

Disability, Victorian Biopolitics and Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray

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Recommended Citation

Wong, Hiu Wai. "Disability, Victorian Biopolitics and Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.5 (2018): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3410>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and CultureISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
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Volume 20 Issue 5 (December 2018) Article 10**Hiu Wai Wong****"Disability, Victorian Biopolitics and Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss5/10>>Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.5 (2018)**Thematic Issue **Voices of Life, Illness and Disabilities in Life Writing and Medical Narratives.****Ed. I-Chun Wang, Jonathan Locke Hart, Cindy Chopoidaló, and David Porter**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss5/10>>

Abstract: In her article "Disability, Victorian Biopolitics and Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray," Hiu Wai Wong discusses *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as Oscar Wilde's life writing of the *androgynous* beauty. Extending his praise of Lord Alfred Douglas in *De Profundis*, Wilde's descriptions of Dorian as the androgyne can be read as the demonstration of Michel Foucault's techniques of the self. She argues that the androgynous beauty can be a strategy of bodily practice that overthrows the Victorian biopolitics which enforces a rigid gender role. Moreover, she explores the notion of camp and Judith Butler's theory of performance to explain the strategy of bodily practice demonstrated by Dorian. However, she has to point out that the strategy of bodily practice of Dorian's androgynous beauty fails to undermine the able-bodied biopolitics which deprives the disabled the opportunity to re-self-categorize themselves.

Hiu Wai WONG

Could the Disabled Employ Androgynous Beauty as Strategy against the Able-bodied Biopolitics?

In *De Profundis*, Oscar Wilde expresses his love for Lord Alfred Douglas and his determination to resist the Victorian biopolitics. In this love letter filled with bitterness, Wilde accuses Bosie of spending his money, abandoning him in the loneliness of the dark cell, and ruining his artistic and real life. Although criticizing the relationship with this flowery lad as "unintellectual" (*De Profundis* 5) and "degrading" (6), Wilde highlights his astonishing beauty as beyond comparison. As the extension of Wilde's life writing of his affection for the androgynous young boy, Wilde's portrayal of Dorian Gray in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* serves as an autobiographical narration of the significance of employing androgynous beauty as a strategy of bodily practice. Georgia Johnston points out that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an important work of life writing which demonstrate how "Wilde repositions the 'I' and the body as they interface with his public" (270). As the trials in 1895 indicated, the novel was never viewed as merely literary imagination. Wilde's controversial romantic relationship with Douglas and the portrayal of Dorian's homoerotic relationship with Basil and Lord Henry illustrate that Wilde not only "extends public queer discourse but also autobiographical discourse" (Johnston 270).

Wilde himself points out how the three characters in *Dorian Gray* represent himself: "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be" (*Letters* 352). Lord Henry Wotton, the dandy, indicates Wilde's public image of being a hedonistic man who participates frequently in dinner parties. Comparable to Basil Hallward, Wilde is an artist who molds and advocates a new form of beauty. Dorian, representing unprecedented beauty, is the ultimate goal that Wilde would like to reach. Thus, one needs to read the fiction that thematizes the beauty of a youthful boy carefully, since "a great deal of" Wilde's own life is "like a purple thread" which "runs through the gold cloth of *Dorian Gray*" (*De Profundis* 68).

Sharon N. Barnartt writes in her introduction to *Disability As a Fluid State*: "Disability can be a self-categorization—but, again, people with impairments or functional limitations may not categorize themselves that way" (6). Therefore, in addition to looking into the able-bodied prejudice hidden in the portrayal of literary characters, disability studies should focus on the strategy of bodily practice in order to offer the disabled an opportunity to re-self-categorize, which is, in Foucault's words, part of the techniques of the self. According to Foucault, techniques of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom," or "perfection" ("Technologies of the Self" 18). If one were to review a literary work from the perspective of disability studies, one would, besides putting emphasis on the disabled characters, discover the strategy of bodily practice embedded in a text. One has to investigate if a literary work proposes a strategy, one which can be adopted by the disabled. In what follows, I will first discuss the strategy of bodily practice, and look into the structure of biopolitics in which the relationship between Dorian and other characters is formed. Second, I will explore the significance of the strategy regarding its effects. Last, I will attempt to examine if the strategy of bodily practice includes the possibility for the disabled to remold themselves.

The reason that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* caused such a huge controversy was that Oscar Wilde rebelled against the rigid gender roles formed by biopolitics in Victorian England. According to William D. Romanowski, the ideal gender role of men was aligned with traditional Victorianism that combined Protestantism, family values, and economic status. A proper Victorian man "should learn to value punctuality, hard work, order, self-control, and delayed gratification," and hereby he should "develop a sense of duty, virtue, moral obligation and social responsibility" (Romanowski 62).

In order to prepare the young boys to fit in the Victorian middle-class, didactic boys' books, centering on the theme of overcoming trials at boarding school, were circulated in the mid-Victorian age. These include Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and Frederic W. Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little* (1858). These school stories provided moral warnings as to how to attend a boarding school, which represented the Victorian middle class, without falling into bad habits such as smoking and cheating. *Eric, or Little by Little*, still popular in the 1890s after twenty-four editions, was one of the most representative school stories that warned young boys against moral degeneration. The protagonist, Eric Williams, is corrupted bit by bit after he goes to Roslyn School. Indulging in smoking, drinking, swearing, and other lowly behaviors, Eric exemplifies what a virtuous Victorian young lad should not be. Running away from Roslyn and being accused of stealing, Eric shows remorse for his wrongdoings: "There

seemed to be a great load at his heart which he could not remove; a sense of shame, the memory of his disgrace at Roslyn, and of the dark suspicion that rested on his name" (379). Most importantly, Eric's story illustrates the Victorian emphasis on men's moral uprightness, which includes the omission of sexual pleasure.

I would like to draw on Michel Foucault's discussion on the repression of sexual desire in the Victorian age to explicate the relationship between marriage and gender roles. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault analyzes the Victorians' fear of sexuality: "Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law" (3). According to Foucault's notion of repressive hypothesis, modern industrialism and capitalism created "prudish" (*The History* 49) society, one which suppressed pleasures and forced people to focus their energy on practical production. Sex was restricted to the domain of marriage, and prostitution helped illegitimate sexualities to exist.

Hence, Foucault points out that the middle-class Victorian family employed silence to replace sexuality. Due to the austere culture of the family unit, in which husband and wife co-operated to educate children, sex was severely repressed as gender roles were strengthened. "Everyone knew ... that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed" (Foucault, *The History* 4). As silence conquered everywhere, Foucault points out that the pimp, the client, and the prostitute in the brothel as well as the psychiatrist and the mentally disordered became the "other Victorians" (4). The desires that were not spoken were "surreptitiously transferred" "into the order of things that are counted" (4). Only through such repression could the "monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie" (3) continue, and they kept enforcing the rigid gender roles and separate spheres of men and women.

Since the Victorian middle class could not discuss sexuality, they diverted their efforts toward bolstering masculinity and femininity to stabilize social order. As is portrayed in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectation*, the importance of attaining middle-class masculinity is eminent. Such a story as *Great Expectation* tellingly explains the necessity for men to cultivate middle-class masculinity in terms of manners, dressing, and income in the Victorian age, which formed pressure on other classes.

In terms of law, the Labouchere Amendment aimed to criminalize homosexual acts, which undergirded the heterosexual conception of gender roles. In section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, it states: "Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor" (United Kingdom). The amendment regulated that homosexual intercourse was a crime and could be punished by life imprisonment. With this legislation, Marquess of Queensberry accused Wilde of gross indecency and sentenced him to prison.

From the point of view of Foucault, one needs to develop techniques of the self, which constitutes the truth of one's own self, in order to disintegrate omnipresent biopolitics, namely "a set of arrangements that brings ... the individual human body of the human species ... into a single political rationality through a set of norms" (Bennett 284), which discipline one's identity, body, and even his desire. Although Victorian artists could not undo the laws of the British Empire, through artworks they could still undermine the circumventing biopolitics. From 1848 to late nineteenth century, the Pre-Raphaelites demonstrated Foucault's notion of techniques of the self by portraying a new look of body, the Pre-Raphaelite body: "The debate about Pre-Raphaelitism was staged around the representation of the human body, and in the period between 1850 and 1880, the Pre-Raphaelite body was a focus for public and private pleasure, puzzlement and disquiet" (Bullen 1). The Pre-Raphaelite body is represented by the figure of the fallen woman, namely a prostitute or a girl caught within unfavorable situations, who is sexually experienced and needs rescue from a man. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Found* is one of the representative paintings that exhibits such an unconventional figure of women, which defies the conventional Victorian gender role of "the Angel in the House."

As is put forth by J. B. Bullen, the kind of Pre-Raphaelite body that epitomizes techniques of the self most appropriately is not the fallen woman, but the androgyne. The most subversive Pre-Raphaelite bodily style that overthrows masculinity is the androgynous style, rather than a new kind of femininity (Bullen 186). Bullen looks into the intriguing Pre-Raphaelite figure of the androgyne: "The androgyne provided a peculiarly powerful challenge to the prevailing binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, since it empowered by means of its deviant avoidance of classification along conventional lines of gender" (186). It is interesting that "the androgyne is essentially a conceit, an idea; it exists in the realm of ideological uncertainty" (186). The Pre-Raphaelite androgynous women had wide jaws and

thick necks, marked by "gaunt, lank, and long-limbed" (192) looks, while the androgynous men appeared unmanly. To use Bullen's words, the androgyne is "the combination" "of femininity in appearance and manners with male genitalia" (189). More transgressive than the fallen woman, who subverts femininity by displaying aberrant life experiences, the androgyne more thoroughly renders ineffective the fixed gender roles of both men and women through bodily features.

For instance, in *Perseus and the Sea Nymphs*, Edward Burne-Jones paints Perseus as an androgynous young man. Burne-Jones had huge influence on Aubrey Beardsley, whose Japanese-style drawings in black ink also portray a lot of figures of the androgyne. Susan P. Casteras describes Beardsley's drawings as "androgynous," and also "promiscuous and celibate, alluring and repulsive, malignant and innocent" (171).

Furthermore, the Pre-Raphaelites' determination to disintegrate Victorian gender roles was illustrated in Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Hermaphroditus." In this poem Swinburne attempted to transgress the Victorian binary gender divide by praising the androgyne. He writes, "Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss / Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis, / And the large light turned tender in thine eyes, / And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs" (*Poems* 52-5). Narrating the conflation of the male and female bodies of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Swinburne means to dismantle the Victorian morality of gender. Claiming that "great poets are bisexual; male and female at once" (*Miscellanies* 221), Swinburne, as an aesthetic avant-garde, pioneered in giving "body" "to the ... Victorian rhetoric of androgyny" (Dellamora 71) by writing on an androgynous figure. Richard Dellamora points out that by the androgynous character, "Swinburne signals the body to be the locus of mingled sensations, fantasy, and reverie that may be 'masculine' or 'feminine' in connotation — or both" (71). Catherine Maxwell also argues that the androgyne shows that the male "is to take on femininity which is as deprivative as it is creative" (211). Swinburne's adaptation of Ovid's myth story manifests that men can breach the gender norm by feminizing themselves.

Inspiring the Victorians with varied styles of men and women, the Pre-Raphaelites crossed boundaries between classes and genders altogether. Sophia Andres writes: "Representing unconventional beauty in conventional ugliness, feminine fragility in masculinity, and masculine strength in femininity, the Pre-Raphaelites extended gender roles and offered the Victorian novelists innovative ways of depicting controversial gender issues" (39). Wilde considered Pre-Raphaelite paintings as revolution, which "involved not only a resistance to established aesthetic precepts but also the repudiation of social and gender hierarchies" (Andres 7). "Fashioning himself as a de facto Pre-Raphaelite" (Bristow and Mitchell 132), Wilde identified himself with this group of revolutionary artists.

Following the Pre-Raphaelites' pictorial challenge to the Victorian stereotypical gender divide, Wilde portrays Dorian Gray to advocate androgynous beauty, which is demonstrated in the life writing of *De Profundis*. Wilde describes Lord Alfred Douglas in the following way: "The morning dawn of boyhood with its delicate bloom, its clear pure light, its joy of innocence and expectation" (*De Profundis* 4). Wilde personally espouses "pleasure for the beautiful body" (67), which is illustrated in *Dorian Gray*: "Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair ... All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world" (20). In these descriptions, Dorian looks both handsome and angelic. Besides being a good-looking young boy, with charming colors of hair and eyes, Gray is also like a lovely young girl with red lips and feminine purity. Interestingly, the descriptions of Dorian's look match those of a pretty Victorian woman.

According to Valerie Steele, who studies the changing standards of female beauty, an attractive Victorian woman should have beautiful hair, pale complexion, light pink cheeks, expressive eyes, and small mouth (110). Simply put, "a clear, fine complexion" (Steele 110) was what a Victorian woman should show. Stressing his pale face and rosy cheeks, Dorian was depicted as one "who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves" (*Dorian* 7), which come close to the standard of beautiful women from the Victorians' perspective. Furthermore, Kathryn Ledbetter remarks that in a gorgeous Victorian woman "all features should radiate purity" (122), which matches Dorian's traits of being "unspotted" and having youthful "purity." Tantamount to a good-looking young lady, Dorian "is some brainless, beautiful creature" (*Dorian* 7). Not only does Wilde employ the triangular homoerotic relationship between Basil Hallward, Lord Henry Wotton, and Dorian to challenge the Victorians' heterosexual point of view, but he also purposively highlights Dorian's womanly traits to rebel against the Victorian middle-class masculinity.

Apparently, Dorian is to be distinguished from the mainstream Victorian middle-class man, who "presented a hirsute appearance" (Nunn 143) by wearing sideburns, side-whiskers, or full beards. In contrast with Dorian, Basil is described with a middle-class masculine image, having "rugged, strong

face," and "coal-black hair" (*Dorian* 7), demonstrating traits of being practical and industrious. Moreover, different from Lord Henry, the dandy, who often have tea parties with friends and is exempted from work, Basil is a hard-working middle-class artist who stays in his studio most of the time. Regarding Dorian's marriage with Sybil the actress, Basil obeys the strict moral standards of the middle class, and thinks that Dorian should not marry a lower-class girl, which may do harm to his social status. He says: "Think of Dorian's birth, and position, and wealth. It would be absurd for him to marry so much beneath him" (*Dorian* 80). Undoubtedly, Basil represents the conventional, conservative middle-class man who is afraid of people from the gross, uncultivated working class, and can accept only "the Angel in the House" as his wife.

Furthermore, in *De Profundis* Wilde mentions "Narcissus" (65) as the ideal image, which is extended in the novel's descriptions of a number of the Greek youths famous for androgynous beauty, such as Antinous, Adonis, Narcissus, Adrian, and Paris. After Lord Henry points out that "he is a Narcissus" (*Dorian* 7), Basil then compares Dorian to other androgynous Greek youths: "What ... the face of Antinous was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me ... He has stood as Paris in dainty armor, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms, he has sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, looking into the green, turbid Nile" (*Dorian* 14). In addition to Basil's comparison between Dorian and the androgynous Greek youths, Lord Henry tells Dorian that he shows "rose-red youth" and "rose-white boyhood" (*Dorian* 23). The simile of flowers puts much emphasis on Dorian's feminine boyhood.

To prevent Dorian from being fettered by Victorian masculinity, which equates utility with masculinity, Lord Henry praises Dorian's lack of mental labor. Lord Henry says: "He is a brainless, beautiful thing, who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence" (*Dorian* 7). More like a woman, who according to the Victorian notion of "separate spheres" should not develop one's practical working ability, Dorian is a feminine being who never uses his brain too much. Explaining the feminine fairness, or any kind of gorgeousness unrestricted to gender, Lord Henry says that "beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins" (*Dorian* 7). He warns everyone about the danger of the gender ideal of masculinity, which demands one to work and think vigorously: "Intellect ... destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid" (*Dorian* 7). Explicitly, both Basil and Lord Henry hope that Dorian would keep his distance from the Victorian stereotype of masculinity by staying "brainless."

Importantly, one should notice that the transgressive strategy of techniques of the self that Dorian exemplifies can be analyzed by the twentieth-century notion of camp. The Pre-Raphaelite painting and Wilde's life writing of the androgyne in the nineteenth century, which meant to disassemble the biopolitics of the rigid gender images, laid the groundwork for camp. As a new sense or style, camp advocates exaggerated fashion to emancipate one from the constraint of gender roles. In this sense, the way one displays one's gender becomes quintessential. I should first examine Susan Sontag's notion of camp, and then discuss Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which both illustrate how the androgynous beauty of Dorian undermine the biopolitics which could be traced back to the Victorian age.

In "Notes on Camp" (1964), Sontag points out that the androgyne represents camp fittingly: "The androgyne is certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility... Here, Camp taste draws on a mostly unacknowledged truth of taste: the most refined form of sexual attractiveness (as well as the most refined form of sexual pleasure) consists in going against the grain of one's sex. What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine" (99). Such examples of androgynous bodies as "the swooning, slim, sinuous figures of pre-Raphaelite painting and poetry" and "the thin, flowing, sexless bodies in Art Nouveau prints and posters" (99) fully display camp sensibility. Sontag explains that "allied to the Camp taste for the androgynous is something that seems quite different but isn't" (100). The camp sensibility underlying Dorian is its attempt to be vague. Different from the conventional men or women, hence, the androgyne serves as the best exemplar of camp.

More interestingly, Sontag points out that "Camp is the glorification of 'character'" (104). The unconventional style of camp attempts to bring new sparkle to middle-class life by demonstrating fresh character: "The statement is of no importance - except, of course, to the person ... who makes it. What the Camp eye appreciates is the unity, the force of the person" (Sontag 104). By the "force of the person," it refers to a distinguished allure that does not follow the rules of society, such as getting married and having a family. In terms of personality, Sontag stresses that "what Camp taste responds

to is 'instant character'," since "character is understood as a state of continual incandescence - a person being one, very intense thing" (105).

In addition, Sontag points out that camp advocates bold exploration of sensual pleasures. Daring to abandon the common routine of life, "Camp is the attempt to do something extraordinary," meaning "being special" and "glamorous" (Sontag 103): "Clothes, furniture, all the elements of visual décor, for instance, make up a large part of Camp. For Camp art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content. Concert music, though, because it is contentless, is rarely Camp. It offers no opportunity, say, for a contrast between silly or extravagant content and rich form" (98). Privileging the surface over content, the core notion of camp is to probe into the sensual domain in order to fight against the obsolete, regulative middle-class gender image.

Within the framework of Sontag's notion of camp, the revolutionary elements embedded in Dorian's androgynous beauty can be revealed more clearly. In *De Profundis* Wilde puts forth that "beautiful personalities" (66) are important, which are demonstrated by Dorian's exceptional and yet inspiring traits. Soon after Lord Henry's tutoring, Dorian is no longer "the shy, frightened boy he had met in Basil Hallward's studio" (*Dorian* 60). When Dorian, the grandson of Lord Kelso, falls in love with Sibyl Vane, a lower-class actress, it captures Lord Henry's attention: "If a personality fascinates me, whatever mode of expression that personality selects is absolutely delightful to me" (80). Lord Henry observes that "his nature had developed like a flower, had borne blossoms of scarlet flame" (60). The simile of a growing flower describes Dorian's instant character, which is always transforming. Dorian's exuding of light and intensity, which enormously moves Basil, Lord Henry, and Sibyl, exhibits the camp sense of "continual incandescence."

Furthermore, in *De Profundis* Wilde thinks it is important to go "to the depths in the search for new sensation" (56) and be "a man of fashion" (56). Wilde does not "regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure" and "there was no pleasure" he "did not experience" (68). Dorian also shows bold fascination for jewelry, perfume, music, and embroidery represent the aspects of texture, sensuous surface, and style, which are emphasized by Sontag. For instance, Dorian "took up the study of jewels, and appeared at a costume ball as Anne de Joyeuse, Admiral of France, in a dress covered with five hundred and sixty pearls" (*Dorian* 145). Filled with various forms of sensual experience, Dorian exclaims: "How exquisite life had once been! How gorgeous in its pomp and decoration! Even to read of the luxury of the dead was wonderful" (147). He feels more diversified and versatile.

I will now briefly theorize the exaggerated style of camp by looking into Judith Butler's notion of performativity. In my opinion, Butler's theory of performativity helps explicate the reason for the strategy of camp to operate as a great resistance to the dull, routine middle-class life. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Butler analyzes that gender is in fact a socially constructed facade instead of a stable identity. She explains that gender is a "corporeal style" or an "act" that is carried out artificially (100). To be a man in the Victorian age was a corporeal project, which included demonstrating masculinity by walking with a swagger, taking a cane, and wearing glasses. When a respectable man talked to others, he stood with one foot stepping forward and one hand holding a lapel. These masculine ornaments and bodily gestures reveal that masculinity is but a set of cultural codes. Therefore, Butler writes that "gender is not a fact": "The various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (Butler 100). Despite that in the Victorian age to be a hardworking, respectable man is an imperative for every middle-class man, Butler would like to point out that this is merely a set of repetitive acts.

Thus, Butler develops the notion of performativity to explain the cultural acts of reiteration of masculinity and femininity. She writes that "gender reality is performative" and "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler 106). The notion of performativity should be understood "in the theatrical sense" (97), as if a drama performed on the stage, which constitutes gender identity "as a compelling illusion" or "an object of belief" (98). More importantly, social performances of gender are "dangerous," since "on the street or in the bus" (105), the acts continue ceaselessly and unwittingly. As such, one would thoroughly fall into the gender roles since one cannot tell the fake, artificial act from reality. Butler employs the transvestite in the late twentieth century to discuss the performative potential: "The transvestite ... challenges ... the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. If the 'reality' of gender constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized 'sex' or 'gender' which gender performances ostensibly express" (105-6). Untying the link between the look and reality, the transvestite uncovers that gender "cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior 'self,' whether that self is conceived as sexed or not" (106).

Notwithstanding that posing as the androgyne seems like a feasible strategy in practicing techniques of the self, I would like to point out that the gender performance he/she enacts is grounded on the exclusion of other different bodies. Even in the theatrical field of performance, where one dresses up his/her body in a peculiar way and carries out acts that disobey the conventional gender image, the gender performance remains an enclosed arena for the disabled, who cannot find their own stage, one for the different body. Hence, I would like to clarify that by upholding androgynous beauty, the challenge that Wilde's fiction proposes is based on an able-bodied narrative. In order to explore more possibilities of disrupting gender division, I will re-examine the challenge to Victorian gender ideology from the perspective of the fragmented body.

As a matter of fact, Victorian masculinity was not only threatened by the ambiguous beauty of the androgyne, but also the disabled. Although Dorian's feminine complexion and denial of hard work violate masculinity, his androgynous beauty is not the only way to uncover that the Victorian gender roles are absurd. The fragmented body of the disabled, which cannot be categorized, more substantially reveals that the division of gender is unreasonable. One should note that as the Pre-Raphaelites and Wilde ignored the disabled body, and assumed that a new form of beauty based on the intact body could release one from the dilemma of gender, they had inadvertently exercised violence against the maimed body.

The Victorians' discrimination against the disabled was illustrated in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), in which he documents the life of the working class people by observing and talking to them on the streets in mid-Victorian London. Attempting to advocate the Victorian work ethic, Mayhew divides the people of London into three categories, "those that will work," "those that cannot work," and "those that will not work," admonishing the reader that having the will and ability to work is of the utmost importance. The disabled, who are physically too weak to cope with work, are hence considered by Mayhew as a problematic type of population.

In a section named "Cripples" in volume IV, Mayhew discusses how some lower-class people pretend to be the disabled and beg for money, while the truly disabled still have "prescriptive right to beg where they please" (433). However, although Mayhew seems to understand that the disabled are restrained by their bodily difficulties, and are therefore "incapacitated from any kind of labour," and "certainly deserving of sympathy and aid," he cruelly employs derogatory terms to describe them, such as "the poor wretch without hands," "the crab-like man without legs," and "the idiotic-looking youth" (433). Worst of all, Mayhew thinks that the disabled should not stay in public due to the abnormal shape of their bodies, which are "hideous" and would "infest the streets" (433). Writing that "I am surprised that there is no home or institution for cripples of this class" (433), Mayhew suggests that those with impaired bodies be put away.

Mayhew describes how the disabled lower-class people scare respectable ladies on the streets, and therefore constitute a scene of horror in London: "Instances are on record of nervous females having been seriously frightened, and even injured, by seeing men without legs or arms crawling at their feet. A case within my knowledge, where the sight of a man without legs or arms had such an effect upon a lady in the family way that her child was born in all respects the very counterpart of the object that alarmed her"(433). Incredibly, Mayhew attempts to spread the superstition that women could bear disabled children after seeing legless beggars on the street. Insisting that the disabled really do harm to women's embryos, he even buttresses his viewpoint by providing an example, writing that it "took place at Brighton about eleven years ago" (433).

The examples discussed above have delineated the situation that the disabled are in every day, one which is filled with embarrassment and insult. Therefore, the effects that looking brings to the disabled are worth a discussion. In "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," Rosemarie Garland Thomson analyzes that for the disabled, the estranged experience of being looked at enormously influence their social identity. Apart from the gaze that a beautiful man or woman may receive, the mode of looking being executed on the disabled is staring: "Staring is an intense form of looking that enacts a relationship of spectator spectacle between two people ... The dynamic of staring registers the perception of difference by the viewer and enforces the acceptance of difference by the viewed. As such, it manifests the power relations between the subject positions of 'disabled' and 'able-bodied'" (347). These power relations explicate the process in which the able visually code the somatic traits of the disabled. This parallels Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's notion of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, which explains that the anonymous viewers are always there, hidden in the dark, and make the inmates feel being watched every second. Being kept under constant surveillance creates pain for the inmates, which comes close to the feeling of the

disabled, who also experience the pain of being watched by unseen eyes in the panopticon when they walk down the street.

More significantly, in this process of coding the somatic traits of the disabled, the able people's staring designates the visual search for the incongruent, problematic parts of the fragmented body. Garland Thomson writes: "Starers gawk with abandon at the prosthetic hook, the empty sleeve, the scarred flesh, the unfocused eye, the twitching limb, but seldom do they broaden looking to envelop the whole body of the person with a disability" (347). Thus, staring at the prosthetic arms or legs consolidates the visual rupture between the intact body and the fragmented body, and imposes the biased social identity on the disabled in a visual way. In this way, various disfigured bodies are turned into Foucault's docile bodies, losing all the energy to fight and forced to accept the result of incessant coding. Hence, Garland Thomson points out that "staring at disability ... intensely telescopes looking toward the physical signifier for disability" (347). As if seeking for the marks that label the disabled body, staring is an optic act which brands the maimed body as disabled. For the disfigured bodies, whenever they are present on the street, they are taken by people such as Mayhew as "spectacle" (Hayward 62). In fact, Mayhew's observation and analysis of the poor class are grounded on the perspective that the disabled are a spectacle. Once people stare at the bizarre shapes, all types of the disabled body are compelled to become a target for looking already. In stark contrast to the anonymous middle-class body, which is self-regulated and quantified, the disabled body, being exposed to people's stare, is overtly thematized and coerced to act as if it is on an invisible stage.

In the face of the stress underlying visibility, one has to rethink about if it is possible for the disabled to employ the strategy of performance, since they are also situated in the visual field and would like to claim their autonomy and achieve revolution. Nevertheless, to perform the disabled body by displaying it scarcely contains the revolutionary potential one expects. In this case, the disabled body cannot be strategically performed as an alternative body. In fact, the conventional strategy of blurring the binary demarcation of masculinity and femininity has excluded the fragmented body, which cannot find any position in the strategy of performance, not even in the one executed by the androgyne. As a consequence, the performance of the androgyne fails to terminate the structure which codes the disabled body.

Examining Wilde's character of Dorian, which offers a historical origin of employing a strategy of bodily practice, one can see that Dorian's androgynous beauty has shut out the participation of the fragmented body. Thus, when the novel seems to effectively break down the binary gender roles by employing hedonism and the aesthetic idealism of beauty to rebel against the middle-class asceticism and work ethic, it actually reinforces them. Eradicating the disabled in the narrative of aestheticism, and building beauty on the basis of the able body, the novel, as well as the Pre-Raphaelites, buttresses the conventional thinking of the body instead of revolutionizing them. When it is rumored that Dorian visits Whitechapel and brawls with sailors, thieves, coiners, and other working class people (*Dorian* 151), there should be the legless or armless like Mayhew describes. However, even the descriptions of the East End of London, the region of the lower class, omit the disabled naturally as if they do not exist. In order to take the disabled body into account, one has to re-examine the part when Dorian is astonished at his unchanged face: "No winter marred his face or stained his flower-like bloom. How different it was with material things!" (*Dorian* 148) After exchanging fate with his portrait, Dorian stays young and pretty as the portrait grows old and ugly. Regardless of the fact that Dorian's perception of sensual pleasures and materiality is enriched after he acquires the eternity of youth, his ignorance of the disabled body is still prominent. Materiality, the most essential element of the body, here refers only to the intact body and excludes the impaired body. For the disabled, the attempt to perform the beauty of the androgyne still cannot veil sceneries of fragmented bodies on the street.

As Irmo Marini observes: "Certain disabilities, such as amputation, facial disfigurement, and deformity, are perceived as repulsive to look at, despite the fact that we have a morbid curiosity to stare. The conflicting cognition of wanting to stare and concomitantly look away generates discomfort" (40). Grounded on the discomfort induced by staring, the performance of the disabled body cannot generate any meaningful reflection that prompts the viewer to rethink about the fragmented body. Discomfort is comparable to a wall, which blocks the act of re-categorizing the visual objects carried out by the consciousness of the viewer who should be enlightened. For the disabled to re-self-categorize themselves, the feeling of discomfort associated with the fragmented body has to be dismantled. Nevertheless, the way to break down this wall may need a strategy other than the strategy of bodily practice that Wilde's androgynous youth offers.

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