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**Being at the Centre of a Scandal – Exploring the Complexities of the Sexual
Deviant**

**Queer Counterspaces and their Effect on Character Development and Self-Actualisation in
The Picture of Dorian Gray and *Giovanni's Room***

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Abstract

This thesis addresses literary representations of queerness in public and private places. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's 1998 essay 'Sex in Public' addresses the public's association with sexuality and the idea of counterpublics. This thesis aims to use this idea of counterpublics in association with queer spacing, Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias, and the concept of the deviant. I specifically aim to use these concepts in a comparative analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, to explore the queer counterspaces in both novels and their effect on both the protagonists and other characters. The spaces in the novels affect different characters in different ways, both positively and negatively, and the way in which the different characters use the spaces to self-actualise, whether consciously or unconsciously, is interesting to look at; especially if we consider that all of the characters possess a certain amount of fear of being labelled as deviants and being at the centre of a scandal. The main aim of this thesis is to highlight the importance of queer spacing in these pieces of literature and bring attention to this larger discussion in queer theory, through the exploration of queer identity made by the means of the queer spaces in novels.

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Introduction

*In another life
I'll reach for her hand
and no one will wonder
if we're friends or something more
In another life
I'll kiss her in the streets
to our favourite song
and no one will look at us
like we're doing something wrong*

– Courtney Peppernell (54)

The concept of space is something easily taken for granted – it is one of those things which is just *there*; and this is especially true for heterosexual people. No heterosexual person would question their right to be in a place, or question whether they belong, based on their sexuality. The same cannot be said for queer people. As Courtney Peppernell so aptly describes in her poem above, queer people often do not feel entitled to take up space, to exist in the same space which is so natural for heterosexual people. Queer people do not exist so easily in the public; there is always a question of whether someone will question their right to exist in said space. The fear that someone will look at a queer couple and assume a lot about their relationship and pass judgement on them, or question whether they should be allowed to exist in the same space as ‘normal people’, that is to say, heterosexual people, due to their sexuality, is something which heterosexual people will likely never have to experience.

Peppernell writes that the reality she imagines, the reality where queer people would feel safe and included in society, could perhaps happen ‘[i]n another life’ – which should make everyone’s heart break, because the reality is that a lot of people do not feel safe or included by society at large *because* of their sexual orientation; the best a queer person can hope for is that things could be different in another life. And the idea that someone should not belong in a space based on their sexuality, on the fact that their sexuality deviates from the heteronormative society, is something I find absolutely absurd; but it is nonetheless important to discuss and take issues with because that is the reality. I aim to do so in this thesis by doing a comparative analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) by Oscar Wilde and *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) by James Baldwin through the concepts of ‘queer space’, the ‘deviant’, and ‘heterotopias’ – because if any two writers believed in ‘another life’ where queerness would

be accepted and be a natural part of society, it would almost undoubtedly be Wilde and Baldwin.

In Chapter 1 I will present my theoretical background, the concept of the deviant, queer spacing in general, and heterotopias. In the deviant section I will discuss how the deviant came to be and how the term soon morphed into representing the homosexual specifically. The term deviant, in this thesis, will therefore largely be used in the context of the sexual deviant, which is to say queer people, because that is most relevant for my thesis, and, in more modern times, this constitutes the main use of the term at large. The deviant was seen as a corrupting force on society, an immoral influence on the ‘proper’ heteronormative society. The heteronormative society then exercised control over the deviant population by weaponizing the concept itself and lay heavy social sanctions on people who were unfortunate enough to be labelled as deviants – and this control aspect is why it is imperative to have this discussion of queer spaces in relation to deviants in the first place; the labelling of deviants is something which has happened a lot in the past, and still happens today.

In the next section of the chapter, I will tread more into the concept of space itself, and, more specifically, the notion of queer space. Berlant and Warner have introduced the concept of ‘queer counterpublics’, suggesting that society is made up of different public spheres, where the queer counterpublic lays claim to a part of it. As opposed to the act of labelling individuals as deviants, the creation of queer counterpublics was in response to societal sanctions laid by the heteronormative public. Since societal control is a big deal for the hegemonic society, which we see in, for instance the privatisation of intimacies, the idea of queer counterspaces was created to keep that control at bay – to make society at large more including of all societal groups.

The last section of Chapter 1 discusses Foucault’s notion of heterotopias. Foucault set out to connect metaphorical and material senses of the space concept, and therefore created the heterotopia concept to connect the two. He states that all societies on earth have some sort of heterotopia connected to them, and that these spaces are places of an alternative ordering of society. Foucault gives many characteristics to describe heterotopias, but I am most interested in deviation heterotopias, which are places where deviant people may gather, not unlike queer spaces, and hypercomplex spaces, which are places which contain multiple spaces at the same time, like theatres. I argue that heterotopias, largely, are forms of queer space.

In Chapter 2 I will be discussing the critical receptions of both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Giovanni’s Room*. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has largely been read by critics as a queer novel with traits heavily influenced by Aestheticism. It was viewed as an immoral

book, which largely, on the assumed behalf of Wilde, aimed to corrupt the Victorian way of life and the all-too naïve middle class. Some critics also focused on the fact that a lot of the characters in the novel were queer, and that these characters desperately wanted to conceal that fact – because of the fear of scandal and being labelled as a deviant. *Giovanni's Room* has, on the other hand, been read through the race lens, as a way to connect race and sexuality. This connection was also read as a way to discuss masculinity, and then especially black masculinity, and its connection to queer identity. The novel, lastly, has also been read with the concept of 'the closet' in mind, as a way in which heteronormative society has laid control over the queer individual, but also as a way for the queer person to hide away their sexuality – to avoid scandal and being labelled as a deviant.

Chapter 3 aims to analyse *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with the concepts from Chapter 1 in mind. I will take a look at different queer spaces, namely Basil's garden, Sybil's theatre, the opium dens at the docks, and the picture of Dorian Gray itself. I use the concepts from Chapter 1 as a way to look at the queer spaces and heterotopias, but also to look at how the different spaces affect the different characters in different ways. It is interesting to look at these spaces in particular because the novel is set in the Victorian era, when being labelled as a deviant would receive not only societal sanctions but also often legal sanctions. The morality of being a deviant is also something which I will touch upon, and what that means for the queer spaces in particular.

Chapter 4 is set up in a similar way to Chapter 3, but is instead dedicated to *Giovanni's Room*. Instead of looking at how queer spaces affect a lot of different characters, I will look at how the spaces affect David specifically. David goes through a lot of character development throughout the novel, and this is largely because of the queer spaces he spends time in. I will take a look at Giovanni's room itself, Guillaume's bar, the house in the south of France, and the mirror image David spends a lot of time looking at in the present, and I will of course be utilising the concepts from Chapter 1 throughout this chapter as well. The thing that is most interesting in this chapter is the fact that the deviation heterotopia in this novel, Guillaume's bar, is much more obvious than its counterpart in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the opium dens at the docks, and the fact that David is much more susceptible to the shame often associated with being queer than Dorian is. The self-discovery theme of the novel is also very interesting to look at in regard to queer spaces and queer identity.

This thesis aims to take a look at the issues mentioned above, of queer spacing in regard to the deviant concept, by taking a comparative look at *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Giovanni's Room*. At first glance these novels are widely different: one of them was

written by a flamboyant Irishman, condemned for ‘gross indecency’ during the nineteenth century, while the other was written by an openly queer African American civil rights activist during the twentieth century. But for all sakes and purposes, both novels have a lot of the same themes, such as a feeling of otherness, the inner turmoil accompanying the hiding of your sexuality, and the crippling fear of a possible scandal, as well as similar queer spaces in both novels, for instance deviation heterotopias, self-created utopias, utopian mirrors, and hypercomplex spaces, not to mention queer spaces in general. The fact that these two novels are very different on the surface, but still have a lot in common, is why it is important to look at them together. The novels are separated by time and space, themes, and critical acclaim, but are still similar in ways that matter – in common themes and the queer spaces in the novels; they show that queer culture and queer spaces always have had a place in the very fabric of human society, despite the hegemonic society’s desire to weed them out.

Queer spaces have always, and will always, be a part of society, whether explicitly or implicitly. For a lot of history, queer spaces were shrouded in shame, a need to hide, and societal scandal, not to mention the possible legal sanctions of being queer; and I wish to emphasise these places in these particular novels because the spaces shape and help the characters develop, for better or for worse – whether that is to accept the fact that they are queer, or do anything to remain ignorant of that fact. As I have already stated, both novels contain many different queer counterspaces, and since the characters claim these counterspaces, in one way or another, the claiming itself is a means toward self-actualisation. When Dorian enters Basil’s garden, his journey towards a deviant lifestyle begins, just as it does when David enters Guillaume’s bar and first lays eyes on Giovanni. Both journeys are somewhat interrupted by other forms of queer counterspaces, like Sybil’s theatre and Giovanni’s room, but not abandoned all together – and later spaces continue to shape both protagonists, in positive and negative lights. While Dorian somewhat accepts his new deviant lifestyle by, for instance, spending time in opium dens and ‘corrupting’ his friends, David proves more hesitant and afraid of the sanctions often administered to those labelled deviants. Both protagonists experience character development, in both positive and negative directions, by claiming or refusing to claim the counterspaces they occupy. The characters are able to look at their own deviant ways, their own queer ways, and act accordingly. Dorian accepts his new lifestyle after Sybil’s death and embraces the fact that he is now considered immoral, but he still proves to be afraid of the social and legal sanctions which would follow – he also tries to change his ways by the end of the novel, which has deadly results for him, and insignificant results for society at large. David, on the other hand, proves hesitant to embrace his new life

with his male lover, even though there can be no doubt about his own deviance. He struggles back and forth with his sexuality, and this indecision leads to the self-contemplation and struggle with identity we see in the present-tense David – and also sets Giovanni on the road to fatality. The counterspaces in both novels provide areas where both the protagonists and other characters in the novels undergo character development, but ultimately do no change the world, as it were. The world the characters find themselves in is just like the world Peppernell describes: a world where queer people are not instinctively accepted, even though they obviously should be.

1 Chapter 1: Theoretical Background

1.1 The Deviant and the Pervert

In this chapter, I will be surveying different theoretical concepts and connect queerness with the notion of space by looking at the concept of the deviant alongside queer counterspace and heterotopias. I will first look at the concept of the deviant specifically, since the word deviant is often connected to queerness in general, especially in the time periods my chosen novels were written in, before moving on to queer space in general and lastly heterotopias. The concept of the deviant itself will also make it clear why society needs to establish and cultivate alternative notions of space: one size does not fit all.

The idea of the deviant or the pervert, which essentially, and for the purposes of this thesis, inhabit the same meaning, has always been prevalent in human society. Etymologically the word 'pervert' derives from the Latin *pervertere*, where one meaning is 'to cause to deviate'. The deviation here is from societal expectations. During the nineteenth century, the word took on the sexualised meaning of 'deviating from normative sexual practices' (Schaffner 3). Thomas Aquinas was one of the first and most influential philosophers who discussed the concept of 'perversions', during the thirteenth century, and then, naturally, mostly from a religious point of view. He defined any sexual act which cannot end in procreation as an 'unnatural vice', as a perversion. This encompasses everything from self-abuse, bestiality, sodomy (same-sex intercourse), and sexual deviations from normative sexual practises (which is to say, vaginal intercourse) such as oral or anal sex (33). The deviant (not exclusively the sexual deviant, even though this is the type of deviant I explicitly explore throughout this thesis) may be born a deviant, like someone born with an unusual appearance or some physical or mental disability, or they may be mentored into the deviant lifestyle (Bryant 179), as Lord Henry 'tutors' Dorian, and Jacques tries to influence David. Further down the road, about halfway through the nineteenth century, sexual deviance, or perversion, became a topic of great discussion, not only by theological, judicial, and philosophical disciplines, but also by physicians and psychiatrists. Sexual deviance had gone from being a discussion about the notions of right and wrong, of what can be called correct and incorrect or moral and immoral societal behaviour, to the question of whether a particular sexual deviation, *a particular pervasion*, was a crime 'against nature'; or, more importantly for this thesis, a crime against society (Schaffner 3-4).

Homosexuality soon became one of the main perversions for sexology scholars like Krafft-Ebing and Freud to study during the nineteenth century, alongside sadism, masochism, fetishism, voyeurism, and exhibitionism. These perversions are linked directly to topics such as gender roles, power dynamics in relationships (and outside of them, as well), and, most importantly for this thesis, the increased division between private and public spaces, as I will discuss in the next subsection. A growing urbanisation, alongside the emergence of several subcultures (such as queer groupings or cultures), were soon perceived as actively threatening the family institution and heteronormative values, so of course this concept of the deviant and the pervert needed to be studied, controlled, and, hopefully, stopped (11). The pervert was seen as a corrupting force, who actively endangered the community and contaminated the collective body of society, much like ‘immoral books’ such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or *Giovanni’s Room*. Perverts were seen as contaminating the gene pool of humankind – which is ironic since a lot of queer couples cannot produce biological children themselves – and this inability to reproduce were perceived as ultimately leading to the destruction of humanity (12). First among these perversions soon became homosexuality, largely because of Oscar Wilde’s trials in 1895, which brought this fear to light. The homosexual became the figure of moral corruption (13), and was punished thereafter. Victorian era legislation actually created multiple laws which targeted queer people, and effectively created the concept of the deviant, especially in the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Vagrancy Act of 1898, which punished the practices of ‘gross indecency’ between men in private and in public, and solicitation of immoral purposes, respectively. Victorian law marked homosexuality as an unacceptable lifestyle, as a corrupting force of society, and effectively as a ‘crime against nature’. Queer people were thus forced to hide their true nature from society, a society which tried to protect the heteronormative and patriarchal status quo, and to silence themselves, under threat of societal ruination and severe legislative punishment (Sanna 23-24). This attitude towards queer people would continue to exist for decades to come, all the way from Wilde’s time to beyond Baldwin’s.

The figure of the deviant in literature served a double role. On the one hand, literature was believed to expose the inner workings of the author; it was a way in which one could analyse the perverse imagination of the author, and on the other hand, literature was feared and vilified as the origin of perverting society. The issue, then, proved to be whether literary or scientific language could be the cause of sexual behaviours, fantasies, and identities (Schnaffer 256). Michel Foucault argues, in *The History of Sexuality*, that identities are formed through behaviours, that linguistic and institutional economies of power, which

behaviours are shaped by, directly influence one's identity (which obviously also includes sexual identity). Butler, on the other hand, argues that desire is always linguistically dependent, and that identity, in and of itself, is performative – that identity (and especially gender identity) does not come from some inner force, but is shaped by societal expectations (Schnaffer 256-57). The answer to this particular query of whether literary language could shape sexual behaviour is, nonetheless, not easy to find, and I will not attempt to do so here. What I will say is that it is certain that the sexual desire portrayed in a novel can, to a certain degree, be an expression of the author's own imagination and/or sexual preference, but literature is not just a way in which the author may live through their imagination; it is art made to serve some purpose, whether that purpose be to aesthetically please, as Wilde fought for, or to make the world a more understanding place, as Baldwin believed. Moreover, the writing of desire is also a performative act, a 'linguistic reification of desire' (Schnaffer 259). Literature can thus serve the role of giving us a window into 'the soul of the author', as it were, but it is also a form of self-expression which may not reflect reality thoroughly or accurately, and I am reluctant to discuss this issue further in this thesis.

The identity of the deviant is created through a combination of both self-perception and the perception of others – and if one's deviance becomes public knowledge, negative social reactions and sanctions may ensue. One's identity is often closely connected to one's connection to a particular group and the feeling of belonging. If a person then becomes known as a deviant, they may be excluded from their previous group, whether that be a cultural group, subculture, or society as a whole, and be reduced to someone undesirable and harmful to the community. Some deviants often, then, choose to hide their deviant actions from the public arena to avoid public scrutiny, becoming so-called 'secret deviants' (or 'silent homosexuals' as Antonia Sanna calls them) (Bradley-Engen 190-91). The negative reactions and sanctions following the deviant (which can be formal, such as judicial sanctions, or informal, such as shunning or social exclusion) are a way for society to control individuals. The deviant could feel desperate to re-join the group that has now ostracised them, which would make them amend their behaviour to something more socially acceptable (and therefore let themselves be controlled), or they could leave the former group and join a group of fellow deviants (avoiding social control). Either way, if a person is labelled as a deviant, that label becomes an almost permanent part of their identity, whether they want it to or not (191), which is a situation both Dorian and David fear. Managing the idea of being labelled as a deviant could prove difficult. Erving Goffman outlines three techniques which are often used. The first one is to avoid all sorts of public interactions, both positive and negative: so-

called *passing*. The second one is called *covering*, which is the act of minimising or trying to normalise the stigma surrounding their deviant behaviour, by for example avoiding talking about it, but not actively acknowledging the stigma. The last one is to *cope*, by utilising levity, sarcasm, or avoidance to manage the situation (192).

As we have seen, the deviant is an important part of queer literature because, first and foremost, and for the purposes of this thesis, the deviant is a queer person. A deviant is someone who does not belong in heteronormative society, a person who is ostracised from the group they previously belonged in – which is why the deviant as a figure is central in the discussion of queer space. The deviant may want to re-join the heteronormative society, or they can choose to enter another part of society, the queer counterspace. As I already stated, hegemonic heteronormative society wants to exercise control over as much of the public as it is able to, and as many people as it is able to – which is the case for both Dorian and David, who try to conform to the heteronormative society as best as they can, despite both being deviants. I want to place both of them in different queer counterspaces, or heterotopias, which other deviants also frequent, in the *Giovanni's Room* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* chapters later in the thesis, but I will first provide an examination of queer counterspace and heterotopias.

1.2 Private and Public Sexuality: (Queer) Counterpublics and (Queer) Counterintimacies

Space is, and has been for several millennia, an immensely interesting concept to discuss. The ancient Greeks believed that there existed two notions of space, *chora* and *topos* (Rämö 309). The word *chora* started off as meaning something along the lines of ‘definite space’, but was later changed, by Plato, to describe a space of giving and creation, an abstract space (313-14). *Topos*, on the other hand, describes a contextualised and physical place, a concrete space (314-15), which is why words like topography and utopia are derived from *topos* (313). For Aristotle space and time were ways in which one could legitimise the naming and classifying of the senses, a way to prove that the senses exist (Lefebvre 1). In the Middle Ages, there was a hierarchical ensemble of spaces, where different spaces were placed in categories and in opposition to one another. A space could, for example, be defined as either sacred or profane, protected or exposed, or as urban or rural. In the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei opened up the discussion of space even more, by introducing the idea of infinite space (Foucault, ‘Of

Other spaces' 1). With his discovery of, amongst others, four of Jupiter's moons, he introduced a new way of thinking about the cosmos – that space could be infinitely more than previously believed (Gingerich 137). René Descartes had a more philosophical approach to the notion of space. He believed that space and body are essentially the same thing, that space is just an extension of the body. This is because we can only be assured of the existence of our own body; everything else is up for discussion (Zepeda 24; Evangelidis 6). Gottfried Leibniz, on the other hand, believed that space is relative; that space and time are nothing more than virtual relationships and mathematical concepts (Evangelidis 1), and that space is made up of spatial relationships between objects (2). Isaac Newton was vehemently opposed to this idea, and instead presented the idea of absolute space, the idea that space will always remain the same, and works independently of the world outside of it (2, 9). Immanuel Kant believed that the human experience is shaped by the human mind, and every experience we have is dependent on it – including space and time (Warburton 110). But the knowledge of space can be both *a priori* and *synthetic*, according to Kant. *A priori* knowledge is knowledge that is independent of experience; *synthetic* knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge which is arrived at by experience, either your own or others' (113). Kant believed that knowledge could be both *a priori* and *synthetic* if the knowledge reveals a truth about the world and is arrived at independently of experience. One such knowledge is of space, because it exists outside of our experience, and is an *a priori* form of human perception (113). Space then, in the twentieth century, took on a new form yet again, with Henri Lefebvre's ideas of 'social space'. In his book *The Production of Space*, he explored the concept of space and found that the geometric meaning, which is to say the idea of space as an empty area, was too limiting. He believed that space should not merely serve as a blank vacuum filled with objects, but that every space 'always embodies a meaning' (Lefebvre 154). This meaning is created through social relations, which makes space a social product, or what Lefebvre called 'social space'. In addition to space being a social product, Lefebvre argued that space was, moreover, a political concept – a way in which one can control others (26; Thacker 17). One of the ways in which this may be achieved is through his concept of the hypercomplex space. The idea behind this concept is that if we analyse a space, or a fragment of a space, closely enough, we reveal that the space is actually made up of many social relationships (Thacker 19) – and I would like to stress that this notion of space clearly resonates with Berlant and Warner's arguments about queer counterspaces. Lefebvre believed, as already mentioned, that space is produced by social practices, and the concept of hypercomplex space builds further upon this idea. A space can, furthermore, be separated into three different types of space –

and these types are additionally interconnected. The first type concerns how people actually use the space. This can be things like production, in a social, Marxist sense, and reproduction, in relation to reproducing the relations of production, but also how individual people use the space. The second type of space is linked to official notions of space. This representation of space refers to how government officials, planners, architects, etc. perceive a given space in connection to the spaces surrounding it. Space can thus change the landscape around it and be used as a way to further a way of life or an ideology. The third form of space is called representational space, and is related to how inhabitants imagine the space, especially in an artistic and symbolic context (19-20; Lefebvre 33). All of these types of space are interconnected, and Lefebvre stress this intricate connection between these experienced-perceived-imagined spaces (Thacker 20; Lefebvre 230).

Lefebvre's concept of social space, that spaces are made up of social connections between individuals or groups of people, clearly resonates with Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's concept of 'counterpublics' and how these types of spaces are connected to queer culture. Berlant and Warner, in their essay 'Sex in Public' from 1998, introduce the concept by first looking at Jürgen Habermas' different categories of public and private spheres – where the public sphere can be understood as a representation of everything going on in society and as a representation of so-called public opinion (Habermas 1, 43), and the private sphere is the familial sphere, the goings-on at home, the intimate sphere (152). Berlant and Warner use Habermas' categorization as a starting point, and create the notion of multiple public spheres, as opposed to Habermas' singular one (Berlant & Warner 2451). They argue that the public sphere is made up of several spheres, making up the whole, most notably a heteronormative one and a counterpublic one, a queer sphere.

One can argue that a lot of western culture consists of heteronormative societies, that heterosexuality is the norm. Heteronormativity is the term which describes this phenomenon: when you meet new people, you assume that they are heterosexual because that is the 'normal', the 'default' sexuality of everyone (unless there are culturally recognisable signs which indicate otherwise) (Wade & Ferree 108, 400). This also means that society is catering to heterosexuals when it comes to systematic, structural, and institutional practices – it is, for example, illegal for same-sex partners to get married in more than 150 countries (Masci et al.), and the experience that queer people have when engaging with public healthcare is poorer and less tailored for them than heterosexual people (Brady). Berlant and Warner do, however, argue that there is no such thing as heterosexuality, that '[w]e speak of heterosexual culture rather than heterosexuality because that culture never has more than a provisional

unity' (2456) – that even though heterosexuality and heterosexual culture is the 'norm', these types of societies have nothing outside the fact that they share a sexuality to bind them together, like, for instance, ethnic or religious bonds, the same way that queer culture has by cultural similarities, like resembling ways of self-expressions and shared intimacies.

A way in which heterosexual culture establishes itself as the hegemonic order, and further confirms heteronormativity, is through the intimacy factor. As Habermas pointed out in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the 'private'- and the 'public' spheres were strictly separated – mostly due to the convergence of the private sphere, the privatisation of the familial sphere (152). Berlant and Warner point out that this separation works favourably for heteronormativity, especially the intimacy factor. Prescribing acts of intimacy as exclusively something belonging in the home, to the domesticated home life, which is to say the private sphere, excludes queer people from the full public sphere (Berlant & Warner 2462). Queer people have created and cultivated intimacies which

... good folk used to call criminal intimacies. [Queer people] have developed relations and narratives that are only recognised as intimate in queer culture: girlfriends, gal pals, fuckbuddies, tricks. Queer culture has learned not only how to sexualise these and other relations but also how to use them as a context for witnessing intense and personal affect while elaborating a public world of belonging and transformation. (2461)

To ensure that heteronormativity is preserved and re-established as the hegemonic order, intimacies such as these have been rejected from the public sphere by the heteronormative hegemonic order itself. These acts and relationships, these examples of intimacy, are rejected from the public sphere by the hegemonic order, and queer people are essentially banished from the public and labelled as deviants. When the hegemonic order then determines that intimacies in general should be confined to the home, to the private sphere, they are essentially defining what is the 'proper' and 'improper' way to behave and be in public. Removing intimacies from the public thus creates an environment where queer culture is ostracised from the public by the hegemonic order (Berlant & Warner 2462). Queer people are often then forced to hide their queerness, much as David and Dorian are forced to do – to resort to hiding away their sexual deviance.

Foucault is also in agreement that intimacies have been privatised. His view is that one's sexuality is the true measure of a person's being, their 'true personhood'. Sexuality can thus be rather isolating, since having a different sexuality to the majority of your community can be fairly alienating; people are thus encouraged to categorise each other as either

‘normal’, which is to say heterosexual, or ‘perverse’ based on their sexuality (2462; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 48). This is one of the reasons Dorian decides to kill Basil: to preserve his status as ‘normal’; and the reason David is so keen to abandon Giovanni: to avoid receiving the pervert or deviant label accompanying openly queer people. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault even proposes that the act of defining and differentiating between sexualities could be a way to exclude certain people from the public sphere: ‘When this whole thicket of disparate sexualities was labelled, as if to disentangle them from one another, was the object to exclude them from reality?’ (Foucault 41). If we then combine the ideas of Foucault and Habermas, even though they often disagree with each other or focus on different aspects, we can see that the privatisation of intimacies, per Habermas’ privatisation model, and the labelling of a person (their sexuality), per Foucault’s observations, are both ways in which the hegemonic public, which is to say the heteronormative society, founds itself; this isolation and exclusion of individuals in public only furthered the status quo, the domination of heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner 2462).

Ironically, the actual acts of queer culture, and more specifically queer sex, more often than not happened, historically, in public spaces: alleys, parks, parking lots, the docks, and public toilets, just to mention a few (Bell 306). David Bell argues that the city provides a space where queer people can gather together, but they are, at the same time, forced to stay apart. A lot of men ended up leading a sort of double life, where they had a wife and family at home, but still participated in what could constitute queer culture. The conclusion was that urbanization was a danger to ‘proper’ family values, and provided an individual with *too much* freedom, which resulted in the individual’s participating in sinful acts; this occurred because the city provided a person with a certain amount of anonymity (Chauncey 131-32). Queer people thus utilised the anonymity of the city and the alternate social order the city provided to lead two lives – one of ‘normalcy’ and one of ‘deviance’. This double life was of course not without its problems. The outer society, the hegemonic and heteronormative one, was keen to control all parts of society, especially the ‘sinful’ ones. People who voluntarily fell out of the strict middle-class notions of ‘proper’ behaviour were targeted as disrupting the social order. Queer people who had moved to certain neighbourhoods, where they could engage in counterintimacies – intimacies which are not explicitly linked to the ‘privileged [heterosexual] institutions of social reproduction, the accumulation and transfer of capital, and self-development’ (Berlant & Warner 2457) – gathered together in so-called commercialised spaces such as theatres, cabarets, and restaurants (Chauncey 148-49). The city was not only a place where secretive and anonymous acts of ‘sinful sex’ happened, but a place where the

multi-layered and organized gay subculture could thrive, where counterintimacies, which were not allowed elsewhere in the public sphere, were accepted and celebrated. This was not a sort of *disorganized* part of the city, where chaos roamed free, but a social *reorganization* where queer people were actually included and made to feel welcome (132-33).

The reason heteronormative society, then, tries to dispel counterintimacies from the public sphere is mostly because of the social-control aspect. So-called ‘sex crimes’ are often understood as being harmful to the public; the belief is that an action can either be for or against the good of the public. If a person does something which is arguably against the public, the perpetrators are often excluded from society – which leads to labelling the perpetrators as deviants. This involvement of the public, and effectively the law, in the private sphere, then, reduces the intimacies belonging in the home; these intimacies become a public ‘issue’ – intimacy is effectively rendered as a public concern. The contrast between the desire for counterintimacies to remain private, to remain in the privacy of the private sphere, and the need for them to be a part of the public, is obvious (Bell 311-13). The heteronormative society will, for example, accept homosexuality to a certain degree, as long as it is not seen out in public and conforms to the heteronormative constructions of love and sex – as long as queer acts can remain in ‘the closet’. But other types of intimacies, other types of sexual acts which do not follow the recipe of the heteronormative concepts of masculinist heterosexuality, are just too much for society to tolerate. The solution is to prohibit these kinds of acts, to alienate the people belonging to and participating in these counterintimacies and this culture (315-16).

If we then go back to Berlant and Warner’s essay, their main idea is that queer people largely exist in what they call counterspaces in the public sphere. They argue that there exist multiple public spheres, which allow for all kinds of people to be a part of the public, not just the hegemonic order – and one of these spheres is the queer counterspace. This counterspace is made up of many different spaces, as Chauncey has also argued, where people from all walks of life are welcome, with many entrances and exits, made up of different kinds of relationships and networks – it is, essentially, a world-building project. ‘World’ is a better term to use than, for example, ‘community’ or ‘group’, since a ‘world’ can encompass a lot of different communities and embrace countless groups as well. But this world-making project cannot take its own existence for granted since the rest of the public can be hostile and try to dismantle it, to ensure that the hegemonic order continues to exist. A way to ensure the existence of this world is by recognising and legitimising the way queer culture constitutes itself (Berlant & Warner 2461). This world, this space, is where the counterintimacies which I

have already accounted for are able to exist and prosper without being overly influenced by other more dominant public spheres, such as the hegemonic heteronormative one.

The problem with queer spacing, however, is the fact that queer culture is hard to pinpoint and attach to a specific place – because, as already mentioned, queer people do not have the same systematic infrastructure as heterosexual people. You can of course point to some places which have been labelled as ‘gay places’, such as, as already mentioned, bars, cabarets, and public toilets – like the gay bar in *Giovanni’s Room* and the opium dens at the docks in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Places such as these are, however, not universally queer, and queer people would not necessarily point to these places and categorically call them ‘queer’ or ‘gay’. Queer culture does not naturally fit into one specific space; there is no one space to conceptualise and feature everything concerning queer people. A space may be labelled ‘queer’, but not all queer people would seek out this specific space, and the people currently inhabiting a specific space may not want to be a part of the queer community, either (Woodhead 238, 240). Queer spaces have often, then, been forced to be rather mobile and temporal, but also just generally hard to point out, such as sites for drag and parades, and, as a result, such spaces have been trivialised as representing a ‘lifestyle’ rather than a culture. This ‘lifestyle’ consists of counterintimacies, which I have already discussed a lot, but not in the context of queer spaces. Counterintimacies are not forms of intimacies which are the exact opposite of heteronormative ones. Rather, the term describes and contextualises queer culture – and the specific forms of intimacies which are typical of queer culture. These counterintimacies are of course made up of sexual practices, but also of self-expressions such as drag, personal style, music and behaviour, shared knowledge inside of the culture, self-preservation, and a demand for recognition. And since many these spaces are temporal and mobile, queer culture is often very dependent on urban spaces to create these queer counterspaces (Berlant & Warner 2463-65), which is an echo of Bell’s argument about queerness and urbanisation. Queer spaces are therefore often urban, and when politicians then talk about ‘cleaning up the streets’ they are essentially trying to remove these queer counterspaces. And while heteronormative spaces are protected and shielded from these ‘deviants’, the queer urban counterspaces are being targeted. These spaces are welcoming for all kinds of ‘outcasts’, such as people of different sexualities and ethnicities, and are not as limiting as typical heteronormative spaces (2465).

A heteronormative society with only heteronormative spaces is, ultimately, too narrow as a public sphere, so queer counterspaces are an essential part of all societies. Queer people have created different kinds of intimacies than heterosexual people; they have carved out a

piece of the public, especially the urban public, for themselves, and they have tried to resist the control of the hegemonic heteronormative society surrounding them. Queer spaces have always, really, been a part of life, which is true both in today's society and in the societies of Baldwin and Wilde.

For the next part of this thesis, I will look at what Foucault called 'heterotopias', and I will argue that certain heterotopias also can be viewed as queer counterspaces.

1.3 Places of Otherness

Foucault's 'Of other Spaces' from 1967 briefly discusses the idea of space by connecting the metaphorical and material senses of the concept – it looks at the relations between actual, real places, and metaphorical, abstract ones (Foucault 3; Thacker 24). Foucault outlined the idea of utopias, which are 'sites with no real place' (Foucault 3). A utopia is an abstract idea of an idealised society, or an inverted version of an already existing society (Thacker 24), but is fundamentally *not* a real place. In today's society, one would, however, use the term utopia as a form of banal optimism, created by a sort of blind idealism (Muñoz 3). Heterotopias, on the other hand, are a form of counterspace, Foucault argues; and *I* would argue that they often are forms of *queer counterspaces*. These sites are real places, as opposed to Foucault's description of utopias, but they are, in some way or another, separated from society (Foucault 3-4). The heterotopia is a place outside of other places, much like queer counterspaces often are, but it can, nonetheless be located in reality.

There is also a third kind of place which Foucault describes in his essay, besides the utopia and the heterotopia, which is the mirror of utopia. For while a mirror is in fact a real place, it also represents and shows reflections which are not real, making it both a utopia and a heterotopia at the same time. It shows the utopian reality, where the reflection can come to pass thousands of times and warp reality (in the case of distorting mirrors). But a mirror can also be a counterspace, where it warps the space you inhabit. For while it shows the space you are physically occupying, connecting you to your surroundings, it also warps reality because your position is changed as soon as you look into the reflection. A mirror, therefore, functions as both a heterotopia and a utopia at the same time (4). This third place, this third form of space, will also demonstrate how queer space is prevalent in both of my novels, with the existence of Dorian Gray's picture (which can both be a metaphor for his soul and a physical manifestation of Dorian's queerness), and the role of David's reflection in his mirror (which can, in the same manner as Dorian's picture, be David's way of confronting his innermost

identity) – which I will discuss further in the chapters for *Giovanni's Room* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Foucault outlines several principles, or characteristics, to better recognise a heterotopia, where one or more of these characteristics may be used to describe the heterotopia in question. I will, however, just mention the characteristics which prove most relevant for my thesis about queer spacing since not every characteristic is equally relevant. The first principle mentions that heterotopias are prevalent in all societies of the world, and one common type is the deviation heterotopia – where people who deviate from societal norms are placed on the outskirts of the public sphere (Foucault 4-5; Thacker 25). This deviation heterotopia is very important for my thesis since people who deviate from the norms of society often are queer people, sexual deviants. Kevin Hetherington also focuses a lot on this type of heterotopia and claims that ‘Heterotopia are places of Otherness’ (Hetherington 8) – places with an alternative ordering based on the fact that society despises them (6), much like queer counterspaces. This otherness, this alienation from society, is important to keep in mind because queer people have often been made to feel out of place and strange just because of their sexuality – which is something that every queer character I will look at in my analysis has been made to feel, in some way or other. This is something which Hetherington also highlighted in his rundown of the concept, and claimed that this ‘otherness’ can mean any number of things, such as being outside of or different to the norm, like queer people, or being excessive or incongruous, like the deviant (8). Foucault’s third principle states that a heterotopia may contain several real or imagined places at the same time, like when a theatre transports you inside the story on stage. This is similar to Lefebvre’s theory of the hypercomplex space, which I already discussed in the previous subsection. The fourth principle says that a heterotopia may be connected to a specific notion of time, whether that may be eternity or temporality, while the fifth states that heterotopias are not generally accessible; you need to gain permission to access these spaces. The last principle focuses on the relationship between heterotopias and other spaces, and states that heterotopias may either break or reinforce the illusion which a place shrouds itself in (Foucault 4-9; Thacker 25-26).

Foucault concludes his essay by saying that a heterotopia is ‘a place without a place, that exists, by itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity’, and that a society without heterotopias is robbed of imagination (Foucault 9); which I find strikingly similar to the description Berlant and Warner give of queer counterspaces. Andrew Thacker, on the one hand, concludes that Foucault’s concept of heterotopia symbolises the fluidity of social space (think back to Lefebvre’s ideas of social space and his concept of hypercomplex space), but

also connects material and metaphorical places (Thacker 29). Hetherington, however, points out that heterotopias should not be defined as ‘sites of resistance, sites of transgression or as marginal spaces’, like a lot of queer spaces are, ‘but precisely as *spaces of an alternate ordering*’ (9) – which I tend to disagree with. I want to argue that heterotopias often also are spaces where queer subjects may gather, examples of queer counterspaces, and these kinds of places of course have an alternate ordering than the public sphere, and are also often sites of resistance for marginalised people, such as queer people. The most important heterotopia characteristic for my thesis is the deviation heterotopia, which Hetherington calls the incongruous heterotopia. As both Foucault and Hetherington point out, these kinds of heterotopias are places where people who deviate from the norms of society either gather voluntarily or are forced to gather. These are places where ‘normal’ societal rules do not necessarily apply, places where deviants may gather in peace – not unlike Berlant and Warner’s description of queer counterspaces. Since queer people often are referred to as deviants because they deviate from normative sexual practices, it is natural to draw the connection between the queer counterspace and the deviation heterotopia.

Queer spaces can largely, as Hetherington states, be called places of otherness, especially in the heteronormative society we live in today and the societies of both Wilde and Baldwin. In these two men’s societies it was not uncommon to be labelled as a deviant, nor has this changed in today’s society, but the sanctions and social control that followed were much more severe. The social control factor is also largely why queer spaces have continued to be marginalised and ostracised into today’s society, and why it is important to be aware of and support spaces such as these. When we also consider Foucault’s outline of heterotopias, especially deviation heterotopias, we are reminded that queer spaces, which these types of heterotopias most definitely are, mostly can be found on the outskirts of heteronormative society, because that is the only place they are tolerated.

2 Chapter 2: Critical Reception of the Novels

2.1 Critical Reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.

– Oscar Wilde (3).

The Picture of Dorian Gray was Oscar Wilde's only novel, and was not well received. It was marked as a scandalous book by contemporary critics, who viewed it as trying to corrupt the audience with its highly immoral and unhealthy messages. Wilde, naturally, found these accusations absurd and added in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that no book could be marked as either moral nor immoral, only as well or badly written (Wilde 3). The quote at the top of this section was added with the preface to the novel in 1891, and was Wilde's way of trying to refocus the critics: to make them direct their focus to the aestheticism of the novel instead of the question of the novel's morality. For Wilde was an aesthete at heart; he appreciated beauty over everything and wanted only to make 'art for art's sake': his idea was that art should refrain from serving as propaganda or serving some higher purpose, that art should just exist on its own; and the notion of 'art for art's sake' is undoubtedly essential in Aestheticism. Immanuel Kant also advocated for the autonomy of art, and believed that art should exist for its own sake, for its own beauty, and not as a way in which the artist should feel free to voice their moral convictions – and Wilde obviously approved of and was in support of this sentiment (Calloway 34; Nicolaescu 203). Aestheticism is a tool to separate art from life, and consequently reduce moral implications. Aestheticism itself, then, effectively threatened the Victorian way of life, the idea that one should remain morally proper and value the family unit over everything else (Nicolaescu 203); and Wilde was largely the face of this movement.

The notion of 'art for art's sake', this dandy-esque quality, this appreciation of all things aesthetic, is, of course, one of the central themes of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, alongside themes of queerness and deviance. We follow the fate of Dorian, who goes from being a beautiful and naïve boy to become an immoral influence on society, a deviant. The journey begins in Basil Hallward's residence, where he is painting Dorian. Basil has a visitor, Lord Henry Wotton, who is very eager to meet the beautiful boy whom Basil is so smitten by. They meet, and Henry introduces Dorian to the philosophy of Hedonism, and constantly obsesses over Dorian's beauty. Dorian then utters a wish to always remain as beautiful as his

portrait shows him today, and, unbeknownst to both Dorian and the reader, the wish is granted. Dorian will always remain beautiful, while the portrait will capture all of his aging and all of his evil. Henry and Dorian then begin a friendship, a mentor-mentee relationship, where Henry slowly starts to corrupt Dorian. A little while later Dorian meets the beautiful and talented actress Sybil Vane, and is instantly infatuated with her, and soon they are engaged to be married. When Dorian then takes Henry and Basil with him to watch Sybil perform as Juliet, the performance is rather horrible. Dorian instantly breaks off his relationship with her because he has fallen in love with an actress, a piece of living art, which she no longer is – and Sybil responds by taking her own life later that night. Dorian then notices that his portrait has started to change, that there is a ‘vicious cruelty that marred the fine lines of [his] mouth’ (101) that had not been there earlier. Dorian thus has proof that no evil will ever touch his real face, that age will not affect him the same way as other people, and that he will remain as beautiful as that day in Basil’s garden, forever. After more ‘teachings’ from Henry, and after reading a very immoral book, Dorian decides to do whatever he pleases, however immoral, for the next eighteen years of his life. His friendship becomes ‘so fatal to young men’ (144), he starts to take opium recreationally and gluttonously, and ultimately shows Basil the painting (which by now is old and filled with evil), and subsequently kills his friend and admirer. He then forces a scientist he knows to get rid of the body, under threat of blackmail, and just carries on as normal. After this strenuous affair, Dorian travels to the docks to indulge in his opium addiction, where he meets James Vane, the brother of the deceased Sybil Vane, whom he manages to escape before Vane is able to exact his revenge. A week later, Dorian travels to the countryside and, in a freak hunting accident, James Vane is accidentally killed – making Dorian safe from any more revenge murder attempts. The next day, he is talking with Henry about the ‘disappearance’ of Basil, how Dorian wishes to change for the better, and the possibility of being poisoned by a book. Dorian is set to meet Henry later at the club, but first he decides to take a look at the painting and try to rid himself of his sinful past by stabbing it – in order to live a more moral life than before. He ends up killing himself, and his servants find a crooked, horrid body in front of the beautiful painting of their now dead master.

Wilde had no intentions of telling us what his drive behind writing the story was, other than stating that the fact that no book, no work of art, could ever be classified as ‘immoral’ – that the meaning behind art is in the eyes of the beholder (Wilde 4). This duality is what has excited people about Wilde for over a century. His life was made up of fragments (Holland 5), and the fact of the matter is that Wilde had no intentions of letting anyone examine these

fragments too closely. He thrived on being mysterious, contradictory, and misunderstood. He was an Irishman living in high-societal England; a Catholic leaning Protestant; he was married to a woman and had children with her, while still sleeping with men; and an expert writer and poet who confessed that he found writing rather boring; and, finally, a gay martyr, but also someone who is said to have set the queer agenda back by not being more outspoken. We do not know if all of this is true, of course, since Wilde wanted to keep up this mysterious air around himself. He may have lied, he may have been dramatic for effect, or he may have been truthful in all things (3). This duality (or plurality) lives on, just as he would have wanted (15-16).

One popular theme critics have written about is the trials and general reception of Wilde's novel – and these three trials were perhaps the most prolific obscenity prosecutions of the nineteenth century (Stern 756). While Wilde was never convicted of 'obscenity', but rather 'gross indecency', the trials served as a way in which the author, and consequently his novel, was publicly damned as immoral and deviant. While obscenity would have marked Wilde as actively trying to influence society at large for immoral purposes, gross indecency only marked Wilde as having engaged in homosexual relations (761). The trials have often been seen as a fundamental moment in the 'formation of a modern homosexual identity' (Stern 762), and framed Wilde as an author who would, and did, imprint his identity into his fiction – suggesting that the plot, actions, and messages found in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were approved of by Wilde himself, and represented behaviours he wished he could do, or had indeed done himself – not unlike how the concept of the deviant in literature, whether that is the author or the character being perceived in the story, has been viewed (762).

The Victorian era saw a change in readership of literature – the middle-class read substantially more than before, which led to a shift in the reviewing practices, which largely affected Wilde's novel. Reviewers viewed the middle class as more susceptible to bad, that is to say, immoral literature, or perhaps deviant literature is a more appropriate term to use, than the previously strictly upper-class readership, and took it upon themselves to weed out the more immoral pieces of said literature. The reviewers were eager to establish themselves as 'arbiters of aesthetic taste, ... [and] establish an image of themselves as morally and intellectually superior beings' (McGann 606). The reviewers took it upon themselves to label novels as either moral or immoral, deviant or proper – for the sake of the all too impressionable Victorian community. McGann suggests that it is within this context that we should consider *The Picture of Dorian Gray* because the novel, for better or for worse, was a by-product of these reviewing practices; Wilde had, after all, long been a reviewer and critic

himself, and was therefore especially impressionable to critiques and reviews (607). Simon Stern also points out that, in the trials of Oscar Wilde, the reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* played a big part. As I have already established, the novel was regarded as immoral, and this was hugely because of the homoeroticism it portrayed, especially between Dorian and Henry and Basil (757, 758). We know that Dorian was heavily influenced by Henry in the start of the novel, and this influence was compared to the ‘corrupting influence’ the novel itself had on young men in the Victorian era. This idea that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was an immoral book was thus something which Wilde actually addressed in the novel. As Stern argues, Dorian himself was ‘poisoned’ by a book given to him by Lord Henry, which Wilde points out multiple times throughout the novel (see for instance Wilde 121, 140 and 208). Henry, as an extension of Wilde’s voice, responds to Dorian’s accusation of being poisoned by a book, that ‘there is no such thing as that ... [Art] is superbly sterile. The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame’ (208). The book that had ‘poisoned’ Dorian was only harmful because it showed Dorian his own shame, just as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* would do to its readers (Stern 770). The fact that society viewed the novel itself as immoral or deviant suggests that people would be influenced by the themes and motifs of the novel – that society believed the novel would turn its readers into deviants themselves; the novel would turn people queer, which of course would be unacceptable to the Victorian society.

Antonio Sanna is one of the critics who have focused on the sexualities present in Wilde’s novel: he has discussed the role of the homosexual in the Victorian age, alongside the concept of ‘silent homosexuality’, which is closely connected to the concept of the deviant, which I already discussed in the previous chapter. Sanna argues that the worst thing that could happen to someone during this time was being a part of a scandal, especially if that scandal was connected to something as immoral as being a deviant homosexual. The best way to protect oneself, then, as a homosexual person, was to surround oneself in silence, to keep out of the heteronormative public sphere. Dorian is very concerned with the public opinion of himself, just like David is in *Giovanni’s Room*, even though he is reluctant to stop his corruptive behaviours (25-26). But he *does try* to keep his double life under wraps, seeing as all of his sins are done in silent and secret ways (29). Dorian is a big part of the London society, and noise is something he is always surrounded by, but when he turns to opium or murder or any of his other illicit behaviours, it is always shrouded in silence. This is a very interesting point of Sanna to make, which I profoundly agree with, especially if we consider the shame often accompanied with such illicit activities, the shame that often makes people

hide or try to remain silent. The silence found in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* corresponds well with my argument about the separation between public and private spheres, because queer spaces, which I covered in the previous chapter, would be examples of places which Sanna would consider silent places – and this desire to remain silent is not unlike how queer people seek protection from the proverbial closet, as I will discuss further in the next subsection. I would argue that Dorian is an inspiration for other men, in the novel, to also take part in ‘illicit activities’, arguably of a queer nature, which consequently damages their reputation – Dorian’s deviant behaviour is contagious. These men are said to be filled with ‘a madness for pleasure’ by Dorian, who then leads them to their demise (Wilde 145); some of the men in question even choose to kill themselves after their encounters with Dorian, rather than possibly suffer from the punishments of the law and public opinion (Sanna 31).

But Dorian is not the only arguably queer character in the novel; Basil Hallward is also likely queer. Basil is explicitly described as being in love with Dorian – or maybe enamoured is a better word to use (31). Basil is a painter who prefers total silence when he works (which would be an example of ‘silent homosexuality’), and often retreats back to his own home – which can be viewed as a queer space, as I will demonstrate in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* chapter – rather than be a distinct part of the higher society of London. *He* is the one who first makes Dorian aware of his beauty and, subsequently, his interest in and need of immoral vices. When Basil then admits his adoration and idolization of Dorian, he himself meets the silent consequence of his adulation eighteen years later. Basil never screams for help when Dorian repeatedly stabs him; the only sound he emits is made by choking on his own blood. But, as Sanna points out, it is not the fact that Basil was romantically interested in Dorian that seals his fate. Rather, it is the fact that Basil is at his house to tell Dorian about the horrid rumours circulating in London about him – the rumours that Dorian is a deviant. Basil is effectively accusing Dorian of living an immoral life, of being a deviant, and warns him about the potential scandals which may follow, which is arguably why Dorian kills him – to silence both Basil and the rumours in one fell swoop. I find this argument rather compelling, especially since Dorian does not react with disgust or something similar when Basil admits his feelings for him. And the whole killing scene is also written with a certain amount of detachment from Dorian’s point of view, rather than as an act of passion. The alternatives Dorian would face, if the rumours of his deviance were to survive (along with Basil), seem to be to either face the punishments of the Victorian laws and society at large, or to kill himself, like many of the men he has influenced have done (33). This characterisation of the concept of the deviant is very similar to my main argument, that people who are characterised as

deviants would go to extreme lengths in order to avoid this label because of the social and judicial sanctions which would undoubtedly follow. Sanna, lastly, argues that the actual painting of Dorian can be interpreted as the physical manifestation of homosexuality, and especially homosexuality as something sinful. Dorian tries to hide the painting away in a room only he himself, and the people he chooses to admit, can access, just as Victorian people engaging in homosexual relations would be confined to the privacy of their homes (34). The room which Dorian keeps his painting in is a metaphor for where he keeps his queerness, the space in which his queerness can exist in the world. And when Dorian then, at the end of the novel, decides to live a more 'proper' and 'moral' life, he stabs the picture in the hopes of 'killing his past' – maybe even killing the part of himself that does not conform to the heteronormative society he lives in (36). This is a question in need of more discussion, so I will address it further in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* chapter later on in this thesis.

Another way in which Victorian society proved heteronormative was in how gender was performed – or how people were obligated to perform their gender. Burak Irmak argues that the character Lord Henry is trapped by the male roles which were dictated by society, and the reason for his involvement in Dorian's life was to somewhat escape this entrapment by living vicariously through Dorian (77). People who did not conform to the set gender roles of the Victorian society were punished, just as people who deviated from normative sexualities, people who could be viewed as deviant, were – people who would be deemed as 'other'. Irmak's main argument is that Henry performs many roles in his life, and Irmak builds upon Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity (78) – which states that people are not born to act a certain way based on their gender, but are, rather, conditioned to act a certain way by society (Butler 2384-86). Irmak then argues that Henry feels trapped in his role as a husband, a role he does not enjoy or thrive in; his energy is thus dedicated to his role as a 'teacher of desire, he turns Dorian into a personification of his own desires, and the result of his escape from the normative gender' (Irmak 79). I would argue that Henry feels trapped in the role which the heteronormative society has forced him into, that since the society at large has no proper place for Henry to feel at home, there is no space he would more naturally fit into. Henry is thus another example of the concept of the deviant, but someone who is rather more successful in hiding his own deviance. Lord Henry *is* an immensely interesting character for us as readers, probably because he never fits into the society he lives in. He often, for example, gives these little anecdotes about how he feels life *ought* to be lived, but he never himself acts upon his own advice. An example of such an anecdote is when he says that '[t]hose who are faithful know only the trivial side of love: it is the faithless who know love's

tragedies' (Wilde 15), and, as far as we as readers know, Henry has always been faithful to his wife. He says something rather scandalous, like the quote in the previous sentence, but does what is expected of him; he performs his gender (80) – he conforms to the expectations of the heteronormative society surrounding him, unlike Dorian.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is, first and foremost, read as a queer novel by critics, readers, and me, as well. This is not solely because of Wilde's rumoured sexuality, nor because of the love declaration from Basil in the novel, but also because of the seductive and sexual language in the novel (Campbell 9). James Campbell takes an explicit look at this language, and sets out to establish Oscar Wilde as a queer theorist, and to establish Wilfred Owen and his writings as a part of the queer legacy left by Wilde (2). A question Campbell frequently raises is that of Wilde's sexuality: since Wilde often takes the honour of practically inventing the twentieth century queer person, and considering that he was a part of multiple same-sex relationships, what, exactly, was Wilde's sexuality? (13, 2; see also 24 and 37) Campbell does not, however, pose this question in order to try to fit Wilde into an established sexual category, nor a gender category for that matter, because at the time of Wilde's life, such categories were irrelevant. As Foucault established more than seventy years after Wilde's death in *The History of Sexuality*, there were no sexual identities in the nineteenth century (or prior), only sexual actions (Campbell 88); even though the term 'homosexual' was invented in 1869, it did not have the same connotations as we would give it today, so Wilde would not have viewed himself as such (87). Campbell, rather, poses the question in order to historicise Wilde – in order to contextualise how Wilde would have viewed himself, or other queer people, at the time, and see how this view could be evident in his works (16). This discussion of sexuality is something I support, especially considering the fact that the best label to ascribe to Wilde's sexuality, if one were to need a label, is 'queer' – because it covers every sexuality and gender expression without actually being ascribed as a *strict* label. A good reason to actually put a label on someone's sexuality, especially someone who opposed labels in general, is in order to look at their creative work – not to ascribe a sexuality to the author or the work, but in an effort to further queer theory. This is something important to keep in mind, both when it comes to Wilde's works, and also Baldwin's.

Campbell goes on to discuss the role of the word 'worship' in Wilde's novel in connection to Wilde's theory of male procreation. His argument is that the version of Dorian which we see at the end of the novel is made through the creative (or perhaps factual) seduction of Dorian, as well as a metaphorical impregnation (47). Dorian is effectively impregnated with a new version of himself by Henry's hedonistic ideas and Basil's worship

of him. The relationship between Basil and Dorian leads to the creation of the painting, which is essentially a product of worship, while the new version of Dorian is created as a product of Dorian and Henry's relationship (48-49). Multiple times during the 1890 version of the novel, Basil uses the word 'worship' to explain his relationship with Dorian, but Wilde removed a lot of these instances in the 1891 version because of the homoeroticism they alluded to (see for instance the footnotes on p. 12, 13, and 19) – and Henry adopts the word as well: 'No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him' (19) (Campbell 50). Basil's worship of Dorian is a central part of Chapter 9, when he confesses his feelings to Dorian: 'I worshipped you' (Wilde 110). Basil's worship ultimately leads to an increased vanity in Dorian, which makes Basil partly a co-procreator of the new Dorian (Campbell 55). Henry's fascination with Dorian is, however, not one of worship, but rather an intellectual obsession with making Dorian into an extended version of himself, a reiteration of Henry (even if the language Henry uses when talking about his metaphorical son is rather seductive, in my opinion) (56). Campbell's argument, which I find rather appealing, is essentially that both Basil's worship of Dorian and Henry's obsession with him lead to the end-product that is Dorian. Thus neither version of male-male love is superior to the other – Basil's worship is not ethically perfect, just as Henry's influence and obsession is not purely destructive, and both loves are just exaggerations of same-sex affection – and Wilde is just demonstrating two polar opposites of male artistic procreation (49).

Much of the critical reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* addresses Wilde's involvement in the Aestheticism movement, or about how one could use the novel to take a look inside the mind of Oscar Wilde, the queerness and feeling of otherness represented in the novel, and as a comment on morality. The novel has been viewed as a threat to the Victorian way of life and a danger to the heteronormative society, largely because of its queer themes, but also because of the potential immoral influence it could provide its readers. I wish to add to this critical reception by looking specifically at queer spaces in the novel, in cooperation with Foucault's theory on heterotopias and the notion of deviance, which the novel uses as a way to disrupt the mundane heteronormative society of Wilde's time. I will be arguing in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* chapter that the novel depicts many queer spaces, spaces resembling the ideas of the deviation heterotopia and a hypercomplex space, which affects the characters in the novel in many different ways, depending on how well they handle the deviant label.

2.2 Critical Reception of *Giovanni's Room*

Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up.

– James Baldwin ('Nobody Knows My Name' 220)

The writings of James Baldwin are often described as 'coming of age' novels (Elam 16) because the common themes of his writings are of race, sex, and love (3). David, the protagonist in *Giovanni's Room*, for instance, 'as we say in America ... wanted to find [him]self' (Baldwin 25), which is a typical topic in coming-of-age novels, alongside the creation of an identity, or coming to terms with who you 'really are' – whether that is in relation to your race, sex or romantic inclination. Baldwin's works are naturally, for a lot of people, highly transformational; people find his novels and his writings life-changing (Elam 16). While my thesis is about queer spacing in the novel, much previous research on Baldwin and *Giovanni's Room* is about race, sexuality, and identity – and especially where James Baldwin himself could fit into the equation. I wish to build on this triad by considering the role of queer space in the novel, as well as the role of the deviant.

Baldwin was, just like Wilde, reluctant to fit into some predetermined and labelled category. And just like Wilde, Baldwin was full of contradictions; he became 'the face of black America' after his feature cover on *Time* magazine in 1963 with the banner 'The Negro's Push for Equality', and he became a central figure in black, queer studies – when it eventually emerged as a discourse – after the publication of *Giovanni's Room*, while also resisting calling himself a 'civil rights activist'; he was a master writer of novels and essays, but he frequently collaborated with other authors and experimented with different genres; and he was an artist who believed that art should refrain from being propaganda, but should nevertheless promote peace and social equality (2-3). This is similar to Wilde's opinion of making 'art for art's sake', but Baldwin believed that the art should serve some higher, morally good purpose, not just exist in and of itself. The fact that Baldwin was a man of many contradictions who could fit into many different categories is also a reason teachers, in particular, were hesitant to engage with his novels in the classroom, and why neither black nor white people really wanted to be associated with him; he was even removed from the speakers list at the March on Washington in 1963 because of this (3). He was, in essence, seen as too queer to be black, and too black to be queer.

This duality was a huge inspiration to Baldwin's writings; he described himself as 'hitting the trifecta' of creative suffering – one interviewer even described him as 'black,

impoverished, gifted and gay' (1). He brought this trifecta with him when he wrote *Giovanni's Room* in 1956. The novel depicts the main character David's struggle with his identity over the course of one night in the south of France. While he contemplates his identity and comes to terms with the fact that he is a queer, white, middle-class American, he looks back at his life in a seemingly chronological order. He first describes his childhood, homelife, and first sexual experience with the 'brown boy' Joey (11) – whom he slept with, quickly abandoned, and ended up bullying so much that Joey had to move, because David could not handle the shame of being labelled as queer. The story moves on to describe how he finds, falls in love with, and ends up leaving Giovanni to return to his female fiancée Hella. Initially David wants so badly to make things work with Giovanni, that he decides to try to fill the 'female role' in their relationship – so that while Giovanni works to support the two of them, David stays at home to take care of their room. This, however, does not work out because David feels extremely uncomfortable taking on a feminine role in their relationship, and cannot envision a working future with Giovanni because of this, even though Giovanni never expects David to be 'the woman' in the relationship. David also tries to reaffirm his masculinity by sleeping with a woman named Sue, just to prove to himself that he is able to seduce women (even though he feels rather disgusted with the sexual encounter itself). David then leaves Giovanni to be with Hella and they end up in the house in the south of France. They are seemingly very happy together until the news of Giovanni's fate reaches David. Giovanni has lost his job, ends up as a sort of prostitute, and kills his former boss Guillaume. In the present time in the novel, Giovanni is waiting to be guillotined the following morning, while David is alone in the house in the south of France – Hella having just left him – where David is feeling lost and struggles with himself and his identity. David also struggles with letting go of Giovanni, especially since he cannot imagine living in a world without the love of his life.

In the quote from Baldwin at the beginning of this subchapter, he says that 'love is a growing up', which is a common theme in Baldwin's writings. He believed that love is a tool which people use to escape difficult social conflicts (Freeburg 181), that love is a form of escapism; that love prevents people from discovering and cultivating their true identity, and, finally, prevents them from being a part of social and institutional change, as well (188). Much of Baldwin's writing is about this growing up, this creation of an identity, which is why, among others, Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman writes about Baldwin and his writings from an identity perspective. Abdur-Rahman focuses on Baldwin's belief that an identity is created in collaboration with social relations and the preconditions with which one is born (race,

sexuality, ethnicity). Her essay researches how identity is understood inside and outside of Baldwin's written works, and takes a deep dive into how identity is important in both *Giovanni's Room* and the short story 'Going to Meet the Man'; she especially looks into sexual identity and racial identity in the two works (Abdur-Rahman 165).

The question of identity inevitably leads to the question of race. Baldwin was, as mentioned previously, named 'the face of black America' in 1963, despite his wish to not be labelled as a civil rights activist. He wrote numerous works depicting the question of race and was described as anomalous (Elam 4) because of his fearless depiction of interracial and homosexual couples (Abdur-Rahman 170). *Giovanni's Room* has been described as Baldwin's 'raceless novel' due to the fact that there are no obvious black characters in the novel, and it is often viewed as a detour in Baldwin's bibliography, which largely looks into the question of race; but several critics have argued that the question of race should be viewed in collaboration with gender, sexuality, and class as well (Pearl 73; Thomas 608). The overall theme of *Giovanni's Room* is obviously sexuality and love, but it can also be read with race in mind; Josep Armengol is among the critics who explicitly read the novel through the lens of race and black masculinity. He argues that the discourses on race and (homo)sexuality are actually inseparable from one another, and, since whiteness and blackness are set against each other, just as heterosexuality and homosexuality are, that these concepts are closely related to each other in more than one way (Armengol 94). Armengol is one of the critics who argue that Baldwin belongs to both queer and black literary discourses, despite previous statements that he was too queer to be black, and too black to be queer. I wholeheartedly agree with his argument, especially if we consider the space implications: Baldwin fought for both queer people's and black people's right to exist in a hostile, heteronormative society, which *Giovanni's Room* also features. This is somewhat similar to my argument of the importance of acknowledging and cultivate queer spacing. Baldwin, additionally, fought so that the realities of your sexuality, or your race, for that matter, should not discourage you from taking part of society at large; that it should instead make you want to create your own space, *your own queer space*; similarly to Berlant and Warner's discussion of queer counterspace. Armengol also states that African American masculinity has been defined as being opposed to homosexuality, for instance by Eldridge Cleaver. Cleaver's infamous *Soul on Ice*, which was published in 1968, likened blackness with heterosexual masculinity, and essentially dismissed black homosexuality. This connection between blackness and heterosexuality, Cleaver argues, basically establishes that homosexual desire ultimately is a desire for whiteness – that a black homosexual really only yearns to take the position of the white female in a relationship

(Armengol 92-93). David does, in the novel, engage in several sexual relationships, most notably with Joey, Giovanni, Hella, and Sue. And these sexual relations are, clearly, connected to the race of the counterpart. Joey and Giovanni are described as dark and dirty, while Hella and Sue are described as light and clean (96, 98-100). The language which David uses to describe his partners is, without any doubt, linked to race and the dichotomy between homosexuality/darkness/dirtiness and heterosexuality/whiteness/cleanliness; which I will discuss in greater detail in the *Giovanni's Room* chapter.

David's desire to remain 'unsullied' by homosexuality and blackness and appear as a heterosexual man is also one of the main points in Harry Thomas's essay. According to Thomas, David is obsessed with the image he portrays to the world – because even though he has sex with men, and is arguably homosexual, this is okay as long as no one finds out, as long as no one sees David as a deviant. Thomas argues that David enjoys the privilege of being a white middle-class man too much to be openly queer, even though he sleeps with men (607). This is echoed in Monica Pearl's essay, where she states that it is not humiliating to be queer or engage in queer sex, as long as you are not seen doing it – because shame is private, while humiliation is public. This also corresponds with my arguments about the differences between private and public space, and where queer spaces fits into the mix, which I have already discussed in great detail in Chapter 1. So, while David can feel shameful about having sexual relations with men, that is manageable as long as he keeps it private, locked inside Giovanni's room (76) – so long as he can keep his deviance secret; not unlike how Dorian kept his deviance shrouded in silence, away from the public. This shame ultimately becomes too much for David, which is one of the reasons he leaves Giovanni. Hella's return to Paris proves an ample opportunity to make this happen, and is, for David, a way in which he can reclaim a heteronormative masculinity. He chooses the privilege of being a white middle-class man, the privilege of being 'normal', as well as trying to rid himself of the shame he connects with same-sex relations, instead of basking in the love he and Giovanni share for each other (Thomas 609). Thomas further argues that David's attachment to heteronormative masculinity, and ultimately whiteness, is the reason the novel has such a bleak ending, with Hella leaving David, Giovanni facing the guillotine, and David being all alone (611).

Giovanni's Room has also been celebrated as a homosexual novel, because David engages in same-sex relations (even though he also engages in heterosexual relations). Brett Beemyn, in his article, sets out to re-establish Baldwin's views on gender and sexual identities, and states that Baldwin believed that identity labels, like labels for sexuality, gender or race, often prove too narrow to describe a person, or a novel for that matter, and if

we limit ourselves to fit snugly into one or more of these categories, we are missing out on experiencing life to its fullest (57-58). Baldwin said, in an interview from 1965, that,

[H]omosexual, bisexual, heterosexual are 20th-century terms which, for me, really have very little meaning. I've never ... been able to discern exactly where the barriers are. Life being what life is, passion being what passion is. And learning being what that is ... It seems to me, in the first place, that if one's to live at all, one's certainly got to get rid of the labels. It seems to me an incredible way to live, to glory in the fact that one is heterosexual because it proves that you're not something else, or vice versa ... It seems to me that if one is going to deal with this ... at all one's got to get to the root of all these assumptions. (Baldwin, *Conversations with James Baldwin* 55)

Despite the fact that Beemyn quotes Baldwin as stating that these identity categories are too narrow, and quotes the interview which I have also quoted, he proceeds to read the novel with a bisexual and androgenetic view in mind – which I believe somewhat defeats the purpose. One of his first arguments is that Baldwin was attracted to both men and women, and struggled with this attraction, and put this experience into his second novel. Baldwin did, at one point during his twenties, contemplate marriage and starting a family, but realised that he was too attracted to men to make a marriage to a woman work, so he did not go through with it (60). But why is it important to define Baldwin's sexuality, and to spend so much time exploring it? Why is it important to state whether David is bisexual or homosexual or something else entirely? You could argue that David was a homosexual wishing for a 'normal' family with a woman, or you could argue that he was bisexual because he had sex with both men and women, or you could argue that he was pansexual because he mostly had sex with people he knew and cared somewhat about. I personally feel that it does not matter, and that figuring out David's sexuality, or Baldwin's sexuality for that matter, is redundant and rather counteractive. Spending time trying to discern just the right shade of queerness for Baldwin and David, when Baldwin actually did not care to make such distinctions himself and felt that it could be harmful to do so, is ultimately just a waste of time. The only thing we can really be certain of is that David has sex with both men and women and feels shame and disgust when he has sex with either of the sexes. This could be because he is ashamed of his attraction to his own gender (as Pearl also argues), or it could be because he is seriously involved with both Giovanni and Hella, and maybe he somewhat loves them both, and feels like he is dishonouring both of his relationships by sleeping with other people. Ultimately, the sexuality of the author or the character is not important; it simply falls outside of 'normative sexual practices' (31). Similarly to Wilde, I feel that the best label to use when talking about

Baldwin or David or Giovanni, if one were to need labels, is queer, for the same reason as one would call Wilde queer: because it covers a lot of sexualities and gender expressions, without negative connotations – it is just a loose label, encompassing a myriad of different identities, without setting limits to a person’s identity.

The shame of being queer, which David experiences, is partly due to the concept of ‘the closet’ – which really suggests a queer spatiality all on its own. Both Pearl and Luminita Dragulescu discuss the role of ‘the closet’ in *Giovanni’s Room*, by focusing on the shame and humiliation which accompany the concept, and on the visibility factor of sexuality – the private/public space dichotomy, which I also focus on throughout this thesis. Dragulescu argues in her essay that the second David enters Giovanni’s room, he enters a room of no return – that the room forces David to interact with and ultimately accept his sexuality (33), that the entering of a queer space, which the room really is, forces David to be a part of that space. She argues further that *Giovanni’s Room* ultimately is a journey of exploring a person’s homosexuality, of self-identification, and embracement of one’s own sexuality (34). I somewhat disagree with this, since David’s lack of facing his sexuality and accepting it leads to the disastrous end of the novel. *Giovanni’s Room* can, however, serve as a sort of cautionary tale, where the consequences of not embracing your own sexuality can prove to be dooming. Dragulescu also argues that after David leaves Giovanni’s room for good, he accepts his sexuality, which I disagree with (36): it is exactly the opposite of what happens, because if he had accepted his sexuality and his love for Giovanni, the ending of the novel would have been completely different. Pearl, on the other hand, and more fittingly, focuses more explicitly on the metaphor of ‘the closet’. She discusses the colloquial term and explains that ‘the closet’ is a way in which one can hide one’s secrets, even from oneself – not unlike how Dorian hides his deviant secrets in the same room as he hides his painting. She feels that the metaphor is apt for *Giovanni’s Room*, but is at the same time rather limiting, which I agree with. The closet is something a queer person escapes, and seems to equate liberation with this escape, which is not the evolutionary progress one should expect or require of oneself (72-73), because even if ‘[t]he closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century’, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet*, it does not mean that you ‘owe someone’ to ‘out yourself’, as it were (71). ‘The closet’ serves as a way in which David can avoid humiliation and proves to give him an illusion of control – but the metaphor does not hold, as the unfortunate ending proves (Pearl 74). ‘The closet’ instead becomes a sort of prison, where you feel that you need to escape, but the escape could also lead to even more heartache. This argument goes back to the idea of reconciling humiliation and shame, which I

have already discussed earlier in this subsection: for while shame is private and humiliation is public, the same can be said for desire and sex since '[d]esire is shameful; sex is humiliating' (76). 'The closet' is thus a way in which society can control the sexuality of people – because 'the closet', as Pearl describes it, is not only a queer trope, but a trope of control. The control comes by separating the inside and the outside, knowledge and ignorance, and revealing and keeping (77; Sedgwick 72). This control is an issue I will discuss in greater detail later, in both the *Giovanni's Room* chapter and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* chapter, in relation to the concept of the deviant, in this thesis.

Thomas points out that Baldwin was one of the first to introduce the character of 'the masculine gay man' (596), or 'the straight-acting gay man' (606). For David there are only two roles in life, the masculine and the feminine. And he believes that all homosexuals fall into one of three categories, 'the criminal (the prostitutes), the pathetic (the men soliciting the prostitutes), or sub-human (the animalistic *les folles*, whose name means either lunatic or buffoon)' (607); and obviously none of these roles would lead to an acceptable life for David. When David realises his attraction to Giovanni, he tries to fill the feminine role he envisions as existing in the relationship; but he soon finds the role unfitting. When he then breaks up with Giovanni some time later, he accuses Giovanni of trying to feminise him, which is the worst possible fate imaginable for David. He cannot fathom how two men can have a life together because of his attachment to his privilege as a straight-passing middle-class man in the heteronormative society he lives in (609-10) – he cannot imagine creating a queer space for himself and the love of his life. This is also an argument I will touch upon more later, in the *Giovanni's Room* chapter.

As we have seen, the previous criticism about *Giovanni's Room* has largely been about race, sexuality, identity, shame, and masculinity. Of the concepts I have surveyed, the concept of 'the closet', referring to the social control of queer people and their alienation in a heteronormative society, is most relevant for my thesis. *Giovanni's Room* contains many queer spaces, heterotopias, and deviant people, which I wish to explore further in the *Giovanni's Room* chapter later on in this thesis. I will build on the themes of 'the closet', and the labelling of deviants as a way for the heteronormative society to control queer people in relation to the spaces found in the novel. I believe that the spaces themselves serve as a way to re-establish the hegemonic order, as well as a way for David, a straight-passing queer man, to hide away and avoid his sexuality.

3 Chapter 3: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

*I fell a-weeping, and I cried, 'Sweet youth,
Tell me why, sad and sighing, thou dost rove
These pleasant realms? I pray thee speak me sooth
What is thy name?' He said, 'My name is Love.'
Then straight the first did turn himself to me
And cried, 'He lieth, for his name is Shame,
But I am Love, and I was wont to be
Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.'
Then sighing, said the other, 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name.'*

– Lord Alfred Douglas ('Two Loves')

'The love that dare not speak its name' is a common phrase used to describe the love in same-sex relationships; this association is largely because Lord Alfred Douglas, the poet, was one of Oscar Wilde's lovers, and his poem 'Two Loves' was read aloud in Wilde's gross indecency trial. The poem also mentions that queer people feel huge amounts of shame connected with their queer identity, which is very present in Wilde's novel. I would like to explore the love that dare not speak its name in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by looking at the spaces where this love is evident: Basil's home, the theatre where Sybil Vane performs, the opium dens at the docks, and the room where Dorian hides his portrait. I will first and foremost look at how the queer spaces came to be, what type of spaces are represented, and how these spaces affect the characters.

3.1 Basil's Garden

The first space we encounter in Wilde's novel is Basil's home – his painting studio and accompanying garden. The impression one gets at the start of the novel is that of tranquillity and restfulness, or maybe even peaceful sedation. Basil's garden is so beautiful, so filled with richness and exoticism, it is like an aesthete's dream – like the realities of life cannot touch the characters in the garden:

The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling

woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ. (Wilde 5)

Basil has created his own little utopia in the middle of busy city life, a heterotopia. This is a place where he can be himself, where he has created his own societal order – where counterintimacies are welcomed and accepted – an illusion of the perfect society for someone like him, for a queer person like him; not unlike what Giovanni tried to make his room into. This is also a place where Henry feels welcome. He feels he can actually relax and not be bound so tightly to societal expectations – they still exist, mind you, but they are at a distance. And since no one can enter this space without Basil's explicit permission, sexual deviants like Basil, Henry, and Dorian can feel safe. They can embrace and be a part of the 'love that dare not speak its name'.

An important note about the quote from the novel above is the noise implications. The garden possesses this peaceful, perhaps drowsy, silence, as contrasted to the 'dim roar of London'. London, in this case, represents the outer world, the hegemonic heteronormative public sphere, while Basil's garden represents a queer counterspace. This queer space is, however, not really a part of the public sphere because Basil himself is not a part of higher society. He is more comfortable staying at home and painting, and, since the space belongs to him, who is not a part of the public sphere, it is not really a part of the public sphere either. If he were to have extravagant parties, where he invited other people besides Dorian and Henry, the garden could arguably count as being a part of the public sphere, but since access to the garden is limited, this is not the case. The silence of the garden is also important if we consider Antonio Sanna's essay again. Sanna argues that the silence of a space represents something illicit, something one would want to hide, something deviant perhaps. This is an argument I find very appealing since Basil's garden indeed is described as quiet and calm – it is described as a place where the 'silent homosexual', which Sanna uses in his argument, or the deviant, can exist in peace. When Basil is working on the portrait of Dorian, in a quiet deviance, he expresses a desire to not display the portrait because he has 'put too much of [himself] into it' (6): the portrait is too revealing. It exposes Basil's romantic feelings for the younger man to the world. The garden, and Basil, tries to silence his deviant feelings – tries to hide them from the world.

The garden is a place where Basil and Henry feel comfortable sharing their innermost thoughts with each other – where they can be intimate with each other. Henry is very loose-lipped in almost every societal setting, true, but I would argue that the garden is a place where Henry feels even more comfortable, and not merely expresses an opinion just for the sake of

it. The garden provides a space where Henry does *not need to act* in accordance with societal expectations. He feels comfortable disclosing details about his marriage to Basil, about how he and his wife sometimes meet and dine together, and ‘tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces’, and how ‘when she does find me out [the fact that he has lied to her], she makes no row at all. I sometimes wish she would; but she merely laughs at me’ (8). He admits that he wants attention from his wife, that he enjoys spending time with her when possible. And Basil feels comfortable telling Henry that he ‘hate[s] the way you talk about your married life, Harry ... I believe that you are really a very good husband, but that you are thoroughly ashamed of your own virtues. You are an extraordinary fellow. You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose’ (8). Basil is in agreement with Burak Irmak that Henry is performing his gender, that Henry expresses his cynicism as a way to express himself. Henry performs his gender according to the Victorian societal role he has been dealt – not unlike how David, in *Giovanni’s Room*, feels like he needs to perform his sexuality so as not to be labelled as a deviant – and the cynicism and hedonistic philosophy Henry often expresses is a way for him to continue to perform his gender in the public sphere. The garden, and Basil’s company, thus serves as a place where Henry can be himself, with no need to perform (despite the fact that he, to some extent, does exactly that); it is a place where Basil and Henry can experience counterintimacies without being afraid of society’s limitations on queer acts; they can express themselves without fear, enjoy whatever past-times they wish, and recognise the importance of each other. In this private sphere that Basil’s garden is, Henry and Basil are able to exist without shame.

Dorian’s corruption also starts in the garden. Henry and Basil talk lengthily about how Dorian is Basil’s muse, and when Dorian shows up to model for Basil, Henry is immediately obsessed with meeting the younger man. Basil, on the other hand, wishes to spare Dorian of Henry’s bad influence: ‘Don’t spoil him. Don’t try to influence him. Your influence would be bad’ (16) – and even Henry somewhat agrees since he believes that ‘[a]ll influence is immoral ... [b]ecause to influence a person is to give him one’s own soul’ (20). And Henry *does* set out to influence Dorian, to see ‘the sudden impression that his words had produced’ (22). As James Campbell points out, this is the moment where Dorian is exposed to unlimited amounts of worship from Basil, and immoral prodding from Henry. This is the moment where Dorian is made aware of his own beauty and the possibilities associated with that beauty. This is also the moment where Dorian starts his deviant lifestyle, by focusing on the eternity of beauty, by saying that he is ‘jealous of everything whose beauty does not die’ (28). But the decadence of Dorian’s life does only start after he meets Henry. Even though Basil constantly

complimented Dorian, he believes that the compliments ‘had not influenced his nature’ (27). Henry’s obsessions with youth and beauty, on the other hand, ‘had stirred him at the time’ (27). Their combined effort starts to influence Dorian, which, as Henry points out, results in an immoral influence. As Clifton Bryant points out in his description of the deviant, they may be indoctrinated and influenced into the deviant lifestyle, or they may be born. I think it is safe to assume that Dorian is mentored by the deviants Henry and Basil to join their world. The garden that previously served as a safe refuge for the arguably queer Henry and Basil has now turned into the origin of the arguably queer, deviant Dorian.

Basil’s home then serves as the origin of Dorian’s deviant corruption, the place where Dorian’s deviance is born, but also as a queer counterspace. This is the place which Basil has created to accommodate his queer identity, the place where Henry feels comfortable sharing his innermost thoughts and feelings, and, as an illusionary heterotopia, the garden is made to mimic some sort of utopian dream. Not everyone is allowed inside, however, because that could make the queer counterspace cease to exist.

3.2 Sybil’s Theatre

The theatre soon becomes a part of Dorian’s new deviant lifestyle. He tells Henry the story of how he met Sybil and exclaims to Henry that ‘it never would have happened if I had not met you. You filled me with a wild desire to know everything about life’ (48). Henry’s influence, which Henry himself has already argued is immoral, has led Dorian to meet his future fiancée.

The theatre itself is an obvious queer space, following George Chauncey’s definition, which places commercialised spaces such as theatres and cabarets as places where queer people can engage in counter-intimacies almost anonymously. It is also an obvious heterotopia, following Foucault’s third principle about how a space can contain multiple spaces at the same time, and a hypercomplex space following Lefebvre’s theory. The example which Foucault uses is exactly that of a theatre, where a play can transfer you to another realm, which is exactly what Sybil manages to do – but it is not as simple as that. It is implied by Foucault that it is the play itself that transfers the viewer to a secondary location, but in the case of Wilde’s novel, it is only Sybil who manages this extraordinary feat. As Dorian tells Henry:

Well, I found myself seated in a horrid little private box, with a vulgar drop-scene staring me in the face ... There was a dreadful orchestra ... Romeo was a stout elderly gentleman, with corked eyebrows, a husky tragedy voice, and a figure like a beer-

barrel. Mercutio was almost as bad ... They were both as grotesque as the scenery ... [Sybil] is everything to me in life. Night after night I go to see her play. One evening she is Rosalind, and the next evening she is Imogen ... I have seen her in every age and in every costume. Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. (49-51)

The theatre and the other actors practically disgust Dorian, and he soon seems to want to leave; but when Sybil enters the play, Dorian is transfixed by her. He comes back night after night, only to watch Sybil perform, only to be transported to another century. Sybil becomes something of a reverie for Dorian, a dream come to life, an illusion made reality. She is also so extraordinary that she manages to transform the set on stage, and the actors as well.

The space itself is hypercomplex because it can contain multiple meanings, as per Lefebvre's description of the concept. The experienced meaning is clear: it is a theatre which mostly plays Shakespeare. The perceived meaning is harder to pin down because we do not know explicitly how the space is related to the spaces surrounding it. What we *do know* is that Dorian wanders around in London one evening, searching for adventure, and finally loses his way in 'a labyrinth of grimy streets and black grassless squares' (49), which Robert Mighall, the editor of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, argues was a common description of poorer neighbourhoods in London at the time (Wilde 49n. 6). So we know that the theatre is located in a neighbourhood Dorian is unfamiliar with, probably an impoverished one, and that it is 'an absurd little theatre, with great flaring gas-jets and gaudy play-bills' (49) but '[t]he gallery and pit were [still] fairly full' (49). The theatre thus could be the pride of the neighbourhood. It could likely be the venue which brought in the most money to the community at large, and could have a large standing in relation to its surrounding spaces – even if it's positioned in a poor neighbourhood. The imagined meaning is also rather hard to establish because the meaning itself is dependent on the viewer. For Sybil the meaning of the place is probably something of a preferred reality since '[s]he regarded [Dorian] merely as a person in a play. She knows nothing of life' (53), but it is also the place where she falls in love with her 'Prince Charming'. For the Jewish man at the front, the theatre is a way for him to honour William Shakespeare; especially if you consider that 'his five bankruptcies were entirely due to "The Bard," as he insisted on calling him' (52). And for Dorian the theatre is a first step into realising his new deviant lifestyle, an opportunity to appreciate beauty and art (because all plays are ultimately a form of art), and maybe even a first step *out of* his new deviant lifestyle because, as I have already discussed, the deviant is ultimately a way of describing the homosexual lifestyle. When Dorian then is enamoured with Sybil, he is taking a step *away*

from the influence of Henry. But, as I will argue further down, the captivation Dorian feels for Sybil is actually not directed at her at all. Sybil, as a metaphor for the space in question, represents a way in which Dorian can be a part of the hegemonic heteronormative society again – a way for Dorian to be ‘normal’ again.

As I have already stated, I want to argue that Foucault’s heterotopias are examples of queer spacing, but if it still remains uncertain how Sybil’s theatre is queer, let me put an additional argument forth: Wilde made the theatre space itself queer because they only play Shakespearean plays. In his short story ‘The Portrait of Mr. W. H’ Wilde argues that the person who Shakespeare dedicated his *Sonnets* to was a boy actor, Willie Hughes, whom Shakespeare was romantically involved with (Wilde, ‘The Portrait of Mr. W. H’ 17-19). Of course the narrator of this short story does not have any actual proof to back his claim, nor is it certain that Wilde even believed the arguments himself, nor do I find it important if he did, but they still prove rather compelling. I will not bore you by reciting all of the arguments which Wilde presented, but I did find one of them particularly fascinating: Shakespeare apparently made a lot of the female lead roles with his younger lover in mind, roles such as Rosalind and Imogen. Women were naturally not allowed to act in the theatre during Shakespeare’s time, so that task was reserved for younger males such as Willie Hughes (76-77). These roles are incidentally two of the roles which Sybil plays (Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 51), and one of the times when Dorian expresses that ‘[s]he had never seemed to [him] more exquisite’ (74) is when she plays Rosalind, who famously had to disguise herself as a male shepherd and did not wholly fit into the feminine gender roles of Shakespeare’s time. After the performance is finished, Dorian finds himself in Sybil’s dressing room and they share their first kiss and get engaged. The argument I wish to put forth is that Dorian found himself attracted to Sybil largely because of the fact that she had been acting in a role which Shakespeare had created for his male lover, according to Wilde himself, and she had also been wearing a man’s clothing for the better part of the play. Dorian is, as already mentioned, more in love with the characters of Shakespeare than Sybil herself, and the moment they take their relationship further is the day when she plays Rosalind. If one were to believe the arguments that Wilde himself puts forth in ‘The Portrait of Mr. W. H’, it is not a leap to believe that Dorian could have fallen in love with the idea of Willie Hughes, rather than Sybil Vane. All of these factors contribute to the fact that I argue that the theatre itself is a queer space, regardless of the lack of queer actions taking place in the theatre itself.

The argument that Dorian has always just been in love with Shakespeare’s characters, not Sybil herself, is solidified by the way he breaks up with her. Henry asks Dorian, before

they see her play badly, ‘When is she Sybil Vane?’ and Dorian answers, ‘Never’ (54). He is so happy with the fact that she plays all of these wonderful characters and never acts as herself – that he knows exactly what to expect of her. After the horrible play, Sybil explains to Dorian that he has ‘taught [her] what reality really is’ because of her love for him, and when she wishes that Dorian can ‘take [her] away with [him], where [they] can be quite alone’ (84) he breaks up with her. He cannot bear to be alone with *her*, to accept the responsibility of courting *her* any further – he was, after all, more enamoured with the idea of Sybil, of her symbolic act as Willie Hughes, than with Sybil herself. The illusion which Sybil had created no longer exists, which is also true of his love for her, because ‘[she] used to stir [his] imagination. Now [she doesn’t] even stir [his] curiosity’ (85). Because Sybil acts badly one night, because Sybil is ready to enter the heteronormative public sphere with Dorian at her side, the heterotopia, the queer counterspace, ceases to exist. It was just temporary.

Sybil’s theatre is no doubt a hypercomplex space, an illusionary heterotopia, containing many meanings and many places at the same time. I have also argued that the space itself is queer because of the fact that Dorian has fallen in love with Shakespeare’s younger male lover, whom Sybil’s roles were created for, and that Dorian only broke up with Sybil because she became a bad actress, who only wanted to take their relationship into the public sphere, which would make Dorian have to give up his deviant lifestyle. This queer counterspace then ceases to exist when Dorian breaks up with Sybil, and she ends up killing herself because the space itself cannot exist without Sybil, and she cannot exist without Dorian the deviant.

3.3 The Opium Dens at the Docks

During the first meeting between Henry and Dorian, Henry exclaims that one of the secrets to life is ‘[t]o cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul’ (23), which is something Dorian sets out to do the evening he burns Basil’s coat and bag. Dorian ‘had often tried it, and would try it again now. There were opium dens where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of the sins that were new’ (176). Dorian wants to heal his soul by clouding his mind with opium – because he assumes that if you do not acknowledge your sins, they do not exist.

We know for a fact that Dorian has visited these opium dens before, or dens of similar reputation, since he kills Basil in order to protect this little secret. We know there are rumours ‘that he had been seen brawling with foreign sailors in a low den’ (136) – which really is just a euphemism for engaging in same-sex relations – and that there are stories about him

‘creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London’ (145). We also know that some nights, prior to the murder of Basil, he ‘would creep out of the house, go down to dreadful places near Blue Gate Fields, and stay there, day after day, until he was driven away’ (135) – urged by the influence of the painting to participate in deviant acts. Dorian is very familiar with opium dens in general and has participated in sinful and immoral acts for the better part of eighteen years, but somehow, he is still not comfortable actually staying in the environment where such acts are accepted. He is very uncomfortable being a part of this space, despite the fact that he *does*, in fact, belong – just like David who, despite being and participating in queer acts, does not feel like he *belongs* in a gay bar. Dorian has participated in deviant acts such as same-sex relations, and doing these deviant acts in a deviant place would make him even more of a deviant than keeping that part of himself entirely hidden – and being known as a deviant would of course be unacceptable to a high standing man in Victorian times. During the night in question, he certainly is, however, desperate to go back to one of these dens, to calm his nerves, even though the place makes him uneasy – even though he is reluctant to accept that he actually belongs in the place.

Despite his desperation to feed his opium addiction, Dorian feels very uncomfortable before even entering the den. He gets the hansom to drop him off somewhere anonymous, walks the distance to the opium den, and carefully checks that he is not being followed. He knocks at a seemingly random house, and when he gains entry, he does not even greet ‘the squat misshapen figure’ (178) who lets him in – he tries to stay hidden. Dorian walks straight to the back of the den and looks for his friend, or perhaps former friend is a more accurate description, Adrian Singleton, who is the only person he voluntarily engages in conversation. Adrian is one of the men Dorian has led to this unfortunate life and is the only person whom Dorian feels is worthy of his attention, since Adrian formerly was a part of higher society. Dorian even turns his back on the ‘two haggard women’ (179) who ‘sidled up and began to chatter’ (180) at him and Adrian. Because even though Dorian has been in this particular den before, and actually met (and ruined the life of) one of the women patrons, and has often been in other dens like it, he does not feel like he *belongs* in the den. He feels like he is better than the other clientele, even though he has been frequenting these same dens – even though he is a deviant himself. This space is obviously a deviation heterotopia, or what Kevin Hetherington calls an incongruous heterotopia. This is a space which does not follow the societal expectations set by Victorian society, but is instead a place of alternative ordering, just like Guillaume’s bar, and the people who frequent these dens are outside of the public sphere – and are not allowed inside it any time soon. The patrons are deviants, not necessarily sexual

deviants, but deviants just the same. Dorian is, at least on the surface, still a part of the heteronormative public society, due to his money and status in society; so, even though some people would not like to associate with him, he is still a relevant figure in the society. Dorian has gone to great lengths to hide his own deviance, to hide the suspected rumours about him, and it is thus natural that he does not take kindly to associating with other deviants, lest he is found out himself; or maybe, more specifically, he is afraid of other people *seeing him* associate with other deviants. As Sanna points out in his essay, the worst thing that can happen to a person of Dorian's standing is being a part of a scandal, and when Dorian then continues his deviant lifestyle, he is dependent on keeping this life secret – and the only way to do so is by distancing himself as someone better than the other patrons, just like David does with his queer friends and acquaintances. He sees himself as superior to the 'grotesque things' (179) littering the floor around him, because he himself 'was prisoned in thought' (179) and he also knew 'what strange heavens [the opium addicts] were suffering, and what dull hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy' (179). Dorian had experienced the effects of the opium himself, and because he has had the experience before, he is superior to those surrounding him. For while this opium cloud is the reality of life for the patrons in the den, and while they are actively participating in the deviant lifestyle, Dorian only 'wanted to escape from himself' (179), not actually be a permanent part of this incongruous heterotopia.

The opium dens, or the docks in general, are where Dorian had been 'seen brawling with foreign sailors' (136) – which is, as I have already stated, a euphemism for Dorian engaging in same-sex relations, for the fact that Dorian is a sexual deviant. This obviously makes the docks a queer space. The fact that the space in general is a heterotopia does not automatically make it a queer space naturally, but the fact that Dorian presumably has had queer relations at this space, and that these are deviation heterotopias in particular, speaks to the fact that the space itself is queer. As I discussed in Chapter 1, a deviant is often synonymous with a queer person, because homosexuality soon became the number one deviance. The fact that the docks, or the dens, then clearly are deviation heterotopias, speaks to the fact that they also represent a queer space. This might be the place where Dorian first engages with queer sexual acts, and the place which he connects with his role as a deviant (despite his not seeing himself as such). This is a place where other deviants may get together, away from the shame of the public sphere, to just be themselves – to have some sort of anonymity, while still engaging in some sort of queer community. This is a place where counterintimacies may thrive and may be accepted; it may be the Victorian equivalent of a Parisian gay bar. The opium dens can be seen as an example of the world-building project

which Berlant and Warner discuss in their essay. This project can contain a lot of different shades of queer culture, of counterintimacies such as self-expression, and a queer person may enter and exit at will – which is why Dorian leaves as soon as he can. The acceptance of a lifestyle gets to be too much for him. He, after all, only wants to escape his own mind, not enter into a new world, no matter how well he fits in.

Lastly, I want to comment on the fact that Dorian specifically seeks Adrian Singleton out. Basil does, on the night that he is killed, ask Dorian, ‘[w]hy is your friendship so fatal to young men?’ (144), and asks specifically about what had happened to Adrian, and Dorian’s role in ‘his dreadful end’ (144). Dorian then asks, ‘[i]f Adrian Singleton writes his friend’s name across a bill, am I his keeper?’ (144). To answer Dorian’s question, it sure does seem like he thinks he is. Dorian presumably goes to that particular opium den because it is the place Adrian frequents the most, or maybe even where he lives. He goes straight to the back of the den, checks if Adrian is present, checks up on his life, offers to buy him a drink, and asks him to write to Dorian if he requires anything. And lastly, his meeting with the other man ‘had strangely moved him, and he wondered if the ruin of that young life was really to be laid at his door, as Basil Hallward had said to him with such infamy of insult’ (181). He feels rather guilty about introducing Adrian into this deviant lifestyle, about influencing his actions – of doing exactly the same as Henry and Basil had done to him – because if you influence someone to do something, is not the fault yours if they act upon that influence? If we look at the opium den as just an opium den, it is undoubtedly unlikely that one would want to argue against the fact that the space itself is immoral since opium addiction across the world during this time period had ruined countless lives; but if we look at the den as a queer space, it is more difficult as to argue the morality of Dorian indoctrinating Adrian into the lifestyle, and, furthermore, this thesis does not aim to discuss the morality concept specifically. Instead, I wish to argue that the opium dens serve as a form of liberation for Adrian. Dorian is there, as already mentioned, to escape his own spinning mind-prison. Adrian, on the other hand, stays there after he is marked as a deviant by his friends and family – and states that ‘[a]s long as one has this stuff, one doesn’t want friends. I think I have had too many friends’ (179). Dorian, in other words, lets himself continue to be controlled by the hegemonic society, while Adrian, on the other hand, decides to leave that society behind, to not let himself be controlled anymore. Adrian is utilising two of the techniques which Erving Goffman outlines as ways to manage the deviant label: he is *passing* and *covering*. He *covers* by trying to normalise the fact that he is a deviant, because of the fact that he now lives and participates in a deviation heterotopia. He is also reluctant to discuss his label as a deviant with Dorian, so he *passes* by

hiding out in the deviation heterotopia and by not engaging much in conversation with Dorian. Even though Adrian has accepted the fact that he is a deviant, he would not like to appear as such before his former friend. We know, from the rumours about Adrian, that he has been caught writing his friend's name on a bill, and Adrian loses all of his friends as a result – but it seems like he feels liberated after the fact, rather than disgruntled. He is now, in no uncertain terms, a part of the deviant lifestyle which Dorian introduced him to, but which Dorian is afraid to be unapologetically a part of himself. Adrian does not 'care to go back. What does it matter? [He] is quite happy here' (180). Even if he is lying or making light of things, he seems resigned to his new life – to a life of deviance. He is content with being a part of the deviation heterotopia because he has accepted the fact that he is a deviant himself. He can now take part in the counterintimacies which are unacceptable in other places in society; he can be a part of the queer world-building project.

The opium dens at the docks are an obvious example of a deviation heterotopia, but also a queer space. Dorian is reluctant to accept the fact that he can belong in the place due to his being a sexual deviant, because of the potential scandal involved. He saw what a scandal has done to his former friend Adrian and is afraid of having to suffer the same fate. Even though Dorian has probably been involved in several same-sex relations at the docks, with foreign sailors and former friends alike, he, unlike Adrian, will try his hardest to avoid scandal – to avoid having to be forced to be a part of the queer culture.

3.4 Dorian Gray's Picture

We cannot really discuss *The Picture of Dorian Gray* without discussing the picture itself, and the space in which it spends most of the time in the novel. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the picture itself is a mixture of a heterotopia and a utopia, per Foucault's description of the utopian mirror. The picture itself is in reality just a picture, but it is also a window into the soul of Dorian. At first, the picture shows Dorian in his prime, as a youthful and beautiful boy, as a utopian version of himself, but soon it starts to warp Dorian's reality – not only by displaying the sins and deviance of Dorian, but by influencing him to continue to commit sinful acts. The picture shows Dorian as he really is and what he can be, and the picture also tries to influence the actions of Dorian himself, throughout the novel.

As we have already seen, Basil has spent a lot of his time complimenting Dorian, but Dorian does not consider these compliments as categorically true, but as an extension of their friendship. When he sees the portrait of himself for the first time, he finally recognises his

own beauty: 'The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before' (27); and the fact that he had never taken his own beauty seriously before makes him terrified of losing it. He has, after all, only just gained it. He also connects beauty and youth with his respective friendships with Basil and Henry, and therefore fears that he will be alone if he loses either of these traits, which is why he wishes that 'the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now' (28). This is the moment that Dorian's soul is arguably split from his body, so that the portrait will age instead of him, and will soak up the immorality of his actions. But Dorian is still unaware of the power of the portrait. He is not made aware until after Sybil has committed suicide, when he notices that '[t]he expression [on the painting] looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth' (87). He realises that he has been cruel to Sybil by looking at the changed expression and decides to turn himself around and get Sybil back and '[h]is life with her would be beautiful and pure' (89) – which really just means that he is ready to conform to society's expectations of him, by continuing the engagement with Sybil, rather than commit to a life of sexual deviance. He also decides to hide the painting away, to hide his guilt and shame away (or the queer part of himself), by putting up a screen in front of it. This is of course before he realises that Sybil has killed herself, and that the fault lays with him. The death of Sybil, then, takes on the role of some romantic past for himself, and he takes Henry's words to heart: '[s]ome one has killed herself for love of you. I wish that I had ever had such an experience. It would have made me in love with love for the rest of my life' (98). The experience with Sybil was very sad, yes, but now he is able to always love the idea of Sybil, without marring her or watching her grow old – similarly to how David cherishes the memories of Giovanni and their room, rather than making the decision to make more memories with him instead. Dorian then makes the conscious decision of letting life and time decide how he should live his life: '[e]ternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all' (102). He has decided to embrace his deviant lifestyle, and does not try to conform entirely to the notions of the public sphere. He has actively decided to be a deviant, as long as no one finds him out.

Dorian, however, does not feel safe for long: instead, he grows paranoid. He does not trust his servant to know where he is moving the portrait because there 'was something sly about him, and he had thoughtful, treacherous eyes' (116), and he acquires the only key to the room he keeps the painting in. Dorian even fears that his servant will be 'creeping upstairs [one night] and trying to force the door of the room' (119) because he has already

undoubtedly noticed that Dorian has moved the painting. Dorian even grows so paranoid that he cannot bear to part with his painting out of fear ‘that during his absence some one might gain access to the room, in spite of the elaborate bars that he had caused to be placed upon the door’ (135). The more sinful things he does, the more paranoid he grows; the more of a deviant he becomes, *the need to hide* his deviance becomes greater. He needs to hide the painting away so no one will ever know that he is a deviant, as Sanna argues in his essay. This is also similar to the notion of the closet, which I discussed in my chapter on the critical reception of *Giovanni’s Room*. Dorian hides away his deviance, his queerness, in a room only he himself has access to – which is the same as staying inside the proverbial closet. Dorian also gains some sort of perverse satisfaction from looking at the picture as it grows more and more grotesque, from looking at his sins move around the canvas like worms on a corpse: ‘[t]hey would mar its beauty and eat away its grace. They would defile it and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive’ (115). Dorian ‘grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul’ (124) – the juxtaposition of his own beauty in the mirror beside the defiled and shameful portrait, the deviant soul on the canvas, excites Dorian. It makes him feel so alive to defile his own soul by living sinfully, especially when he can see his influence on the faces of other people as well – which is likely why he set out to make his ‘friendship so fatal to young men’ (144). He wishes to see the same influence he can see in his own portrait on the faces of his friends. As long as no one can see the deviance on his own face, on his own soul in the portrait, Dorian continues to live sinfully – his deviance is safely tucked away in the proverbial closet, in his own private sphere.

As Sanna points out in his essay, Dorian goes to great lengths to hide his deviant acts, because that was what queer Victorian men *did*. They could not afford to act upon their sexuality in a place where they did not feel safe, surrounded by other deviants or in the privacy of their own homes – which is, as already stated, arguably why Dorian chooses to hide away his portrait. The portrait is a metaphor for Dorian’s very soul, his own sexually deviant personality, and he cannot afford for other people to see it; he cannot even afford to look upon the portrait himself unless he seeks it out. He hides away his deviance, his shame, in a room only he himself, and the people he lets in, can access. Instead of embracing his sexuality, he decides to imprison himself – just like David’s decision to break up with Giovanni, was spurred on by the need to continue to deny his own sexuality. Dorian decides to hide away his sexuality in a room only *he* can access, to keep his sexuality private, not because he wants to, but because society forces him to – not unlike how society forced queer

intimacies out of the public and into the private sphere, basically abolishing queer people from the public. Dorian is forced to hide his sexuality, to stay inside the proverbial closet, because he cannot afford for other people to look upon his queer personality, his queer soul, lest he be labelled a deviant himself.

The room on the upper floor of Dorian's house is also the place where Basil is killed, and the killing scene is very confusing – because Dorian is, one moment, consumed with passion, and in the next he inhabits an eerie calmness. When Dorian takes Basil up to see the painting, it is in some erratic frenzy, but when Basil actually looks at the painting, Dorian is calm again: '[Dorian was] watching [Basil] with that strange expression that one sees on the faces of those who are absorbed in a play when some great artist is acting' (149). Then, after they discuss the 'ideal' which Basil had put into the painting (which I choose to read as romance, adoration, or worship), Basil wishes to save Dorian from himself, from his deviant lifestyle. Dorian is then filled with 'an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward ... The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything' (151). After the deed of killing Basil is done, Dorian 'felt strangely calm' again (152). And then he only refers to the body of his murdered friend as 'the thing' or 'the murdered man', never as Basil Hallward again. Dorian disassociates entirely from the murder, from the deviance of it, from the love he once had harboured for his friend – in a similar fashion to David, who has a way of dissociating entirely from too-big feelings, his own or others'. Now Basil's murder is just something that has happened, something Dorian needs to get rid of and take care of: 'He felt that the secret of the whole thing was not to realize the situation. The friend who had painted the fatal portrait to which all his misery had been due had gone out of his life. That was enough.' (152). He needs to distance himself from the deviant act, lest he makes it real. He utilises another one of Goffman's techniques: he is *covering* – refusing to think excessively about the deviance of it all, which he thinks might make it go away. Because '[e]very year – every month, almost – men were strangled in England for what he had done' (153). Dorian is aware that deviant acts are being punished by the law, not only punished by society. He is aware that *his own actions*, both the murder and probably his other immoralities, could lead to heavy sanctions. He blatantly refuses to be labelled as a deviant if he can help it.

Alan Campbell is another one of Dorian's former friends, and the one Dorian turns to in order to destroy Basil's body. Alan and Dorian had 'been great friends once, five years before – almost inseparable, indeed. Then the intimacy had come suddenly to an end' (158). And Dorian knows one of Alan's secrets, which he uses to blackmail him. Alan can feel '[a]

horrible sense of sickness [come] over him. He felt as if his heart was beating itself to death in some empty hollow' (163), just by the fact that Dorian knows (or possibly that he is willing to confess) that particular secret of Alan's. Alan is even so mortified by Dorian's knowledge that he would later '[shoot] himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know' (210). Alan helps, albeit against his will, to hide Dorian's deviance – to shield Dorian from the judging public, to contain the deviance inside the home, inside the attic room, inside the proverbial closet, away from the public. Alan does this to shield himself as well, for sure, because he would be connected to the deviance which Dorian would admit to. Dorian is unafraid to implicate himself at this point, because without Alan's help, he himself would be labelled as a deviant either way. He would be forced to show the world his portrait, to show the world his sins – and if Dorian is going to be a public disgrace, he is unafraid to drag Alan down along with him.

The last, and possibly most important, scene I wish to comment on is the last scene in the book, of Dorian killing himself. This scene is so very interesting because Dorian has tried to become a more morally decent person over the last while, and he has begun 'to wonder if the portrait in the locked room had changed. Surely it was not still so horrible as it had been? Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away' (211). The only change that can be seen in the portrait, however, is in the mouth, which is now in 'the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite' (211). Dorian realises that he will never be able to change his deviant ways, because they are, at this time of his life, a part of him, that he can never become society's notion of pure – of conforming to the strict, heterosexual, norms of society. He then ponders if he should confess to his deviant acts, if that would make his past go away: 'it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement' (212). But ultimately he decides that he would rather prefer his past to go away; the only thing actually linking him to a deviant lifestyle is the portrait itself, after all. So he decides that if he destroys the portrait, he destroys the deviance. He is, however, mistaken, because by killing the portrait, he ends up killing himself instead. If we then think about the portrait as a manifestation of Dorian's deviant lifestyle, that is to say his queer lifestyle, he tries to kill that part of himself. He tries to get rid of his sexuality, so to speak, after keeping it hidden for so long. Instead of trying to reconcile that part of himself, which would make him free from guilt and shame, he tries to get rid of it instead. Because '[a]s [the knife] had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he

would be at peace' (212). Instead of embracing his sexuality, he decides to kill it, and ultimately himself – instead of just being queer, being at peace with himself, he tried to conform to society's notion of peace. This is also eerily similar to the ending of *Giovanni's Room*, when Giovanni, the love of David's life, is walking towards the guillotine – because David was unable to accept his sexuality at the time, Giovanni ends up facing the knife, and David ends up all alone. Both Dorian and David find out the hard way that you cannot kill a part of yourself – you cannot halfway conform to society's norms – without killing the whole – without being untrue to yourself. The picture of Dorian Gray is a physical manifestation of Dorian's sinful and sexually deviant life. It was made by the combined effort of the mentoring of Basil and Henry, and, when Dorian realises what the portrait represents, he feels a desperate need to hide it away – to hide away the physical manifestation of his sins and sexually deviant acts. He is afraid of being labelled a deviant by the hegemonic heteronormative public society, so he hides away a piece of himself. He kills and threatens former friends to protect himself and his public image, and that, ultimately, is the bane of his own existence.

As this analysis has shown, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a book filled with queer spaces and sexual deviance. As you have no doubt noticed, I consistently used to terms deviant and deviant acts to refer to many of the characters and their behaviours, because I feel it is the most correct term to refer to Dorian and the immoral and queer acts he participates in. The spaces in the novel are also never obviously queer, so by placing deviants and deviant acts in these places, it is both possible and beneficial to read the spaces as queer. Critics have argued time and time again that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a queer novel, which everyone should agree with, and the spaces should also be considered queer – because one of the themes heavily explored in the novel is that of otherness, of not belonging. This is the case for Henry, for Basil, for Dorian, and Alan and Adrian as well – all characters which can be considered queer. Some of them are desperate to be a part of the hegemonic heteronormative public sphere, while others have created heterotopias where they can be themselves, or have become part of queer spaces such as deviation heterotopias. And we can very well see what happens to the characters who conform, and what happens to those who deviate. Basil, who has created a heterotopia for himself, is killed by the man he considers his muse, his inspiration, and worthy of his affection. Alan kills himself because he cannot bear living in a world where he cannot be accepted, and he cannot live with the guilt of getting rid of Basil's body. Adrian joins a deviation heterotopia, where he can finally be himself, but is cut off from his friends and the world he formerly lived in. Henry is left all alone – his long-time friend has

disappeared, his wife has left him, and his protégé has ended up killing himself. And Dorian, whom so many were influenced by, tries to right his life by living more morally, but ends up killing himself with the same knife he used to kill his friend – with no one but his servants checking up on him. The novel's queer spaces affect these characters in different ways, but the end result seems to be the same: if you do not belong in the public sphere, if you cannot find a way to conform to it, if you cannot find a way to hide that part of yourself which does not belong, you will end up ruined – whether that means that you will die, by your own hand or by the hand of one you trusted most in the world, or that you will be dispelled from the public sphere.

4 Chapter 4: James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*

*I have no will to weep or sing,
No least desire to pray or curse;
The loss of love is a terrible thing;
They lie who say that death is worse.*

– Countee Cullen ('The Loss of Love')

James Baldwin has been said to have been inspired by Countee Cullen's poems, and when we read the heart-wrenching last stanza of 'The Loss of Love', it is easy to see why. It is also likely that *Giovanni's Room* is directly influenced by the poem, if we look at the desperation which David feels in the present time in the novel. He cannot imagine living in a world without the love of his life, even though he was ashamed to claim him as his love. In this part of the thesis I will look at several queer spaces, which often serve as heterotopias as well, namely Giovanni's Room, Guillaume's bar and the house David stays at in the south of France; but I will also look at a mirror of utopia, David's revelatory reflection in the present time in the novel. I will first and foremost look at how David behaves in these spaces, and how the queer spaces affect him and change him throughout the novel.

4.1 Giovanni's Room

You cannot really write a thesis about *Giovanni's Room* without commenting on the room itself, much like the picture in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The room in question encompasses all of David and Giovanni's relationship with each other; the good, the bad and the ugly. This is the room where David could finally imagine himself, however briefly, building a life with Giovanni, the room where David breaks up with the other man, sending Giovanni into a spiral of despair, and the room where they discuss their horrible view of women. The room, which doubles as a heterotopia and a queer space, is arguably where deviants like David and Giovanni can feel safe – much like Basil's garden does for Basil, Henry and Dorian.

One of the first descriptions we get of the room is that David feels like 'life in that room seemed to be occurring beneath the sea, time flowed past indifferently above us, hour and days had no meaning' (Baldwin 73). He feels like he has 'spent a lifetime there. Life in that room seemed to be occurring underwater, as I say, and it is certain that I underwent a sea-change there' (82). His time in the room feels like a lifetime, but also like it is too fleeting.

This is something that clearly resonates with Foucault's fourth heterotopia principle, namely that a heterotopia can be connected to a specific notion of time – eternity or temporality. In the case of this room, David feels like they have lived in the room for an eternity, when in reality it has only been a few months. Similarly, the time spent in the room feels vulnerable and fragile – as if their peace together can only be temporary, and the room merely serves as an escape from reality. David and Giovanni live in their own little bubble, 'far from the center of the city' (83), far away from the heteronormative public sphere. Giovanni has created a queer space, a heterotopia, where he can spend time with David, build a life with him. The room was created, first by Giovanni and later by David, to serve as some sort of free space for them, where they can speak candidly with each other (discussing, for instance, how they feel about women, see 77), and imagine a life they can build together – the very same intentions that drove Basil to create his own utopia in his garden. By comparing their time in the room with that of a life under the sea, David gives us the image of something calm and collected, emerging in its own bubble. If you are careful, it can be preserved, but the sea is a fickle thing; anything could disrupt the peace within.

In the present tense David is somewhat reminiscent about his time spent in Giovanni's room: 'now, of course, I see something very beautiful in those days, which were such torture then' (109). Even though the time David has spent with Giovanni in that room has not always been beautiful and filled with love, he looks back at those days with fondness, those days where he and Giovanni were almost like partners. He actually believes that the room 'became, in a way, every room [he] had ever been in and every room [he finds himself] in hereafter will remind [him] of Giovanni's room' (82). Giovanni's room becomes so ingrained in him, as a person, that he will always be reminded of that room. David also starts to wonder about the state of Giovanni's current room, the cell he undoubtedly resides in in the present time. He wonders 'if it is bigger than his room. [He knows] that it is colder' (108). David romanticises the idea of Giovanni's room because the alternative is too harsh for him; which not unlike what Dorian does with Sybil's suicide. The reality is that David is alone, and Giovanni is alone. The reality is that Hella has just left David, and that Giovanni is facing the guillotine. And David cannot bear to face reality all alone, just as in the scene where David breaks up with Giovanni, as I will discuss shortly. David thinks fondly about their time together in that room because he cannot bear to face the reality of the situation, even if their time together was laced with conflict and the shame that often accompanied same-sex relationships at the time.

The room itself is described as cluttered and disordered (64), claustrophobic (70, 101), and filled with the garbage of 'Giovanni's regurgitated life' (83), which is unlike the

anonymous garbage which fills the streets of Paris. Giovanni's room is filled with everything pertaining to Giovanni's life, everything he owns in the world. David also soon realises that Giovanni does not keep the room untidy and filled with garbage because of 'habit or circumstance or temperament; it was [instead] a matter of punishment and grief' (84). David imagines that the room represents Giovanni's soul, and the reason Giovanni has brought him there is to become a part of the room – to 'destroy this room and give to Giovanni a new and better life' (84). He and Giovanni tries to remodel the room together, and Giovanni has started the remodelling prior to David's arrival. They want to make the room fit for living, to maybe make it 'good enough' for the heteronormative public sphere. We know for a fact that David is homophobic and reluctant to take part in any kind of queer culture, as I will demonstrate in the next subchapter, so when David sees a dilapidated and ruined room, he automatically associates the room with Giovanni's 'ruined soul' – with Giovanni's queerness. David wants to transform Giovanni's room into something acceptable for him, a straight-passing middle class white American – he wants to transform it into some semblance of heteronormativity. He 'invented in [himself] a kind of pleasure in playing the housewife after Giovanni had gone to work' (84), as he tries to reconcile the life he now lives with Giovanni with the kind of life he had imagined himself as living with Hella – where one of them is the breadwinner and the other is taking care of their home. But he cannot lead that sort of life; he cannot make that dream last. He imagines that Giovanni is only with him because David tries to be a housewife; he tries to be the woman whereas Giovanni is the man in their relationship, with the power imbalance which often follows, and they can never make the relationship work because of this power imbalance. And yet one day when they are fighting, David exclaims that '[t]here must – there must ... be other rooms' (112), because he feels that Giovanni has buried himself in the room, the disorder of the room for too long. He feels that Giovanni deserves another room, that Giovanni deserves to be 'normal' – that they both do. The disorder of the room, the dirtiness of the room, is something David associates with queerness, and he feels that Giovanni needs to be something else – something more acceptable. And Giovanni sees this association in David, and asks, 'What kind of room do you think Giovanni should be living in? How long do you think it took me to find the room I have? And since when, since when ... have you so hated the room?' (112). Giovanni's identity and sexuality can be found within that room, and what David calls Giovanni's soul. The fact that David wants to change the room so much, to leave the room, represents his trying to change Giovanni, his trying to leave Giovanni.

Giovanni's room is also an example of a hypercomplex space, a space which contains multiple meanings at the same time – just like Sybil's theatre. The experienced meaning is, as often is the case, rather obvious: the room is a maid's room which Giovanni has been able to rent and live in. The perceived meaning, on the other hand, can be a bit up for interpretation. The room itself is placed in 'a dreadful street, near *Nation* ... among all the dreadful bourgeoisie and their piglike children' (48). It is Guillaume who is telling us this, which is why the perceived meaning is up for interpretation. Guillaume himself is somewhat a part of the middle class in Paris (see 102), presumably a part of the bourgeoisie itself, so it is peculiar that he would call a bourgeois neighbourhood dreadful. He could of course be wary of that particular neighbourhood, or, more likely, he could bear ill will to the bourgeoisie itself because of his sexuality. If he *was* a part of the bourgeoisie class, he has, to some degree, been cast out because of his sexuality, because of his likely being marked as a deviant. The neighbourhood itself is most likely not horrible at all, only far away from the centre of Paris, a neighbourhood fit for the bourgeoisie and their families, which makes the room stick out a bit – it is a queer space in the middle of heteronormative society. Lastly, the imagined meaning of the room is, just like in Sybil's theatre, dependant on the person seeing the room. For Giovanni the room proves to be a respite from his traumatic past (see 131-33), as a place where he can start anew and build a safe haven for himself. For David it symbolises both his own and Giovanni's proverbial closet, as a place where he can be himself but still feels trapped.

When David then decided to leave Giovanni, the room become a sea again, timeless and fleeting. Even though Giovanni had 'worked to make this room for' David (130), it is not enough to make him stay; it is not enough to convince David to make a life with Giovanni – because that is what the breakup ultimately is about, '[w]hat kind of life ... two men [can] have together' (134). David cannot imagine himself in that room alongside Giovanni, whether it is fixed or not – because that would make him a queer person, a deviant, himself. David 'want[s] to get out of this room' (134), to end things with Giovanni, so he can have the life he has imagined for himself, a 'normal' life with Hella – not unlike what Sybil represents for Dorian – where they can be accepted by the heteronormative society; something the same-sex couple David and Giovanni would be hard-pressed to do. Sure, in some queer counterspaces they would be accepted, such as Guillaume's bar, but not by the public sphere itself, which David desperately wants to be. As Harry Thomas points out in his essay, David is obsessed with the image he portrays to the world because of his privilege as a white middle-class man – not unlike how Dorian obsesses with keeping his deviance hidden – so even though David

undoubtedly loves Giovanni, he cannot let himself love the other man because that would make him a deviant; that would make him queer. This image of himself, which Thomas mentions, is also prevalent in the privacy factor of it all. David and Giovanni, or rather Giovanni according to David, leaves the window in the room closed and obscured most of the time to ensure privacy. The window faces the courtyard, and sometimes they can hear children playing outside or people walking past the window. When this happens Giovanni would ‘stiffen like a hunting dog and remain perfectly silent until whatever seemed to threaten our safety had moved away’ (82). They value their privacy but are also afraid of letting the outside world into their bubble, much as Monica Pearl argues in her essay; it is not humiliating being queer as long as no one is watching. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, intimacies had also been forced inside of the home, which is why keeping the window closed is important for the queer couple. They are not *allowed* to be intimate with each other in public, only inside of their own queer space. They are being forced by the hegemonic society to keep their intimacies private under the threat of public shame and possible legislative punishments. This is something which changes within Giovanni at the end of the novel; he does not seem to care any more about who knows that he is queer, since he opens the window in the breakup-scene (see 135) and starts shouting at David about their relationship. David is still desperate to have the window shut, to try and preserve his sexuality within the room – to try and stay in the proverbial closet.

David also starts to disassociate from his relationship with Giovanni, probably trying to make it less real, and thus to make himself less queer. When he enters Giovanni’s room for the last time, he ‘supposed that [he] would feel nothing: but [he] felt a tightening in the far corner of [his] heart’ (130) – he had hoped that he would not harbour any more feelings for the other man, that he could put his queer life behind him. He had hoped that it was just a part of himself that he could leave behind in the room, could leave behind together with Giovanni – but no such luck. He feels a tightening in his heart when he looked at his lover, when he cannot console the man he loves. He ‘looked at the room, thinking: I cannot bear it’ (132). The feelings that Giovanni displays, the feelings which previously have made him feel ‘that [his] heart would burst for him’ (101), become too much for David, so he disassociates entirely from the breakup instead – much as Dorian disassociates from the murder of his friend when it become too much for him. David shuts his own feelings down because he cannot bear the brunt of them – they become entirely too real. Giovanni ‘was sobbing, it would have been said, as though his heart would break. But [David] felt that it was [his] heart which was broken. Something had broken in [him] to make [him] so cold and so perfectly still

and far away' (133). David feels entirely too much for his male lover, so he disconnects instead. He instead 'feel[s] nothing now' (134), because if he were to let himself feel anything, he would never be able to leave Giovanni – he would never be able to leave the room. David would stay inside that room, which now represents the queer closet. He would never be able to live out his heteronormative dream if he were to stay in that room. By staying inside the room, he would leave the proverbial closet, and the domesticated dream of having a family and a wife would be out of his reach. He utilises Erving Goffman's *covering* technique to minimise the fact that he is a sexual deviant by avoiding the topic as much as he can, despite his not actually being labelled as a deviant. David cannot imagine having a life together with another man, with Giovanni, so he leaves the option off the table. David then stays with Giovanni the entire night, and when he tries to leave in the morning, he hesitates. He feels as if his body 'had been branded, [Giovanni's] body was burned into [his] mind, into [his] dreams' (137) – as if Giovanni, not unlike his room, would always be a part of him. And he realises that he 'had to get out of there for [his] face showed too much, the war in [his] body was dragging [him] down' (137) – which is eerily similar to how Basil feels as if his feelings are plain as day in Dorian's portrait, and therefore refuses to exhibit it. David's romantic feelings are popping up again, and if he does not leave the room soon, he will probably never leave.

The last thing I wish to comment on about Giovanni's room is the idea of cleanliness and pureness. As I have already discussed, Giovanni's room is rather dirty, and David wants, *needs*, to be clean. Giovanni does not believe that David is leaving him for Hella, but rather that he leaves to preserve his purity:

You never have loved anyone, I am sure you never will! You love your purity, you love your mirror – you are just like a little virgin ... You will never give [your virginity] to anybody, you will never let anybody *touch* it – man *or* woman. You want to be *clean*. You think you came here covered with soap and you think you will go out covered with soap – and you do not want to *stink*, not even for five minutes, in the meantime ... You want to leave Giovanni because he makes you stink. You want to despise Giovanni because he is not afraid of the stink of love. You want to *kill* him in the name of all your lying little moralities. And you – you are *immoral*. (133-34)

Giovanni is, in other words, not afraid of the love that the two men share for each other; he is not afraid to get *dirty*, to be a deviant – and he recognises that David associates queerness with dirtiness, and that David wishes to remain pure. David wishes to continue to be a part of the hegemonic heteronormative sphere, despite the fact that he most definitely loves

Giovanni. But, as Giovanni points out, David's attachment to purity, not unlike the argument that Josep Armengol proposes, is simply too strong. David associates cleanliness with heterosexuality and dirtiness with queerness. He is attached to the privilege which comes with being a straight-acting white man, and is afraid of what all that 'dirtiness' will do to that privilege – despite the fact that men like Guillaume, who are almost openly queer, retain a lot of privilege despite their sexuality (see 102). This is the reason that, when David describes his lovers, he uses specific language to convey his underlying feelings. He describes Hella's smile as bright (115), Sue as blonde and as possessing some unnamed quality of the Miss Rheingold persona (91), Joey as 'a nice boy, too, very quick and dark' (12), and Giovanni as 'insolent and dark and leonine' (31). He subconsciously describes his sexual partners in accordance with his attitude to sexual relations with different genders: having sex with the opposite gender is bright, while having sex with the same gender is dark.

As I have demonstrated, Giovanni's room is an example of a queer space and a heterotopia, where the deviants David and Giovanni can live together somewhat safely. The room itself represents many things for our narrator David: a place outside of the limits of time; a romanticised memory of his time with Giovanni; everything 'wrong' with being queer, the dirtiness he associates with queerness; a private bubble for him and Giovanni to hide inside, not unlike the proverbial closet; and the place where he breaks up with the love of his life, the place where cleanliness and pureness proves more important to him than his lover.

4.2 Guillaume's Bar

One can argue that many of the spaces in the novel are not actually queer spaces, or heterotopias, for that matter, but I cannot imagine anyone would argue against Guillaume's gay bar being both. The space contains deviants of all kinds, is a place where one could corrupt another into the deviant lifestyle, and is also a meeting place for the queer community, for better or for worse.

The first description we get of the bar is that it was Jacques' favourite bar, 'a noisy, crowded, ill-lit sort of tunnel, of dubious – or perhaps not dubious at all, of rather too emphatic – reputation' (29). The fact that the bar is called 'dubious' and then changed to 'too emphatic' is one of the main reasons I would call it a deviation heterotopia, what Kevin Hetherington called an incongruous heterotopia. Dubious is a word one could prescribe to deviants, and then especially sexual deviants, while 'too emphatic' gives the bar an air of being very including – to David's dismay. Heterotopias are set to the side of 'proper society'

and can include everyone who does not belong to the fold of heteronormativity, just as this bar does. We also know, by Jacques' insinuations to Giovanni, that it is, in fact, a *gay* bar: 'It must ... seem very strange to you ... all these men ... and so few women. Doesn't that seem strange to you' (32-33), to which Giovanni replies, 'Ah ... no doubt the women are waiting at home' (33), so as to not pass any kind of judgment; not unlike Goffman's *coping* technique, where the aim is to deal with a deviant situation by utilising levity in the conversation. The bar is very inclusive of queer people, but also people who do not necessarily label themselves as queer, such as David. This coincides with what Berlant and Warner called the queer world-building project, where queer people can come and go as they will from the queer counterspace and where counterintimacies such as self-expression are accepted and celebrated. The bar is a part of the queer world-building project because of the fact that it is a counterspace: it serves as an alternate order of society, where 'normal' societal rules not necessarily count – just like the opium dens in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

David calls to attention to his categorisation of homosexual men, where there are three categories which he believes all homosexual men fall into. There are, as already mentioned, according to Thomas, 'the criminal (the prostitutes), the pathetic (the men soliciting the prostitutes), or sub-human (the animalistic *les folles*, whose name means either lunatic or buffoon' (607), and David is very disgusted with that last category, the sub-human *les folles*:

There were, of course, *les folles*, always dressed in the most improbable combinations, screaming like parrots the details of their latest love-affairs ... I always found it difficult to believe that they ever went to bed with anybody for a man who wanted a woman would certainly have rather had a real one and a man who wanted a man would certainly not want one of *them*. (Baldwin 30)

David is obviously very uncomfortable in this queer environment, and does not understand, nor does he want to understand, the intimacies found in the queer community. He sees himself as heterosexual, as better than the clientele in the bar because of his presumed sexuality, as better than the sexual deviants in this heterotopia – because that is what the clientele, which includes David, *is*: sexual deviants in a deviation heterotopia. This is basically an echo of Dorian's thoughts inside the opium den, that he is exempt from being part of the clientele because he is better than they are. And when David then comes face to face with one of these 'animalistic *les folles*', one of the men sporting feminine clothing as he sits at the bar (since David uses the pronouns he/him and calls him 'the man', I will be doing the same), his discomfort skyrockets. He first describes the other man as '[looking] like a mummy or a zombie – this was the first, overwhelming impression – of something walking after it had

been put to death' (41). The fact that Baldwin spends almost an entire page describing the man in question says something about how uncomfortable David is in this situation; he cannot even bear to look away from the feminine-presenting man. David is transfixed by the entrance of the other man, the man who could stand as *the* representation of the deviant, and when the other man flirts with David, he gets rather defensive: 'it seemed impossible to hit him, it seemed impossible to get angry. It did not seem real, he did not seem real' (42). David wants so much to re-establish his, to his own view, lacking manhood by hitting the feminine man, but hesitates – probably because they are in a public place, which would make it a scandal. David feels that the other man is mocking the fact that David is so uncomfortable and David cannot give the other man the satisfaction of being correct, but it could also be because he is feminine presenting; David feels like he could not possibly hit a 'woman'. The whole situation seems unreal for David, and he somewhat disassociates, as we know he tends to do. He cannot believe that this situation is real, that he could be a part of this particular environment – the same environment as the feminine presenting man.

To top it all off, Jacques is accused of corrupting David: 'Not only have you finally – thank heaven! – corrupted this great American football player, you use him now to corrupt *my* barman' (34). As I already discussed in Chapter 1, the deviant is often mentored into the deviant lifestyle by a sort of mentor, according to Clifton Bryant, which is what Jacques is being accused of; just as Basil and Henry did to Dorian, and Dorian did to countless other men. Jacques takes this role as a mentor very seriously and doles out advice a couple of times throughout the book without prompting from David. After David is observed by the entire bar flirting with Giovanni, Jacques also observes the disassociation from David, which he calls confusion: 'Confusion is a luxury which only the very, very young can possibly afford, and you are not that young anymore' (43). The reason that I call this confusion disassociation is because the confusion is made by David's not wanting to realise his situation as a queer person – and the more he disassociates and avoids thinking about the fact that he is queer, the more confused he will grow. Jacques does not approve of David's confusion, and wants to make him realise that he, in fact, already is a deviant – he wants to push David into realisation. The second time he offers David advice is later that very same evening, or the morning after, when the bar is closed. Jacques has a very sobering conversation with David about his own queer life, in which David asks: 'Tell me ... is there really no other way for you but this? To kneel down forever before an army of boys for just five dirty minutes in the dark?' To which Jacques replies,

Think ... of the men who have kneeled before you while you thought of something else and pretended that nothing was happening down there in the dark between your legs ... "You think," he persisted, "that my life is shameful because my encounters are. And they are. But you should ask yourself *why* they are ... Because there is no affection in them, and no joy. It's like putting an electric plug in a dead socket. Touch, but no contact. All touch, but no contact and no light. (56-57)

Jacques' advice, then, is for David to let himself 'love [Giovanni] and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters?' (57). Jacques is very passionate about the queer culture he himself is a part of, and wants David to be fully a part of because, as he says, nothing matters more than love, no matter the gender of the person you love and who hopefully loves you as well.

As I already mentioned, David and Giovanni have been flirting incessantly at the bar, something David thoroughly enjoys, but they have done so in a *very* public setting. Not only has Jacques seen them, and somewhat approved of their relationship, but so has the whole bar:

I watched [Giovanni] as he moved. And then I watched their faces, watching him. And then I was afraid. I knew that they were watching, had been watching both of us. They knew that they had witnessed the beginning and now they would not cease to watch until they saw the end. It had taken some time but the tables had been turned, now I was in the zoo, and they were watching. (40-41)

David feels ogled. He has avoided disclosing his queer sexuality to the patrons at the bar for the whole duration of his time there, but suddenly he opens himself up for dissection. Not unlike in the Victorian era, scandal is something which closeted queer people would like to avoid at all costs – and the fact that David has flirted so openly with Giovanni, has been *seen* flirting with Giovanni, counts very much as a scandal. As Pearl argues in her essay, queer acts should not be seen in public, even if that public is a queer counterspace such as this bar.

David is not comfortable taking part in a queer lifestyle; he is not comfortable looking at himself as queer, despite his attraction to Giovanni. He feels exposed. It is really no wonder that David avoids the bar thereafter, when he and Giovanni have committed to each other. His relationship to the bar has changed entirely, whether that is because he is in a relationship with Giovanni and spending time at a queer counterspace would make the fact that he is in a same-sex relationship more real. David's sexuality has thus become something of a speaking subject in the bar, more than it previously had been, which is likely why he basically never returns. When people are talking about something, that something suddenly becomes real –

yes, David and Giovanni have become an item, but just inside that one room, Giovanni's room. If David then spends time with Giovanni at a gay bar, that would make their relationship *even more* real; that would make him just as queer as the rest of the clientele – which is something David cannot stomach.

Guillaume's bar is, without a shadow of a doubt in my mind, a deviation heterotopia, and a queer counterspace where the queer community can spend time. David is immensely uncomfortable in the gay bar, mostly because of his own view of the queer people in the bar and queerness in general, but also because he feels like he is being watched incessantly by the clientele, who are trying to discern his particular shade of queer. It is, lastly, also a place where people may be mentored into the deviant lifestyle, as Jacques tries to mentor David.

4.3 The House in the South of France

The house David and Hella rent in the south of France is the space where the narration of the story takes place – this is where David tells us his story, or reminisces about it. I include this in my analysis largely because of the feelings David gets of being trapped, of being imprisoned by his own identity and sexuality – not unlike the proverbial closet.

The house itself is in a small village in the south of France 'just outside a small summer resort – which is still empty, the season has yet not begun' (10), which arguably makes the house a heterotopia. A small space outside of society, existing all on its own, where 'almost every move is made under the village's collective eye and ear' (66). There are multiple married couples in the village, husbands and wives whose children are all moved out, so '[t]hey treated [David] as the son who has but lately been initiated into manhood; but at the same time, with great distance, for I did not really belong to any of them; and they also sensed (or I felt they did) something else about me, something which it was no longer worth their while to pursue' (65). This community can be a metaphor for the heteronormative public sphere, which David is just barely a part of. Sure, they will smile at him and wish him the best, but he will never truly *belong* – which resembles Dorian's relationship to high societal London. Communities such as these can be very warm for the initiated, but if you are standing on the outside, it can also be painful. David does not feel like he belongs in the community, even before Hella leaves him, because he feels as if he is being ogled again, as if his identity and sexuality are at display. He feels rather alienated, not unlike how queer people often feel when they do not have access to a queer space or have been cast out from the hegemonic public sphere, so he decides to self-isolate in the house – just as one would self-

isolate inside the proverbial closet. He isolates himself so much that the caretaker of the house comes and checks that he is alive and has not run off. We, as readers, then learn that the caretaker, and probably a lot of the women in the village, were not overly fond of Hella (67). My guess is that they did not like her because she defied certain gender roles that traditional heteronormative small villages value a lot; such as ‘drinking rather too fast, and laughing, and watching the men’ (10), or having a ‘wide-legged, boyish stance’ (114), or wearing her hair short, smoking and reading books (152). The caretaker would rather have David, ‘find [himself] another woman, a *good* woman, and get married, and have babies’ (67), which makes David very uncomfortable. The caretaker continues to talk in a similar fashion, and David continues to be uncomfortable, not unlike how he reacted in Guillaume’s bar. David is uncomfortable with both too much heteronormativity and too much deviance.

The house itself is also rather dirty, or maybe neglected is a better word to use. David’s ‘dirty clothes are lying all over’ (67) and the spare bedroom, where David has been sleeping after Hella leaves, is ‘quite untidy, the light burning, my bathrobe, books, dirty socks, and a couple of dirty glasses, and a coffee cup half full of stale coffee – lying around, all over the place: and the sheets on the bed a tangled mess’ (69). This description is not unlike the one we later get about Giovanni’s untidy room, where David expresses a desire to fix up the room, to fix up his lover’s life. The state of Giovanni’s room has not come about because of ‘habit or circumstance or temperament; it was [instead] a matter of punishment and grief’ (84) – and it is not hard for us to draw parallels between the two spaces. This house is where David has retreated in order to deal with the fact that Giovanni will soon face the death penalty, the space where David tries to engage in the heteronormative society by reigniting his relationship with Hella, and the space where he so brutally is left all alone, with no fiancé and no living boyfriend. David lets the house become a mess to reflect his insides, to reflect the jumbled-up mess of feelings he possesses. After the caretaker leaves, he decides to clean up the house, to get a hold of his life. But that is easier said than done because as dawn is approaching, David’s anguish increases: ‘anguish is about to overtake me in this house, as naked as silver as that great knife which Giovanni will be facing very soon. My executioners are here with me, walking up and down with me, washing things, and packing, and drinking from my bottle’ (107). David is trapped in this house, just as Giovanni is trapped, and the only thing he can do is clean and pack and drink until dawn is upon him – until he can walk out of this house forever. The house itself serves as a sort of proverbial closet, where David can hide his secrets from everyone, but it also serves as a prison. As Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet*, the metaphor itself serves as a defining

structure for gay oppression, as a sort of prison – one you would gladly like to escape, but the escape itself can prove fatal, it can destroy you; this is similar to what happens to Dorian when he tries to destroy his own deviance. David is afraid of the freedom from the closet, even as he craves it.

As I already stated above, David feels trapped in this house in the south of France, especially after Hella leaves him. David does not do well with unattachment; he believes that ‘nothing is more unbearable, once one has it, than freedom. I suppose this was why I asked her to marry me: to give myself something to be moored to’ (11). This statement is somewhat contradictory, especially if we consider whom David has been moored to for most of the novel. He has been in a committed relationship with both Hella and Giovanni, and he has been dragged in two different directions – towards the heteronormative life he could have with Hella, with a family, a house, and a white picket fence, but also towards the passion and unconditional love he has with Giovanni in that little, newly renovated room in Nation. He is dragged between the two for the entirety of the novel, between what he *ought* to do and what he *wants* to do. He disassociates when either of his relationships becomes too real, as he does when Hella ‘began to cry. [David] held her in [his] arms. [He] felt nothing at all’ (152), which is not unlike the scene when Giovanni ‘was sobbing ... Something had broken in [David] to make [him] so cold and so perfectly still and far away’ (133). As soon as that freedom he talks about is too far away, when the feelings of his loved ones become too much for David to bear, he cuts the metaphorical ropes that moor him to them. He hates the freedom which life so often offers him, but at the same time he cannot bear to be too attached to someone. He cannot decide what kind of life he wants for himself, a heteronormative lie or a queer alienating truth – so his life is essentially a prison, and right now that prison is in the house in the south of France.

The house is also like a prison in that it is a place where you can confess your sins, which is exactly what David does:

I might ask to be forgiven – if I could name and face my crime, if there were anything, or anybody, anywhere, with the power to forgive.

No. It would help if I were able to feel guilty. But the end of innocence is also the end of guilt.

No matter how it seems now, I must confess: I loved him. I do not think that I will ever love anyone like that again. And this might be a great relief if I did not also know that, when the knife has fallen, Giovanni, if he feels anything will feel relief. (107)

David and Giovanni will always love one another, but that love will always come at a great cost, especially for David, the cost of being a part of the hegemonic heteronormative society. David, coming from a white middle-class American family, will always have expectations of how people treat him. Giovanni, on the other hand, comes from a small village, not unlike the one David is staying at presently, and has abandoned that village, his family, and any previous comfort he has known, in order to move to Paris. He also gladly takes a job working at a gay bar, with the knowledge of how he will be treated at said bar. The consequences of not being a part of the hegemonic society, or deciding not to be a part of it, are steeper for David than for Giovanni because of their different backgrounds and expectations associated with them. David, in the present time, is somewhat ready to confess his crime of loving someone of the same sex, and probably his unfaithfulness, to anyone with the power to forgive – if he once felt guilty, he does not anymore. He has finally realised that Giovanni is the love of his life but cannot do anything about it. He cannot defy the expectations of society to be with the other man and he cannot leave the prison of this house, any more than Giovanni can leave his prison – David cannot leave the proverbial closet. This is also echoed in the last scene of the novel, when Giovanni may already have faced the guillotine, and David tries to let go of Giovanni by ripping up the date of his execution: ‘I take the blue envelope which Jacques has sent me and tear it slowly into many pieces, watching them dance in the wind, watching the wind carry them away. Yet as I turn and begin walking toward the waiting people, the wind blows some of them back on me’ (159). This could either be a metaphor for David’s ripping up his queer identity, a piece of himself he cannot let go of just yet, or it could be that David rips up his commitment to the heteronormative society but cannot let all of his doubts go just yet. I believe that the metaphor means that David tried to let go of his queer identity and queer past, to hide himself inside of the closet even further than he had already done, but was unable to hide that part of himself completely – because one’s sexuality is a part of oneself, whether one likes it or not, whether one accepts it or not. And if we look at the faith of Dorian when he tries to rip up *his* sins, when he tries to let go of his queer sexuality, it does *not* bode well for David trying to do the same, even if he is living roughly seventy years later.

The house in the south of France is not an obvious queer space or heterotopia, but it is a space where the queer David tells us the story of how he met, fell in love with, and lost the love of his life, Giovanni. It shows us how queer spacing can work in a small community like the village the house is located in, how you can be imprisoned by your own mind or maybe your own closet, and have grand (queer) love revelations in the span of just a few hours.

4.4 David's Reflection

Not unlike the picture of Dorian Gray in Wilde's novel, we have mirror of utopia in this novel as well, but this time it is an actual mirror, or maybe reflection is a better term to use. David is, in the house of France, isolated from the outside world, and one of the ways David is reminded of the heteronormative public is through the mirrors and reflections of himself – they break the illusion which the house brought forth.

The first reflection we encounter is in the very third sentence of the novel: 'I watch my reflection on the darkening gleam of the window pane. My reflection is tall, perhaps rather like an arrow, my blond hair gleams. My face is like a face you have seen many times. My ancestors conquered a continent' (9). Already, in the third through sixth sentences of the novel, we get a glimpse of what David values. He looks at himself and he sees a conqueror, the very definition of masculinity – almost the same sentiment that goes through Dorian's head when he is made aware of his own beauty. This is the image he wishes the reader to first encounter, what he himself counts as worthy of being seen – rather than the image of a queer man missing his imprisoned lover. He is not ready to break the illusion of the house yet, so he lets us see what he wants us to see. Giovanni also picks up on the fact that David loves to look upon his own reflection: 'You love your purity, you love your mirror' (133). David does, as already stated above, connect the idea of whiteness with purity and cleanliness, as Armengol argues. He looks into a mirror and he sees everything which he associates with rightness in the world, which Giovanni flings in his face when they are fighting. He argues that David can never love anything which is not considered the norm, he cannot allow himself to love something that is not 'normal'. But Giovanni also argues that David does not love Hella, that he only presumes to love her because that would be considered 'normal', the heteronormative choice of a partner – that David, like Henry, is acting out his gender, just doing what he is supposed to do. This is the first time we really get a closer look at David's personality, the first crack in his façade. All of the times he and Giovanni have spent time together, we, as readers, have been kept at a distance – David has kept us at a distance as the narrator. But when Giovanni brings up David's mask, the illusion we have gotten about David's identity and sexuality shatters. Sure, we have picked up on the fact that David is not comfortable with his sexuality, with anything resembling a queer space; but Giovanni gives us the final piece of the puzzle; David is *attached* to his heteronormative privilege, more so than he is attached to either Giovanni or Hella.

By the end of the novel David encounters his own reflection a lot, by the way of ‘a large mirror. [And he is] terribly aware of that mirror’ (157). He undresses in front of it and realises that he needs to change his clothes, he needs to get on with his life. And when he looks at his own body, he does not recognise it: ‘The body in the mirror forces me to turn and face it. And I look at my body, which is under sentence of death. It is lean, hard, and cold, the incarnation of a mystery. And I do not know what moves in this body, what this body is searching. It is trapped in my mirror as it is trapped in time and it hurries toward revelation’ (158). Unlike the first description we get of David’s reflection – ‘My reflection is tall, perhaps rather like an arrow, my blond hair gleams. My face is like a face you have seen my times’ (9) – the later description is of a body David does not recognise, while the early description is of someone everyone would recognise, someone familiar. The early description is of someone confident in himself and his identity, but as David remembers everything which brought him to this house, he is unable to recognise himself by the end of the night. The latter scene resembles some sort of body-dysmorphia, where he is uncomfortable in his own skin – whether that is because he has finally accepted his sexuality or because he no longer can deny it, is unclear; either way, his self-perception had changed, his deviance is showing. This distance that David feels toward his own body is not unlike how Dorian feels about his painting, but David does not possess the same perversion as Dorian to keep on looking and enjoy the feeling of being trapped. David feels that his body is trapped inside of the mirror, that the reflection does, to a certain degree, reflect his surroundings, but not wholly – just like a utopian mirror would. I maintain that this mirror scene breaks the illusion of safety; it destroys the heterotopia that the house itself provided. David is forced to look upon himself, the body he does not recognise, the guilt he had tried to shove away. He is forced to accept reality, not matter what that reality is (besides the fact that he is alone, and that Giovanni will soon no longer be a part of this world), he is forced to look upon the illusion he has created for himself, and promptly destroy it. Those two contradictory descriptions of himself, from two different times in the night, strongly resemble what Foucault describes in his utopian mirror image: something real and unreal, at the same time.

Another thing that David sees in the mirror is Giovanni’s face:

Giovanni’s face swings before me like an unexpected lantern on a dark, dark night. His eyes – his eyes, they glow like a tiger’s eyes, they stare straight out, watching the approach of his last enemy, the hair of his flesh stands up. I cannot read what is in his eyes: if it is terror, then I have never seen terror, if it is anguish, then anguish has never laid hands on me. (157)

Even when he is looking at his own reflection, he cannot get the face of his lover out of his head. The mirror shows him what he imagines is happening to Giovanni at this second, how he imagines Giovanni looks on the way to the guillotine. The mirror also distorts the face that David knows so well; so he is unable to read what is in his eyes. David has seen Giovanni in all manners of emotion, happiness and elation, anguish and terror, but right now he cannot recognise the emotions flitting past his eyes. The mirror shows what can be real, yes, but also a picture which is very much a lie – a utopia and heterotopia at the same time, the imaginary and the reality. And right now, this mirror of utopia is showing David his worst nightmare, the last walk that the love of his life will ever take, a nightmare that may very well be untrue, but does contain some manner of truth nonetheless. The walk itself is plausible, as well as the reaction of Giovanni, but David will never know if it is the *actual* truth. It is one of those images he will take with him, even after the heterotopia and queer space he currently finds himself in is destroyed – because it will cease to exist the moment David leaves the house. He is the one who has created the heterotopia, he is the one who has kept it alive all through the night; and, just like Giovanni, when David leaves it, it will die – it was only ever temporary.

As I said above, David wishes that his body could escape the world inside the mirror, that he could ‘crack that mirror and be free’ (158). He also believes that ‘[t]he journey to the grave is already begun, the journey to corruption is, always, already, half over’ and that ‘the heavy grace of God, which has brought [him] to this place, is all that can carry [him] out of it’ (159). ‘The journey to corruption’ is obviously a reference to his own sexual deviance, his queer sexuality, but he is also imagining this corruption as a corruption of his own body, the decay which follows death, and the only entity which is capable of letting him get over his own guilt and shame about it is God himself. The sentiment that God is the only one who can free him can also be about freeing him from a queer life – that only some higher entity can help David deny his sexuality, he cannot do it on his own. David also wishes to crack the mirror he is looking into, he wants to be free – free from his ‘troubling sex’ (158). This could be some sort of gender dysmorphia, of course, but I would rather argue that it is his sexuality he finds troubling. He wishes to live in a world where queerness is the norm, rather than heteronormativity, or he wishes that he himself could be heterosexual, which is probably more plausible. Another argument is of course that David wishes to be free from the memory of Giovanni, or maybe even Giovanni himself. He will, as already stated, carry the memory of Giovanni’s room with him in all future rooms he enters, and this longing to crack the mirror may actually be about getting rid of his lovely and romanticised memories of the room. I feel that this lack of clarity regarding what the cracking of the mirror represents is a very

important part of David's characterisation, because the heteronormative rules of society are deeply ingrained in him, despite the fact that he cannot follow them to the letter. The metaphor of breaking the mirror is unclear exactly because David is unsure of his own identity and sexuality. David is not like Adrian Singleton, who was forced into the deviant lifestyle by Dorian but found liberation waiting for him. When David cracks the mirror and gets to be free, he will get to decide what he does with that freedom, but as I have already mentioned, David is terrified of that kind of freedom – even though he craves it; yet he can find no liberation in it.

As my analysis has shown, *Giovanni's Room* is filled with queer spaces and deviants, but also heterotopias. The room itself is a timeless heterotopia, an illusionary heterotopia created to provide a safe space for Giovanni and his lover, and a prison to keep their sexualities hidden. Giovanni's room serves as the perfect metaphor for the proverbial closet, not only for David but also for Giovanni. David sees it as a symbol for the state of Giovanni's soul and tries to save his lover – but only serves to have the room ingrained into himself and his identity, for better or for worse. David will always keep the room with him, will always cherish his memories of the room, even when he refuses to accept his own sexuality. The novel also contains a much more obvious queer space, the deviation heterotopia Guillaume's bar. This is a place where the queer community can thrive, providing an alternative ordering for the deviant clientele, except for David because of his homophobia and denial. But it proves also very exposing for David, who has, until recently kept a close lid on his queer identity, until Giovanni flirted it out of him – exposing David, and ruining his reputation, to the watching queer community. In the latter part of the novel David has hidden himself away in the house in the south of France, only to be haunted by the memories of Giovanni – effectively imprisoning himself in remembrance, as well as the house. He cannot let go of Giovanni, just as he cannot let go of his privilege as a straight-passing middle-class American. This is only solidified by David's reflection throughout the novel, where his privilege is clear as day, for it only to be warped to something unrecognisable by the end. David loses a part of himself, slowly and through decay in the mirror, as time moves toward Giovanni's execution. David becomes a changed person going through all of these counterspaces, but it is very unclear if he becomes a better person – a person who has accepted his queer sexuality.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to illustrate the significance of queer spaces in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*. Queer spaces are largely created because queer people are not allowed in the public sphere to the same extent as heterosexual people. The restriction of queer people in the public sphere, despite the fact that queer people, or deviants, have always been a part of society, is why it is important to be aware of and accept the existence of queer spaces. In these novels the existence of queer spaces is a natural part of the worlds Wilde and Baldwin created, and these spaces has a profound effect on both the protagonists in the novel and other characters as well – despite the fear of scandal which is prominent in both novels, alongside the fear of being labelled as a deviant. Dorian starts his journey into corruption, or into deviance, in Basil's garden, before almost abandoning the journey when he gets engaged to Sybil. Sybil represents the heteronormative society, not unlike Hella's role in *Giovanni's Room*, a way for Dorian to have a 'normal' heteronormative life, but he soon abandons this life in favour of embracing his deviant lifestyle – embracing his own queer identity. The novel's fatal end is not because Dorian had chosen to accept this deviant sexuality, although he still keeps this deviance hidden from the public sphere, but rather because he tries to destroy that part of himself by destroying the portrait; which is a metaphor for his own queerness. Every time Dorian tries to be a part of the heteronormative society, it has fatal results; whether it be Dorian's fiancée or Dorian himself. David, on the other hand, does not accept his sexuality lightly. He has engaged in a couple of same-sex relations prior to the start of the novel, and tries to deny that part of himself, until he meets Giovanni. David then, somewhat, tries to accept the fact that he is in a relationship with someone of the same sex as himself, but ultimately cannot handle the thought of being labelled as a deviant, not unlike Dorian. He soon breaks up with Giovanni in favour of his female fiancée, and ends up trying to deny his sexuality, which leads to the grim ending of the novel: with Giovanni to attend the guillotine and David all alone, still denying his own sexuality.

These novels tell us that the denying of one's sexuality could lead to disastrous results, which is why it is important to be mindful of the existence of queer spaces. Since queer people have always, and will always, be a part of human society, it is only natural that they should claim a part of the public sphere for themselves. A heteronormative society, with only heteronormative spaces, is obviously too narrow for the diversity of humanity, and one of the steps to take in order to accept other types of spaces is by being made aware of them through,

for instance, literature. It is only through this awareness that we can make the world Peppernell described in the poem at the beginning of this thesis real in *this* life, rather than some imaginary utopian future. This thesis has tried to compare the queer spaces evident in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Giovanni's Room*, and also add to the larger discussion of queer spaces in literature. It is important to be aware of and stress the importance of queer spaces in different novels, and the ignorance of such spaces is still an important issue to be aware of in other novels and literature at large.

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