, explicit expressions of queerness from the original draft of the novel. Nicholas Frankel, the editor of *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition*, comments on this:

> When Wilde's novel appeared in Lippincott's in the summer of 1890, it was subjected to a torrent of abuse in the British press, chiefly on account of its latent or not-so-latent homoeroticism. British reviewers were virtually unanimous in condemning Wilde for what one termed 'writing stuff that were better unwritten.' . . . As a consequence, Britain's largest bookseller, W. H. Smith & Son, took the unusual step of pulling the July number of Lippincott's from its railway bookstalls. (3)

The term "abuse" has quite a harsh connotation in this context; one must assume that the effort Wilde put into crafting this novel must have been extraordinary. Wilde also exhibits immense vulnerability in revealing this work to the public, as it also reflects his own homosexual tendencies. To have his novel completely and utterly abused after allowing himself to be so emotionally vulnerable and place himself at risk of imprisonment and harassment must have been quite a blow to his self-esteem, possibly even leading to his own internalised homophobia. The fact that the abuse was directed at Wilde specifically due to the queer sexual expression present indicates the prevailing chrononormative society's negative opinion of alternative lifestyles. The condemnation of Wilde's novel was "unanimous", further illustrating that he was completely alienated from society at this point, and the lack of social interaction and acceptance are further consequences of straying from chrononormativity. It is described as something "better unwritten" would have been an attack on Wilde's own form of imaginary escape through aestheticism (in his case, writing), leaving him with very few safe spaces for the expression of his true identity. What might have been a form of imaginative escape for others on a non-chrononormative path was taken off the shelves, so his readers (who would have related to his words and found comfort in them) fall deeper into despair, too. Internalised homophobia, for both Wilde and his character, Basil) creates self-loathing as one begins to feel animosity towards the queer expression that deviates from accepted norms. As a result of this, he does not enter into any romantic

relationships and isolates himself from society. The internal conflict associated with compulsive heterosexuality and internalised homophobia - as well as the need to isolate and not enter into any romantic relationships - disrupt Basil's sense of time, resulting in a non-linear experience. The repression of his true identity delays his ability to experience a productive timeline and achieve the chrononormative life milestones of romantic relationships, marriage, and parenthood. The societal pressure to fit in denies him the agency to freely choose or reject chrononormativity. Instead, most of his choices are dictated by the need to suppress his true identity and survive, reinforcing the non-linear experience of time. As he has no true agency over his own identity, his entire sense of self gets disrupted, as well. Tragically, Basil dies at the hand of his object of affection, Dorian, which becomes a symbol of the consequences of straying from chrononormativity. In a more physical sense, his time is literally disrupted prematurely, partly as a result of his internalised homo and compulsive heterosexuality.

A similar train of events occurs in *Orlando,* as the protagonist battles with feelings of guilt and shame associated with her new gender and sexual identity. After the chrononormative society voiced its opinion, Orlando deals with internalised homophobia and compulsive heterosexuality, too. When society is sceptical about her gender and sexual identity, it fuels her internalised homophobia. This internalised homophobia changes the way Orlando experiences time, particularly in the contrast between her feminine desires and the expectations of chrononormativity. Just before she meets Marmaduke, she expresses the sense that she has given up on finding happiness by exploring her queerness and is determined to find a man to marry. Then she gets engaged to Marmaduke, who is presented essentially as the ultimate compromise; he is a man engaging in a heteronormative relationship with her, and he also has feminine qualities.

> 'Are you positive you aren't a man?' he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, 'Can it be possible you're not a woman?' and then they must put it to the proof without more ado. For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter to the proof at once. (184)

The words "positive" and "possible" both have a tone of disbelief and a sense of urgency attached, but convey different connotations. Both Orlando and Marmaduke are desperate to find out if their initial assumptions of each other's genders are accurate or not. It makes the reader wonder what their intentions are in this question; are they hoping they are correct or

incorrect in their initial assumption? Interestingly enough, there is a negative connotation to Marmaduke's question, and he asks the question with anxiety. He appears to be afraid of the answer, and if Orlando were to answer that she is, in fact, a man, his reaction might have been negative in nature, too. For Orlando, there is no anxiety attached to the question whatsoever, illustrating that she would not mind if Marmaduke was a man *or* a woman. The use of the word "possible" creates a strange contrast here; it represents one of many possibilities for Orlando, with an almost indifference attached. As for Marmaduke's question, the word "positive" here certainly has more urgency than Orlando's question; he wants Orlando to be *completely* confident of her response, whereas "possible" has a more relaxed tone and less of a need to be certain. This indicates Orlando's possible desire to explore her queerness; certainly, it demonstrates her openness to a homosexual relationship, as she had previously explored and described with such intimacy and emotion. However, she realises that even though she is now in a heterosexual relationship, a man can be "as strange and subtle as a woman". This seems to be a relief to her, indicating her desire for feminine qualities in a partner. It is interesting that she uses the words "strange" and "subtle" as marking characteristics of women; it suggests that even though she is a woman now in comparison to the earlier chapters of the novel, the gender itself seems to be a mystery to her, something not easily defined. The word "subtle" used here imposes that she considers men to be of the opposite in nature: crude, loud, and obvious. When looking at the opposite meanings of 'subtle', the definitions do not carry a positive outlook, inferring that she would be slightly less pleased if Marmaduke had no feminine quality. Or, a possibility may be that in general, she would prefer to be with a woman and in a homosexual relationship. The fact that Marmaduke is a man and also demonstrates feminine qualities supposedly represent the liberations she feels from the limitations of chrononormativity, and yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, it feels hollow. Although he has feminine qualities, he is still a man, and this feels like Orlando settling in order to still get a semblance of acceptance from society. Her engagement with Marmaduke, marked by his feminine qualities, signifies a form of liberation from the constraints of compulsive heterosexuality, yet still has an echo of compulsive heterosexuality, similar to that of Basil's in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

In essence, her experience of time as a queer person is still warped, though. Orlando's life spans a few centuries; a metaphor that illustrates how queer people's lives are shaped by unique events that change the way they experience time. Orlando's warped experience of time becomes especially clear when one realises that it took her centuries to get married, a milestone that generally takes between 20-30 years to achieve in chrononormativity. With

queerness, there is a lot of uncertainty about one's identity, delays due to legal and social repercussions when one expresses this queer identity, and yet, still pressure to follow the linear path. Woolf's use of stream of consciousness as an aesthetic stylistic device further emphasises the non-linear experience of time within a queer context. As in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf outrightly rejects the concept of linear time; she constantly shifts between events from the past, present, and future with no warning, and extends Orlando's life to pass the conventional ageing process (much like Dorian does), which is in itself a rejection of chrononormativity and an expression of queer temporalities. Due to Orlando's gender change, it appears that her life is extended, possibly symbolising how the LGBTQI+ community experiences time in a warped, non-linear fashion due to the queer temporalities excluded from chrononormativity guidelines. Just as the stream of consciousness disrupts conventional storytelling, the queer experience of time is interrupted in the same way, and there is a major disconnect from linear expectations. This narrative approach pushes the idea that queer people cannot fit into chrononormative society, and are highly unlikely to ever reach its expectations due to reasons completely out of their control. By presenting Orlando's life over centuries and using a stream of consciousness, Woolf shows how difficult it is for queer people to adhere to chrononormativity, and how the concept of time becomes warped and non-linear.

Previously, I spoke of aesthetics as a form of imaginative escape from the pain associated with not being able to adhere to chrononormativity in both novels. The pursuit of aesthetic escape was vital to the plots (and vital in reality) because relief and distraction from pain are a means of survival and offer hope. Interestingly, this also plays a role in the way queer people experience time. Firstly, it is important to understand that imaginative escape stems from trauma and suffering; in this context, the suffering is a result of being unable to adhere to chrononormativity. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, trauma is seen in the painful connotation of Basil's sudden disappearance prior to the events of the novel, his unexpressed homosexuality and his complicated feelings for Dorian. Dorian's own feelings of guilt and inner conflict about his sinful ways force him to seek imaginative escape through a hedonistic lifestyle and the pursuit of immaterial luxurious pleasures. Lord Henry's dissatisfaction with the limitations of chrononormative society and his ill feelings toward his wife would be a symbol of trauma, with his imaginative escape being intellectual and philosophical discussions, as well as the pursuit of luxury. All of these imaginative escapes are, in essence, coping methods for suffering, even though they are temporary, and most queer people find imaginative escape in *something.* The interesting part is that this affects the queer experience

of time in two ways: both trauma and imaginative escapes create lapses in time. One can even refer to the personal lives of Wilde and Woolf to evidence this: both were artists in their own right, who used their work as a form of imaginative escape, and both artists experienced a warped time. For Woolf, this manifested in her depression and untimely death via suicide. For Wilde, this manifested in his incarceration, and also his untimely death.

Trauma creates a lapse in time by disrupting queer people's mental health. This disruption can be caused by discrimination, rejection from society, struggles with identity, and more. Trauma, therefore, acts as another barrier preventing queer people from adhering to a linear chrononormative existence. This can result in delays from major milestones in different ways; trauma can result in isolation, which deters queer people from meeting potential partners. Prolonged trauma can also create unhealthy coping mechanisms (such as substance abuse) and low self-esteem that makes it difficult for queer people to be in healthy relationships. Thus, we move on to the imaginative escape from trauma; these escapes, such as writing or painting, can also create lapses in time. Even though these creative expressions work as emotional outlets and offer comfort to queer people temporarily, they can also unintentionally lead to delays in achieving major life milestones. Pursuing imaginative escapes usually mean isolation from society, which further distances queer people from a conventional linear timeline. The act of losing oneself in imaginative escapes, as many artists do, can create a paradoxical lapse in time. While these activities give queer people the agency they so desperately seek to own in chrononormativity, they also delay the milestones expected by chrononormativity. Escapism can detach the LGBTQI+ community from the linear trajectory of life; from my own personal experience, every single queer person I know engages in some kind of artistic pursuit as a form of emotional outlet, myself included, and this creates lapses in time. In essence, both trauma and imaginative escapes disrupt the queer experience of time.

Another major contributing factor to the non-linear experience of time for queer people is queer temporalities. To reiterate Freeman, queer temporalities are events unique to the LGBTQI+ community which drastically affect their ability to adhere to chrononormativity, as well as their experience of time, such as "coming out, consummation, development, domesticity, family, foreplay, genealogy, identity, liberation, modernity, the progress of movements" (22). When one considers Basil's life experience, it is filled with queer temporalities (and the inability to truly experience them). He is unable to openly express his homosexuality (or 'come out') due to his fear of societal rejection, and therefore he hides his true identity. This suppression of homoerotic desire warps time for him and

delays his progression through life's milestones. As he is unable to adhere to chrononormativity and cannot form conventional relationships, his life is essentially filled with missed opportunities and delayed experience, which is a marker of queer temporalities:

> "Good God, Dorian, what a lesson! What an awful lesson!" There was no answer, but he could hear the young man sobbing at the window. "Pray, Dorian, pray," he murmured. "What is it that one was taught to say in one's boyhood? 'Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins. Wash away our iniquities.' Let us say that together. The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished." (170)

This passage, spoken after Dorian reveals the disfigured painting to Basil, illustrates Basil's personal philosophy. He begins his speech with a horrified exclamation, "Good God, Dorian, what a lesson!". This exclamation contains contradictions; on the one hand, while the phrase 'good God' is quite a common exclamation, Basil still uses the positive word "good" in relation to Dorian's punishment for his sins. On the other hand, "what a lesson!" portrays a sense of disbelief, with the unspoken thought that Dorian did not deserve the punishment he received for his sins. These two phrases together work as a contradiction, indicating Basil's mixed feelings towards the event. He has many suppressed homoerotic emotions for Dorian and clearly cares greatly for him as a friend, hence his disbelief. At the same time, he is quite disappointed with him at this point in the novel; Dorian recklessly ignores his advice throughout the entire novel and pursues a life of hedonism against Basil's wishes, concerns, and warnings. As a result, he was given a fitting punishment; Dorian caused a lot of pain in the lives of the people around him, even death in the case of Sibyl, and his punishment, too, will be the loss of his youth and beauty (his most prized values) and ultimately, his death as well. In a sense, Basil's pity and sympathy towards Dorian is also misplaced, as shortly after this, Dorian murders him in a cold rage. After this exclamation, Basil then begs Dorian to pray for his mistakes with reference to the innocence of boyhood and quotes Christian scripture as evidence for his opinions and statements. The mention of the innocence of boyhood here is interesting when taken as a comparison against my earlier mention of Dorian recalling Lord Henry describing his boyhood and youth as "rose-white", although Lord Henry's description places more value on the beauty and youthfulness aspect of boyhood, rather than the pure innocence that Basil is likening boyhood to. These spiritual statements made by Basil indicate that he thinks Dorian may be worthy of repentance and saving and his wishes for Dorian's physical, emotional, and spiritual health to be healed is honourable,

though misplaced at this moment, and further express his deep feelings towards Dorian. In its entirety, the speech he gives to Dorian reflects that Basil appears to be of the opinion that one should never yield to temptation, whether this be a healthy or unhealthy form of temptation, as it is possible to be tempted into moral acts and thought patterns. This philosophy and the spiritual lesson were ingrained in him since he was a child, as indicated by "What is it that one was taught to say in one's boyhood?". This further emphasises the fact that it was not merely mentioned or taught to Basil once or twice; it was something he was taught to "say", which infers a repetitive action, hence it is ingrained in his identity. Even though the prayer he notes is quoted as such in the scripture, the use of the word "our" in regard to temptation, sins, and iniquities illustrates Basil's dedication to his friendship with Dorian. He does not want Dorian to suffer alone, and so involves himself in his sins and the prayer for repentance. In fact, the use of the word "our" here is interesting as, throughout the entire novel, there is a major separation between the two characters. They do not spend as much time together, Dorian never takes in Basil's advice and purposefully goes against his wishes, and their homoerotic feelings are never outrightly stated or expressed. This goes to demonstrate the pureness of Basil's love, as regardless of Dorian's misdeeds and their lack of connections, he is still willing to share his pain and commence an "our", even though their relationship throughout these sinful events was essentially a 'me' and 'him' relationship. This pureness of love and care is something often reflected in LGBTQI+ relationships, and sadly, can never be publicly expressed due to the limitations of chrononormativity. At this moment, Basil is confident that Dorian can be saved, as demonstrated in "your repentance will be answered", as the word "will" contains a strong sense of determination and trust. This same confidence leads one to believe that Basil might be insisting that Dorian strays from *all* temptations, as he himself has. He notes that he worshipped Dorian "too much" and regards this as a sin needing repentance, even though this is a natural homosexual expression of love and desire. As Basil considers this important aspect of identity as sinful, it suggests that there are other natural desires and inclinations of his withheld or suppressed, pointing to the possibility of many life opportunities missed or dismissed in his quest to conform to chrononormativity – not just romantic opportunities. The average queer person might only have their first real romantic relationship a few years after a heterosexual person would, for a number of reasons: fear of rejection from society, confusion about identity, etc. As same-sex marriage was illegal in the Victorian period, this is another queer temporality missed by Basil. The inability to formalise his relationship with Dorian according to social norms forces him into a non-linear space, a stark difference from the regular heteronormative milestones of marriage and family.

The discrimination against queer relationships also results in isolation and a feeling of disconnection from society, which further contributes to the delay in achieving major life milestones. As queer people's temporalities are not validated, their experience of time strays from a linear path.

More importantly, these queer temporalities are not considered at all when defining the major milestones of life. For example, the act of coming out can be extremely frightening for a queer person; they are risking rejection, discrimination, being kicked out of their home, being assaulted and more. Alternatively, they can also receive an abundance of emotional support and validation, an increase in self-esteem, and forge stronger bonds with whomever they decide to express their identity to. It is an incredibly important moment in the coming of age of a queer person, and I would argue that it is just as important a milestone as the others stipulated by chrononormativity. When considering the milestones currently in place by chrononormativity, they are incredibly exclusionary; marriage is not possible (or legal) for many queer people, reproduction is nearly impossible physically (and adopting a child as a gay couple is incredibly difficult in many countries), and advancing in one's career is challenging with the discriminatory attitude of many interviewers. There are many more exclusionary milestones in place, with these being a few of the most 'important' milestones of chrononormative life. With this kind of significance being placed upon heteronormative milestones, queer people begin to feel inferior, as their queer temporalities do not yet have the same importance and consideration attached.

The same can be said when reading *Orlando;* there are many instances of queer temporalities in the novel that are not acknowledged by a chrononormative society, and that also result in delays in major chrononormative milestones. Orlando's gender transition is an important queer temporality in her life that ultimately defines a major part of her identity, and it does not fit into chrononormative milestones. Her transition from a man to a woman, and her experience after changing genders goes on for centuries, allowing her to experience life in a non-linear way. This gender transition also rebels against a linear timeline, as her identity grows over centuries, rather than going through standard milestones that generally relate to age (specific ages to graduate, get married, have children, etc.) The novel also explores queer intimacy and affection, which contrast with the expectations of chrononormativity. Orlando's experiences of affection and sexual relationships are private and can be seen as freeing from chrononormative limitations. Chrononormative partnerships are essentially centred around procreation; the higher goal of life in chrononormativity would be to recreate, and so the

cycle of limitations and restrictions is passed on down generations who are taught to follow the same constricting framework.

Orlando has queer temporalities, which explore sex in intimate, private ways. Orlando's cross-dressing is yet another queer temporality not recognised by chrononormativity as an important milestone. The act of cross-dressing is not just different from norms and expectations from society, it is a conscious choice to express a gender-fluid identity that breaks the boundaries of gender in society. This queer temporality shows how Orlando's experience of time is created from her own expressions of identity, instead of obeying the linear milestones of a chrononormative society. The delay in achieving major chrononormative milestones, such as marriage, that results from these queer temporalities can influence the experience of time.

As queer temporalities are not recognised by chrononormative society, they are also used as a form of resistance. Queer experiences of time, as well as uniquely queer events, are different from linear timelines and challenge conventional methods to organise time. This kind of rebellion expresses alternative paths for living, and offers a different perspective on history, as Freeman continues to elaborate:

> Queer temporalities, visible in the forms of interruption I have described above, are points of resistance to d1is temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically. (22)

These uniquely queer experiences, such as coming out or undergoing gender transitions, as well as the non-linear experiences of time, are extremely important in the LGBTQI+ community. As these experiences are not validated or recognised as milestones within the linear chrononormative timeline, they essentially become acts of resistance against society's temporal order. As they are queer "temporalities", it infers that time is multifaceted and complex for the LGBTQI+ community, and they act as moments of interruption within the linear understanding of time. These interruptions go against the norms demanded by chrononormativity and offer "other possibilities" for alternative paths beyond chrononormativity; this in itself is an act of rebellion, as proposing another path other than chrononormativity is generally met with disapproval and attempts of silencing. These alternative paths are for "past, present, and future others", which suggests that uniquely queer experiences occur throughout a queer person's life, marking them as important for LGBTQI+ communities in history, in the present, and in the future. The use of the word "others" here has a discriminatory undertone from society; the 'other' is the outsider to society, the groups

ostracised. By acknowledging and valuing these uniquely queer temporalities, queer people can craft their own life paths and identities, and chrononormativity can value their experiences rather than demanding that they conform to a limiting guideline. In this way, queer temporalities give agency back to the community; these experiences become agents of change and rebellion that empower queerness rather than refusing to acknowledge it.

Chrononormativity is designed in such a way that it only incorporates linear ways of time and events seen as normative, which are out of reach for some groups. The queer temporalities seen in both novels show how queer people experience time differently due to their identities and the restrictions forced on them by chrononormativity. Coming out, cross-dressing, gender transitions and other uniquely queer events are important milestones that are often excluded from convention, and not given much value by those outside of the LGBTQI+ community. These experiences, even though they are personal and private, also symbolise a straying from a prescribed course of life as dictated by chrononormativity. Aside from being important milestones in personal respect, this also makes them a form of rebellion against a chrononormative society that does not acknowledge their validity. The lack of agency in choosing chrononormativity is an important aspect to consider, as embracing queer temporalities becomes a way of getting control back from the society that excluded them.

Now that I have highlighted the importance of queer temporalities and uniquely queer events, the next step is attempting to find or create a guideline for society to follow that is both inclusive and productive. Chrononormativity as a concept is not inherently useless as a method to organise society; it creates a structured way for people to navigate time and get the most satisfaction out of their lives. It is helpful to add a sense of order to life; it is an effective way to predict one's progression through life through major milestones that people can work to achieve. As chrononormativity imposes a general timeline for these milestones, it makes people more comfortable in the fact that they know what their futures should look like and what goals to strive for. This is especially beneficial for those struggling to find motivation for tasks, and those feeling disconnected from others – there is a guideline of achievements to work towards. It also contributes to the success of human lives by providing values to live by and creating an environment of social connection and acceptance. When there is a shared culture like this, people generally experience the same milestones at the same time that can forge deep bonds, such as attending school together, getting married at similar ages, entering the workforce together, having children at the same time, etc. With chrononormativity, we as a society also have a record of human progress throughout history; encouraging people to

achieve milestones within specific timeframes can create advancements in many academic fields (leading to growth in the economy) and in generational success.

Unfortunately, though chrononormativity attempts to be the superior path of life, it has its disadvantages and limitations, especially when it comes to the exclusion of groups that do not fit within its guidelines and expectations. Chrononormativity reflects heteronormativity and neglects the unique milestone experiences of queer people. Adhering to chrononormativity as a member of the LGBTQI+ community is nearly impossible, as the milestone outlines are not designed to accommodate diverse sexual and gender identities. The fact that chrononormativity makes exclusions to its society denies queer people agency over their life trajectories, forcing them to adhere to a norm that cannot blend with their identities. Chrononormativity places immense pressure on people to achieve milestones within a specific linear timeline, too, which can be incredibly overwhelming. The pressure to achieve milestones by certain ages can result in the suppression of one's own desires and goals outside of this framework. This pressure also places limitations on identity and creates a lack of individuality in a society all attempting to follow the same path at the same time, without being given time to explore who they are and what they actually want in life. This especially affects queer people who might need more time to understand and accept their identities due to discrimination and feelings of shame and confusion. Queer experiences of time are unique and non-linear; the process of coming out, exploring one's identity, going through gender transitions, etc., makes adhering to that chrononormative timeline difficult. The limitations imposed by chrononormativity also extend beyond the queer community to other marginalised groups as well. People with disabilities, people of colour, those from poorer communities, and those with unconventional life choices all deal with similar difficulties in adhering to chrononormativity, and not having the agency to choose it as a viable life path. So where does that leave society?

I propose a redefining of chrononormativity with a more inclusive guideline for society to follow. By not acknowledging the non-linear and uniquely queer experiences of the LGBTQI+ communities, an exclusive environment is created that is a contrast to the core ideals of chrononormativity: shared identity through linear milestones. Chrononormativity should recognise the importance of queer-unique events, such as coming out and transitioning genders, as central milestones that cannot be placed in a linear timeline. This may be one of the few viable solutions to prevent the silencing of queer experiences, while still allowing for productivity in human life. If society recognises these events as important milestones, it can reduce the spread of disinformation and the alienating discrimination faced by the LGBTQI+

community. By redefining chrononormativity to include non-linear events, one would essentially be removing the linear timeline of a productive human life entirely. Queer people would no longer feel a sense of warped time, as non-linear events would become normative. The removal of linear timelines frees everyone, not just queer people, from the limitations on identity posed by chrononormativity, and the pressure of achieving certain milestones at certain ages. It also allows groups like the LGBTQI+ community to take back control of their own lives - as the current definition denies them agency in choosing chrononormativity as a life path - while still offering the acceptance and support that all humans crave and need for personal growth. This new definition of chrononormativity would be inherently inclusive by proposing that a single linear path to success simply does not exist, and blended diverse experiences create a stronger community that can grow in harmony. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* there is no satisfying ending in which a stronger community is created. The only closure experienced by the reader is knowing that Dorian eventually understands that he has caused the people around him pain and accepts responsibility for his sinful acts. The novel is specifically left open-ended and without closure in order to relay an important message: what might have been if the characters did not experience the limitations and restrictions of chrononormativity? If they were allowed the space and freedom to express themselves without judgment from society? As for *Orlando*, the novel concludes with a peaceful resolution, an almost direct opposite effect in comparison to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for two novels with similar themes and experiences. Orlando accepts her new identity, and faces people from her past who previously discriminated against her – these people, representing chrononormativity, finally treat her with respect and do not ostracise her for her gender change and expression thereof. This represents what a chrononormative society *could* look like with the inclusion of queer temporalities into its guidelines and milestones.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have analysed Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* within the context of chrononormativity, queer temporality, and aestheticism. My analysis navigates the essence of these novels' critique against the exclusionary framework and limited perspectives on homoeroticism in the Victorian and Modernist societies respectively whilst also, by way of exploration, unveiling the continuities of these across periods which are themselves indicative of the prevailing social prescriptions on sexuality and gender constructions. Elizabeth Freeman's theories lay the groundwork for the entire thesis, her definition and description of chrononormativity is presented as limiting towards those in the LGBTQI+ community. With futurity and reproductivity as symbols of a heteronormative temporality, the chrononormative timeline can logically only be completely followed by cisgender heterosexual men and women. Queer temporalities include a wide range of experiences unique to the LGBTQI+ community, such as homosexual life partnerships, intimate consummation, gay pride and liberation, homophobia, cross-dressing, and gender transitions. None of these aligns with chrononormative ideals and milestones, making it challenging for the LGBTQI+ community to adhere to chrononormativity. Many of these queer temporalities have a chain reaction of events that follow, cloaked in fear and shame, such as coming out as queer to one's friends and family. It is a major risk to do so, as the process involves risking rejection, discrimination, being removed from one's home and alienated by their family, assault, and more. On the other hand, sometimes these experiences have positive results – considering that society has evolved in terms of acceptance of an alternative lifestyle in the 21st century, empathetic and understanding reactions are becoming more common. These, too, are queer temporalities unique to the LGBTQI+ community, and yet they form no part of chrononormative milestones, even though it is an important coming-of-age experience.

As queer temporalities are not quite accepted or recognised by chrononormative society, they have become forms of rebellion against chrononormativity, in a sense. If one considers one of the main pillars of chrononormativity to be the passing of time in a linear fashion, then queer experiences (which are different from conventional linear timelines) are a rejection of chrononormativity and the formation of an alternative path. The creation of different alternative paths is generally seen as unappealing and uncomfortable for chrononormative society, as it represents *change,* and change can be intimidating to a structure founded on specific milestones in particular timelines. The queer temporalities seen

in both Wilde and Woolf's novels illustrate this rebellion and criticism of their respective societies, as the reader becomes aware of the different ways they are treated due to their expressions of queerness, as well as the limitations placed upon them by chrononormativity. In addition to this rebellion, it is an acknowledgement of chrononormative societies not placing value and validity into queer temporalities. In some circumstances, this is followed by powerful moments of triumph (particularly in *Orlando's* case) in spite of this.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1: The Disavowal of Chrononormativity and Use of Aestheticism in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*, Josh Mcloughlin's claims of the characters in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Woolf's *Orlando* resisting and rejecting chrononormativity is a simplification of the character's identities, expressions, and actions. It is true that in some cases, the characters disavow chrononormativity. One can take Dorian and Lord Henry from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as examples of disavowal in this context. They both make the conscious decision to reject the traditional chrononormative life milestones and decide upon an alternative lifestyle. In Lord Henry's case, he begins to practice hedonism (the pursuit of pure pleasure, regardless of the consequences and the way it affects other people's lives) and 'infects' Dorian with his narcissistic traits and ideas about life, particularly with his speech about beauty and youth as priorities. Unfortunately, this path, like many alternatives to chrononormativity, has its drawbacks. For Dorian, he loses his innocence and sense of morality, causing much pain to the people who care for him. Regardless of the damage Dorian has done to those around him, he still maintains a sense of identity and individualism, demonstrating that his digression from the chrononormative path essentially results in his regaining a sense of morality. He ultimately chooses to reject chrononormativity, and as I have argued, it is what eventually kills him in the sense that he is unable to retain the ultimate Victorian ideals: youth and beauty. As for Lord Henry, the consequences of this are not obvious at first read, besides the results of his corruption of Dorian; however, the pursuit of endless pleasure, vice and temporary highs is not fulfilling, and Lord Henry can never achieve this. Lord Henry's life essentially remains the same as it always was, with a clear lack of individuality. This illustrates how the rejection of chrononormativity does not lead to the ideal life, but neither does adhering to it.

As I have engaged with Mcloughlin's discussion and argued in Chapter 2: Disallowing Agency in Chrononormativity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; not all of the characters have the agency to disavow chrononormativity, and to assume so would be to ignore the undertones of isolation, sorrow, and limitation in the novels due to gender and sexuality expressions. In Basil's case, he enters into a state of compulsory heterosexuality

because he fears society's reaction to his obvious attraction to Dorian (as made clear by the intricate painting). Basil insists on placing his homosexual tendencies aside and externally reflects heterosexuality in order to fit into chrononormative society. This is because he does not have the choice to reject it; if he expressed his desires with transparency and chose an alternative life path, the inferment in the novel is that he would be ostracised, quite possibly assaulted, or worse. As a result of his veiled conformity, his sexual and emotional expression are restricted, along with his identity, and he isolates himself from society. The consequences of straying from chrononormativity are patent; in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it resulted in Dorian's loss of morality, the isolation and alienation of his character, and ultimately both his and Basil's deaths. This thesis has read these deleterious conclusions to their lives as underscoring that the defining guidelines of chrononormativity require further questioning and revision. A similar chain of events can be seen in Woolf's *Orlando*; the protagonist is initially allowed the opportunity to reject chrononormativity, as he has the privilege of being a cisgender heterosexual man adhering to society's conventions.

Unfortunately, this opportunity is revoked when the gender change takes place; Orlando no longer has the agency to reject chrononormativity due to their gender and expressions of sexuality. Orlando as a woman fought against the criticism and ostracism she faced and refused to be restricted by chrononormativity; she pursues a life of art, love, and pleasure, demonstrating the possibilities of what a chrononormative lifestyle could reflect if it contained queer temporalities as part of its milestones instead of the discrimination against alternative lifestyles in place. That is not to say that it was a simple path for Orlando; she struggles to adjust to her new life, particularly during the conflict of inheritance but finds relief in aesthetic pursuits such as writing. This thesis has argued that there is a parallel here between *Orlando* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as both protagonists rebel against chrononormativity and suffer as a result of it. Both novels demonstrate that there is a desire to be accepted and respected as part of a societal whole that is not being satisfied due to circumstances (mostly) out of the characters' control. The mere fact that queer people are forced to hide their true identities speaks to how restrictive chrononormative guidelines are, and how many queer individuals do not have the agency to reject these societal ideals, because the consequences would be dire, and in some cases, even fatal, as with Basil and Dorian. This generally limits queer expressions of identity and the way they experience life. These kinds of consequences are reflected in both novels and simultaneously reflected in the lived experiences of the writers themselves.

As I have shown, Wilde experienced homophobia, rejection from chrononormative society and discrimination when he was jailed with the maximum penalty for his homosexuality. While in prison, he died of meningitis, creating a parallel between the events leading to his death and the path that led to Basil's death. In parallel with *Orlando*, the fact that the novel was written as a form of affection and declaration of love from Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West speaks to the two of them forced to have a secret affair in order to avoid rejection from a chrononormative society. It also engages with the restrictions upon their relationship through a celebration *and* critique of these strictures in fictional form. Their love, both powerful and intimate, is almost romanticised in the undercurrents of the novel, especially within the context of a chrononormative society that rejects alternative lifestyles with homosexual expressions. In fact, their love became something akin to obsession, which demonstrates how the governance of queer love creates a suppressed passion that can become unhealthy, especially when the participants are aware that the relationship could come to an untimely end at any moment due to circumstances out of their control. When Woolf gave Orlando gender fluidity, she challenged the nature of chrononormativity and revealed its restrictions. Woolf and Sackville-West's letters, along with Wilde's own letter to his homosexual partner, contained feelings of alienation, sorrow, and loneliness. In Wilde's case, maintaining the presumption of heterosexual life, just like Basil, had taken its toll on his mental, emotional, and physical life. This was a shared pain stemming from the limitations placed on their identities by chrononormativity. In both the novels and the lives of the writers, the pursuit of aestheticism was used as a means of imaginary escape from these restrictions and limitations.

This thesis has also engaged with Mcloughlin's central premise that the use of aestheticism in both novels is useless and digressive. I engaged with this claim in Chapter 3: Aestheticism as an Escape in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*. I argued that both of the novels' protagonists turn to aesthetics when they are disallowed chrononormativity or are forced to adhere to it in order to survive) as a form of imaginative escape, rather than a digression from the plot. This is because they are not offered a safe alternative space to express their true identities. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* queer temporality is pointed to through aesthetics like reading, writing, painting, materialistic belongings and luxurious excursions. Lord Henry and Dorian's pursuit of aesthetic and temporary pleasures, as well as Dorian's obsession with youth, are all forms of imaginative escape from the limitations of chrononormativity. Dorian's focus on appearance and the painting is his supernatural way of rejecting the natural ageing process, and this separates him from the conventions of growing

older. This in itself is a rejection of the linear trajectory of chrononormativity. Basil similarly distracts himself with painting, as he can escape into a safe space to express his identity without ostracism and alienation. As for *Orlando,* Woolf's use of stream of consciousness reflects a similar changing of self and sense of time as Dorian's rejection of the natural ageing process. In fact, it can be said that both Woolf and Wilde used writing and other art forms as their own imaginative escape from the limitations and restrictions of chrononormativity. Orlando as a character is under immense pressure from a chrononormative society to adhere to its conventions and traditions and escapes into the world of writing as a form of distraction. I also made the argument that although she aligns with chrononormativity when she marries a man, decisions made out of a need to survive do not necessarily reflect true agency. Even though it is clear that she feels affection for him, it is hardly comparable to her earlier descriptions of the intimacy she feels with a woman, especially as she expresses joy when she discovers his feminine qualities.

Ultimately, Wilde and Woolf's novels' reflection of aesthetic pursuits cannot be defined as a digression from the plot, because they are a form of survival for the protagonists. They are not useless; if there were no aesthetic pursuits in these novels, such as writing, painting, and reading, the characters would be in a state of constant torment, with no safe, agentive space to escape from the chains of chrononormativity and the limitations it places on their identities. In fact, I go so far as to argue that without them, the non-chrononormative groups they represent could entirely disappear. This could be either an emotional or physical detachment from life (possibly even the eradication of certain groups) and it would be amiss to dismiss the importance of aestheticism as a form of imaginative escape in the novels, as well as in real life. Even with these artistic pursuits, the characters (and the people following alternative lifestyles) *still* do not experience time in a linear fashion, as these activities can also distort the characters' experience of time.

Chapter 4: The Experience of Time, Queer Temporalities, and Redefining Chrononormativity argues that queer temporalities are a central contributing factor to the non-linear experience of time. If one considers the importance of queer temporalities as events and experiences completely unique, as well as the significance of their contribution to shaping their core identities, then the exclusion of these experiences from chrononormative milestones can greatly impact their experience of life and ability to adhere to chrononormativity. Queer people do in fact resist the norms of conventional, chrononormative life; however, this is not quite a decision, but rather these actions are taken as a form of survival and an unconventional attempt at alternative modes of agency. Their

sense of time is distorted because they are not given agency in chrononormativity, which places them in the position of being unable to accomplish the chrononormative milestones due to gender or sexual expression. In fact, chrononormativity does not just refuse to validate queer temporalities, it refers to them as imagined, and at times, a menace to society. This creates the growing stigma of understanding queer expressions to be a threat to the chrononormative way of life. Besides the lack of queer temporalities in the chrononormative structure, there are many other aspects contributing to the non-linear timeline experienced by queer people. For example, many countries still have laws in place forbidding gay marriage and expression, with some holding the threat of imprisonment or even death for expressing their sexualities, forcing a sense of fear and need to isolate in the LGBTQI+ community. This isolation can delay the progression of life milestones. In the Victorian and Modernist periods, queer partners did not get married, as it was largely illegal, and they certainly did not reproduce. With these arguments and discussions in mind, it is evident that chrononormativity cannot hold a safe space for queer people with its current guidelines, restrictions, and milestones, nor does it give queer people the agency to reject it.

In Chapter 2: Disallowing Agency in Chrononormativity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*, I noted that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Basil exhibits internalised homophobia and compulsive heterosexuality. For example, Basil's life has many queer temporalities, such as his inability to come out due to fear of the chrononormative society rejecting him. He suppresses his desires instead, and this delays his progress through life's milestones. As he has no agency in chrononormativity, he cannot have a conventional relationship, and his life is filled with delayed experiences or missed opportunities. This also contributes to the queer experience of non-linear time, and it reflects a lack of agency over one's own identity. His experience is similar to that of Orlando's, as she struggles with internalised homophobia and compulsive heterosexuality, along with feelings of shame due to her new queer identity. By presenting Orlando's life over centuries and using a stream of consciousness, Woolf shows how difficult it is for queer people to adhere to chrononormativity, and how the concept of time becomes warped and non-linear. Interestingly, it becomes clear that both trauma and imaginative escape through aesthetic pursuit can distort a queer individual's sense of time. Taking the authors as an example of the experience of non-linear time, Wilde was imprisoned due to his homosexuality, and incarceration causes a warped sense of time in strange routines. Woolf was extremely depressed due to the constraints and limitations of chrononormativity and sadly committed suicide. This kind of depressive trauma disrupted her mental health, and thus her experience

of time, too, as those who are depressed often do not experience time in the same way as those who are mentally healthy.

The same applies to *Orlando,* as she also experiences a major delay in achieving life's milestones. In fact, it takes her hundreds of years to marry. She experiences many queer temporalities, such as gender change, cross-dressing, coming out, homophobia, etc., none of which are recognized by chrononormativity as important milestone events and experiences. In essence, her gender transition is one of the core events that shape her entire identity; with chrononormativity excluding this and not offering it validation, she struggles to define her own identity. She also experiences a warped sense of time quite literally, as her sexual and gender expression journey continues for centuries, in opposition to chrononormativity's linear mode of time. Another queer temporality experienced by Orlando is the intimacy of a sexual act that is not for the purpose of recreation. This rejection of chrononormative demands indicates that queer people experience and express intimacy in a completely different way than heteronormative people do, and also makes a contribution to the experience of non-linear time.

At the conclusion of Chapter 4: The Experience of Time, Queer Temporalities, and Redefining Chrononormativity, one is left with an essential question: where do we go from here? Chrononormativity is the backbone of our society and is not a completely useless organizational method. It essentially builds a helpful structure to life for people to follow and find some order and peace in the chaos of living. It is also a way for people to chart the future and what will transpire next in their journey to a certain degree. Especially as there is a specific timeline with ages attached to chrononormativity's milestones, it helps make people feel more at ease with the progression of their lives. With that being said, it can also cause anxiety for those not reaching specific milestones at the predicted ages, and so it contradicts itself. At the same time, such specific milestones create a set of values for people to live by and an enjoyable social landscape in which people can relate to each other, achieve the same milestones at the same time, and progress together as a stronger community. Additionally, it builds a record of human progress, as the motivation it inspires causes people to make significant contributions to history, particularly in academic fields and the growth of the economy. Chrononormativity as the general standard of living does not achieve its purpose to become the superior path of life. Its exclusionary elements, limitations on gender and sexuality, and the restrictions it places on groups which are othered make it an almost unattainable goal for some, and a source of anxiety for others. The milestones and guidelines are not defined in a way to accommodate these groups, nor provide them a safe space to rebel

against them. Referring back to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Orlando*, both novels leave chrononormative society important considerations: In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there is a major lack of chrononormativity, and those who adhered to it did so out of necessity – one is left with the realization that the events of the novel could have transpired in a much more helpful and positive way if the characters did not experience the limitations and restrictions of chrononormativity, and received no judgment for their identities. In *Orlando*, one feels peaceful closure upon finishing the last chapter, as Orlando no longer feels shame for her identity, and those who ostracised her now respect her, indicating a society free from the constraints of chrononormativity. This non-chrononormative world is much more peaceful but does not necessarily mean that chrononormativity cannot play a role in the progression of society.

Hence, this brings me to my recommendation, emerging from my exploration of these novels, of a redefined chrononormativity. It is possible for society to live a structured life with important milestones to aspire to, but this is still achievable with a more inclusive environment. When chrononormativity does not validate queer temporalities, exclusion occurs, which should be a contrast to the core ideals of the concept, as chrononormativity is largely about social interaction. If chrononormativity acknowledged the importance of queer temporalities and placed these experiences within the standard timeline of major life milestones, the LGBTQI+ community could adhere to its guidelines. It would also prevent the silencing of queer experiences, while simultaneously promoting human productivity. A redefined chrononormativity would essentially become non-linear, as it includes non-linear queer temporalities. I believe this to be the ideal solution, as it also removes the anxiety faced by those unable to reach certain milestones by certain ages (including heteronormative people). Milestones would not *solely* be about productivity, but rather a genuine connection to natural experiences and the people in the society who can relate to them. Non-linear events could become normative, and linear events could become irregular. This allows complete agency for queer individuals to choose or reject chrononormativity, offering more control in their lives and creating a stronger, healthier community overall. A singular linear path would not exist; every individual is made up of diverse personality traits, and each milestone would reflect this.

I recognise that while my proposition is useful and interesting as a theory, it would be difficult to implement in reality. Administering an inclusive ideology such as my proposal across an entire international society would be challenging, to say the least. However, change takes time; if one considers the progression of society now in comparison to the Victorian

and Modernist periods, the difference is colossal. With the rise of the digital age and information being spread much faster than ever before, our society is quickly becoming more educated and more aligned with inclusivity, so I believe that this thesis will contribute to the 21st-century literature landscape in important ways. Many scholars have engaged with these novels and the queer undertones they hold, but this thesis works to question the entire framework of our society and the milestones we build our lives on; it is engaged with, critiqued, and questioned across periods and texts. In this sense, it could be the catalyst upon which many literary scholars are inspired to question other exclusionary frameworks and make widespread change through examination and analysis of other texts. The scope of articles published thereafter in order to educate and spread awareness would make a large contribution to the rise of the digital age and the optimized form of educating society I mentioned. As an LGBTQI+ member myself, I too have a form of imaginative escape through the writing of poetry, and so I conclude this thesis with a line from one of my own poems: "With great rage, comes great change."

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