Fall 12-11-2017

The Selfie of Dorian Gray: Adapting Literature for Modern Media

Darby L. Campbell
Eastern Kentucky University, darby_campbell83@mymail.eku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://encompass.eku.edu/honors_theses

The Selfie of Dorian Gray: Adapting Literature for Modern Media

Honors Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements of HON 420

Fall 2017

By

Darby L. Campbell

Mentor

Dr. Rick Mott

Department of English and Theater

The Selfie of Dorian Gray: Adapting Literature for Modern Media

Darby Campbell

Dr. Rick Mott
Department of English and Theater

Abstract: *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* is a modern adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* set in modern America and starring a female Dorian Gray. The work is set up as a web series that takes place on YouTube in the form of a vlog run by Dori herself. The transmedia world consists of both YouTube content and Twitter content that all contribute to one over-arching story world. Modernizing the narrative, setting, media, and characters highlights which literary themes and motifs of the original novel are still relevant today and which symbols have changed since publication. The greatest effect on the novel is likely a result of the new media format, as this format changes not only the setting, but also the narrator and the perspective from which the audience is given access to the story. The purpose of this project was to take a piece of Victorian literature and bring it into the modern world, making it more accessible to a new generation. The new media format makes it possible for people who otherwise would not have been able to access the original work due to language barriers or other such obstacles to enjoy this narrative.

Keywords: Honors Thesis, Adaptation, Transmedia, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Modernization, Gender-swapping, Picture Perfect Dori Gray

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Dr. Rick Mott for agreeing to be my mentor, showing excitement when I explained what I was going to do, and generally being supportive and confident in my ability to complete this project. I doubt many professors would have heard "I'm going to write, direct, edit, and publish a 27-episode web series based on a 20-chapter classic novel, plus I'm going to change the genders of most of the characters just to see what happens there, and, oh yeah, they all have Twitter accounts," and been as enthusiastic as he has been.

Secondly, I would like to thank all the people who agreed to be actors, despite few of them having experience with this kind of acting and even fewer still who had any experience with Dorian Gray and its characters. Specifically, I would like to thank Annie Jo Baker, Carter Stovall, Mackinnon Wessel, Hank Richburg, Renee Richburg, Cheyenne Gibson, Rachel Lachut, and lastly, Delaney Stovall for agreeing to be my Dori. I would like to thank Annie Jo Baker a second time for putting the idea in my head and allowing me to bring it to life, and Rachel Lachut a second time for providing the music. I would also like to thank my roommate, Rachel Bracker, for letting me turn our room into a filming studio, and always being there to make me breathe. And thanks to Tanya Cifranik, for reminding us to practice before turning the camera on.

Special thanks to the EKU IT Geeks for providing the recording equipment. Even more thanks to Dr. David Coleman and the entire honors program for giving me the opportunity to complete this project and to share it with an accepting community of academics both at EKU and on a national level. And finally, thanks to everyone who ever heard me explain this project and did not immediately respond, "Are you crazy?" but

who instead smiled, listened, told me how much they were looking forward to it, and then told me I was crazy. Dori wouldn't exist without all of you.

Personal Statement

The inspiration for this project came from two places. First of all, literary transmedia has been done before, first in the form of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, followed by other shows like *Frankenstein M.D., The March Family Letters,* and *Carmilla*. I myself am a huge fan of all of these shows, particularly *Lizzie Bennet* which brought one of my favorite classic novels to life in a way that allowed me to talk to characters who had once just been ink on a page. I wanted to know what it was like to create something like that, and create my own literary transmedia experience for others to enjoy. I am a creative writer at heart, and the task of turning a great piece of literature into something that was inherently mine was a challenge I was excited to take.

I began with only the idea of literary transmedia, unsure of which literature I would be bringing to life. My second spark of inspiration came right before I went to talk to my mentor, when I came across a tweet posted by my best friend, Annie Jo Baker. It read "The Picture of Dorian Gray, but with like a really really great selfie," (Baker). I immediately texted her to ask if that tweet could become my honors thesis, and so it did.

What strikes me the most about this whole experience now that I have come to the end of the process is the thought that has been running through my mind for the past few days. I did that. Almost one year ago I decided to take on this project and I envisioned what it would look like at the end, but only after completing it has the magnitude of this project hit me (something that everyone but me realized one year ago). One year ago,

Dori was just an idea, a tweet, and a person in my mind, and now she has her own

YouTube channel and social media presence, and the process has been long, and it's been

a lot of work, but the satisfaction of looking back at the last year of work and being able

to say, "I did that," is worth every moment.

Literature Review

Adaptation is the retelling and simplification of one story as it is transferred from one medium to another (Hutcheon). Adaptation is by no means a new phenomenon. Shakespeare exploited the art of adaptation for many of his plays; for example, *Romeo and Juliet* was based off a poem of a similar title (Hutcheon). Adaptation was particularly popular back in the Victorian era when playwrights would often adapt the works of Dickens and other popular authors for the stage, although these adaptations were not always well received by the authors themselves (Laird). The common practice today is to not just retell the same story in a new medium, but to re-imagine the story in a way that is new and exciting for audiences. A late Sunday night T.V. program called *Masterpiece* found that their adaptations were more well-received when they moved from sticking strictly to the dialog, events, and scenes of the pieces they were adapting and began to include much more interesting interpretations (West). When an adapter makes the decision to reimagine a piece or adapt it for a medium with more content restrictions than the original, that adapter must be willing to make sacrifices with the content and cut certain elements (Shohet). Some adaptation theorists claim that the only way to save adaptation from a "bleak and servile future" is to adopt a "writerly" approach to it. (Leitch, Boozer). What this means is the adapter should approach the project with the mindset that they are the new writer of this work in order to make it new and exciting. When adapting, Hutcheon claims that what adapters should be most aware of is the presence of both a knowing and unknowing audience. A knowing audience is one that is aware that the work is an adaptation, and an unknowing audience is unaware. The adapter must cater to both these audiences in order to be successful (Hutcheon).

A new technique creators are using when adapting for new media is transmedia. A transmedia story is one that unfolds across multiple media platforms which all work together to create one massive story-world (Jenkins, Ryan, Dan). Transmedia got its start in the comic book industry. Superman was the first character whose story was told transmedially. Superman began as a single comic book, but when Donefield, the owner of what would become DC Comics realized that audiences were demanding Superman, he began including the Man of Steele in his other comic book *Action Comics.* He later transferred the Superman character into a newspaper comic, a radio show, and eventually Superman made it on the silver screen. In order to get the full story of Superman, one has to partake in all these forms of media (Freeman). The term transmedia, however, did not arise until the 90s and the creation of *The Blair Witch Project* which had content circulating on the internet before the pseudo-documentary was released and revealed to be a work of fiction (Jenkins).

With the advent of the internet, independent creators now have access to a new set of tools to create transmedia. What is particularly interesting about online-based transmedia that relies on YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook to tell these stories is the fact that it allows for a greater amount of audience interactivity. The story is meant to bleed into the viewers' daily lives by including fictional social media updates that merge with the real-life updates that users tend to surround themselves with (Dann). What creators of popular transmedia productions – for example, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a modern transmedia adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* – have found is the audience responds well to the opportunity to interact with the characters and story (Tepper).

Where all these elements come together in the creation of a transmedia adaptation of a classic novel is in the consideration of the audience. If a transmedia production is done well, it should appeal to an audience that is unaware that it is an adaptation and unaware of the existence of the extra content just as much as it appeals to the audience that is aware of the transmedia aspect and the adaptation (Hutcheon, Jandl). The creator should pinpoint one form of media, typically film, YouTube or other forms of visual or audio media, to be the main medium through which the story will be told, while all other forms of media involve supplementary content or work to cover any small plot holes left in the main medium (Jandl, Tepper).

In order to successfully complete an adaptation of a classic work, an author must thoroughly understand the characters in that work. Online transmedia adaptations are largely character-centric (Jandl), so accurately representing the characters of the source material is necessary. Much of the criticism of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* focuses on the characters, and very specifically on the sexualities of these characters. Wilde uses what is called circumnarration, or narrating around a topic without outright saying it, to imply the homoeroticism of his main characters Dorian and Basil (Davis). Dorian is a highly complex character and his actions go against many tropes of the time. For example, Dorian is a villain who seeks the light because the light being shed on his youthful face has allowed him to escape facing his sins more than once (Lying). Dorian is manipulated by Henry Wotton, an interesting character meant to represent the stereotypical "man's man" of the Victorian period (Irmak). Wilde's portrayal of the genders is highly calculated in this novel. He describes men in a way that makes them seem more real and touchable while women are described in off-handed ways (Yingvi).

How Dorian Gray is interpreted, however, is really determined by whether one reads it as a moral parable or a Gothic romance, although many critics suggest reading it as a hybrid of both (Clausson).

Picture Perfect Dori Gray

Picture Perfect Dori Gray is a 27-episode web series that takes place over multiple social media platforms, specifically YouTube and Twitter. The majority of the narrative takes place on the main YouTube channel called *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* which is owned and operated by the title character Dori Gray (Delaney Stovall), who is a female version of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray. The channel begins as a make-up tutorial channel and spirals out of control throughout the series. Dori is a music major living with art major Basil Hallward (Annie Jo Baker), also gender-swapped. Through her friendship with Basil, Dori meets Harry Wotton (Carter Stovall), originally Lord Henry Wotton in the novel, who leads her to believe that her beauty is her defining quality. This leads Dori to wish that the selfie that her and Basil had taken earlier would age and that she would stay young forever.

Through the influence of Harry, Dori goes on to explore the more run-down dingy parts of campus and town, and finds herself in a campus theater where she meets actor Sibyl Vane (Hank Richburg), gender-swapped. They fall in love and become engaged. Their engagement convinces Sibyl to throw away his acting career in favor of his love for Dori, which angers Dori to the point where she breaks off the engagement, driving Sibyl

to commit suicide. Dori then realizes that the selfie is recording her sins and so chooses to hide it and live her life based on her sinful desires.

By the end of the show, Dori has destroyed her relationship with almost everyone except Harry. She has even gone so far as to murder Basil when she came close to discovering the secret of the selfie. Dori begins to feel remorseful, and attempts to redeem her soul by rebuilding her relationship with Gwen Wotton (Rachel Lachut), Harry's sister who is a conglomeration of two characters from the novel, The Duchess and a young woman who Dorian decides to break up with for her own good. After checking the selfie and discovering that this act of charity has not affected anything, Dori becomes angry and destroys the phone containing the selfie. Dori then dies clutching her chest. The last episode shows Harry explaining how Dori was found and speaking a eulogy for her on her vlog.

The second YouTube channel that makes up this web series belongs to Jim Vane (Mackinnon Wessel). The channel is called James Vane, and consists of three vlog-style episodes hosted by Jim as he speaks to his mother through the videos. The first video, "Goodbye Mother," shows Jim receiving the news from his brother Sibyl that Sibyl is engaged to be married, and Jim's disapproval. The second episode, "A Tweet," is a video letter to his mother just after Sibyl's suicide in which Jim angrily monologues about how his mother should have told him about his brother's death and ending with Jim vowing to get revenge on Dorian Gray, who he blames for Sibyl's death. The last episode shows Jim just after he has attempted to kill Dori as he explains that he became confused, worried that he had the wrong girl, and subsequently let her go. This episode airs just a

week before an episode on Dori's channel in which the audience learns that Jim was shot by a friend of Dori's in a hunting accident and killed.

The two channels contain about two total hours of visual content in addition to six twitter accounts that are associated with the characters. Every character on the show, except for Aly Campbell (Cheyenne Gibson), gender-swapped, has their own Twitter account from which they live-tweet events and provide additional character background. (Aly Campbell was supposed to have a Twitter account, however, technical issues and Twitter's user policy prohibiting multiple fake accounts caused that account to be locked multiple times, and so that account was abandoned).

Picture Perfect Dori Gray explores a variety of media-related issues and how the changes that have been made to the source material and the technical setup of the show affect the characters and the themes and events of the narrative.

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde's psychological novel was a perfect fit for this format and translated into the modern world, the transmedia format, and the vlog format better than expected. Many factors present in the structure and content of the original novel helped facilitate an easy transition when moving from Victorian novel to modern transmedia.

First of all, the novel is dialog heavy, which works well with the modern vlog style which is also dialog heavy. Much of the novel consists of the characters sitting in drawing rooms having discussions, and much of the exposition of the novel is revealed through dialog. For example, we learn about Dorian Gray's history not through a narrator as is typical, but through a conversation between Lord Henry and his uncle in which Lord

Henry snoops into the life of this man he just met; the uncle reveals the history of Dorian's mother and how Dorian came into his wealth. The dialog-heavy nature works especially well in the vlog format.

Vlogging is a form of video blogging in which the vlogger, or person running the vlog, speaks directly to the audience through the camera or has a conversation with a second or third person with the awareness that that conversation is being captured on camera. The vlog format involves a static setting and a static camera, so adapting a novel that relies heavily on action would not have worked nearly as well, as most action in a fictional vlog setting has to happen off camera. Because *Dorian Gray* relies heavily on dialog to tell the story, little action had to be cut to accommodate the new format. The conversations between the characters were simply moved from the drawing room to in front of the camera. For example, the conversation in the original novel between Henry and his uncle disclosing Dorian's past becomes a conversation in the adaptation between Harry and Dori on camera fronted as an interview in which Dori reveals her past to Harry and the viewing audience, fully aware of the filming.

The Picture of Dorian Gray adapted easily into this format also because it is character-centric rather than action-centric. For a fictional narrative formatted as a vlog to be successful, it must focus on and develop the characters (Jandl). The static setting associated with the vlog format does not allow for a great deal of action to be captured in a way that is both compelling and makes sense within the restrictions of the format. It is difficult to justify the character taking their camera with them into a battle, and so narratives that contain scenes of that nature are not a good fit for this format. Because *Dorian Gray* is a psychological novel that is focused on the characters, their motivations,

and their emotions, it is a perfect fit for this format. When the camera never moves and every episode looks the same structurally, the audience needs to have something to invest their interest in, and Wilde's characters are so dynamic that they fit right in.

Adaptation

The most ambitious part of this project was the process of adaptation. The first step in adapting *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for the online transmedia format was deciding the parameters of that format and reading the novel with the format in mind at all times. After every chapter, I would make notes on how that chapter could be adapted. I decided at this stage to split several chapters into smaller episodes in order to keep each episode under ten minutes.

It was during this stage of adapting that I began working on how to reconfigure the novel from a third person omniscient narrator to the first-person narrator of Dori Gray. One struggle I faced at this stage was how to handle the few scenes in the novel that take place without Dorian being present and about which Dorian must remain unaware. I solved this in two different ways in two different instances.

The first instance is in chapter one when Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward are discussing Dorian and Basil's infatuation with him. This conversation must take place on screen because it gives significant character background to both Harry and Basil, but Dori must not be aware of the conversation and Basil's feelings. I show this scene in episode 3 on the main *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* channel, and set it up so that Dori is the one who turned the camera on, got called away to an emergency, and left the camera on when she left. Harry and Basil come in just after Dori has left, and unaware that they are being

filmed, have the conversation from chapter one. They leave and Dori returns, and it is heavily implied that Dori, in a rush, cuts and posts the wrong part of the tape.

The second instance is in the case of James Vane. The novel gives the reader a glimpse into the lives of James and Sibyl Vane through, again, the third-person narrator. Because James does not interact with Dorian directly except for once toward the end of the novel, it was impossible to justify him showing up on the main channel. Therefore, Jim Vane had to have his own YouTube channel where his motivations are made clear as he attempts to kill Dori.

When adapting from print to visual media, Hutcheon claims there are two important steps: cutting and filling (Hutcheon). The next step in the adaptation process was cutting. The scriptwriting process consisted of copying passages from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on to a document, and first adapting it for the script format. My final script is almost completely dialog with little stage direction, and none of the description that Wilde had included in his novel, as I did not know when I wrote the script what the set would look like. So, the first part to be cut was all of that setting and character description, taking the novel down to its most basic format. The next step was to modernize the dialog, infusing it with slang and dialect that did not exist in 1890. After that, the next step was to cut that dialog down to the most important or prominent information. This was especially important in the case of Harry, whose defining quality as a character is the ability to monologue about seemingly nothing for pages on end. A great deal of what Harry says is nonsense meant to provoke the characters around him, and so much of it could be easily cut without having much effect on the plot. Much of the dialog cut from Harry was moved to the Twitter.

Another factor when adapting is adapting the timeline. Often, for a narrative to be adapted for visual media, it must be adapted for a new timeline (Hutcheon). This is especially true for the social transmedia format, as the goal of this format is to make it seem to the audience that the events are taking place in real time. This means that the timeline of *Dorian Gray* needs to be adapted from an 18-year timeline to a 3-month timeline. In order to do that, I needed to create the illusion that Dori had been committing a great deal of sin and illegal acts within a short span of time in order to account for the 18-year jump that takes place in the novel. I did this with "Ep. 13- The Montage of Dori Gray," an episode that jumps between scenes to make it seem that all of this has happened at different times all within the span of time between Episode 12 and that episode. In reality, that time difference is only four days, so this is a place where the audience needs to suspend their disbelief to keep the illusion of realism alive.

Cutting and compressing the narrative in order to make it fit the new medium can often cause plot holes in the narrative as certain aspects of the original work don't translate over as well as others. In this case, Hutcheon says it is the adapter's responsibility to fill those gaps with new content that flows well with the adapted content. In *Picture Perfect Dori Gray*, there are two such instances where I wrote episodes of entirely new content in order to fill a hole that was left in the adaptation process.

The first episode of new content is "A Tweet" on Jim's channel. In this episode, Jim complains about having found out about Sibyl's suicide through the internet and vows to hunt down Dori who he blames for the suicide. Without this episode, Jim's motivation's don't seem as clear as they do in the original novel, and so this episode attempts to explain that.

The second episode is "Ep. 24- The Eulogy of Dorian Gray," the final episode of the show. The plot hole here is caused by the shift from third-person to first-person narrator. In the novel, the third-person narrator explains to the audience what happened after Dorian dies, how he was found the next morning, and what he looked like when he was found the next morning. With the limited perspective of *Picture Perfect Dori Gray*, it was difficult to convey all of that visually, and so I choose to have Harry explain to the audience in one final episode what happened to Dori, and eulogize her as a way to tie the show all together.

When adapting, Hutcheon says the adapter should be aware that they are writing for two different audiences, the knowing audience and the unknowing audience. The knowing audience is aware that the work is an adaptation and is familiar with the source material. Members of the knowing audience are able to enjoy the intertextualities, or subtle hints or jokes included in the adaptation. *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* includes some intertextualities meant to give the knowing audience a laugh. The first is a joke made on Twitter in which Harry tweets a picture of a Darth Vadar wall hanging that can be seen in the background of every vlog and asks Dori and Basil why they have it on their living room wall, to which Dori replies simply, "Aesthetic." The joke that only someone highly familiar with the novel and Oscar Wilde would get is that Wilde was a well-known member of the aestheticism movement, a movement of artists that believed in art for the sake of art. Another intertextuality is the fact that Episode 15 takes place on November 9, the exact same date that the events of that episode take place in the book.

In order for an adaptation to be successful, it must not only cater to the knowing audience, but also to the unknowing audience who is not familiar with the source material

and may not even be aware that they are watching an adaptation. This means that no holes should be left and everything should be easily understood to cater to this audience. The intertextualities should not distract the unknowing audience from the piece. For example, in the case of the "Aesthetic" joke previously mentioned, even though that joke is targeted to the knowing audience, it can still be appreciated as a joke to the unknowing audience as well. Recently, in internet culture, responding with the single word "Aesthetic" to any image that is odd or unusual has become a widely known joke across social media. Therefore, Dori responding "Aesthetic" to Harry's inquiry of why Darth Vader is on the wall would still be funny and understandable to an audience without intricate literary knowledge of the source material.

The adaptation process for this project was difficult in that I was tasked with taking a narrative and forcing it into a time, place, and format that it was never meant to conform to. However, when compared to other forms of print-to-visual adaptation, such as movies, I had much more leeway with this project as I was not restricted to any specific running time, and was only restricted by how long an audience would be engaged.

Modernization

Modernizing the work gave new perspective on the themes and symbols within the novel as many of those themes, such as vanity, sexism, sexuality, and toxic masculinity, are still relevant topics today. Despite how much has changed in the 127 years since *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published, the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of the characters do not seem out of place in the modern world.

Vanity

A central theme of *Dorian Gray* is the idea of vanity. Dorian's fatal flaw is his obsession with his own beauty, and his fear that he will one day lose that beauty. This theme shines through in the modernization very well, especially with the reliance on social media as the storytelling platform. In today's society, the cardinal sin of social media is often labelled as vanity. People post with the intention of showing off to their followers, friends, and other internet connections. People Dori's age today are often stereotyped as the "selfie generation" and "selfie culture" is often criticized as being the result of an obsession with "likes" and "hearts" and "retweets." The character of Dorian Gray fits this description exactly, making this particular theme even more prominent in the modernization than the original work.

Sexuality

The Picture of Dorian Gray showcases characters that are meant to be read as LGBTQ. Basil Hallward can be read to have very strong romantic feelings for Dorian, while Dorian himself is strongly implied to have had relationships with men throughout the novel, specifically Alan Campbell. The evidence to support this is most prominent in the uncensored version of the novel, however, Wilde makes it clear in the censored version as well using a technique called circumnarration (Davis). Wilde includes symbols that strongly imply that these characters fall under these sexualities, such as Harry's mention of a popular vacation spot for homosexual men back in this time.

Modernizing the work removes the need for circumnarration. Because homosexuality is no longer taboo or illegal, these characters can take on those identities in a modern sense. Basil makes no effort to hide her feelings for Dori, and at one point,

Dori says, "He [her grandfather] said 'She can't have a name associated with a homosexual, she'll be a homosexual herself.' Well, he was half right," joking about her identity as bisexual (Campbell). This could have an effect on the audience's perceptions of this narrative. When the original novel was published, it was surprisingly celebrated by certain Christian groups because they read the novel as a moral parable, or a warning against vanity and acting out in the way that Dorian did (Clausson). They believed Dorian's exploration of his sexuality was just one of his many other sinful acts. This was likely not Wilde's intention, as Basil, the tragic hero of the novel, is also portrayed as having a same-sex attraction to Dorian before Dorian is even introduced to the novel. Because of the modern nature of *Picture Perfect Dori Gray*, the sexualities of these characters can now be outright stated, destroying the idea that Dori's sexuality is a part of her sins.

Masculinity

Harry Wotton is meant to be the "man's man" of the Victorian era, and the fact that he still fits the description of stereotypical masculinity today says a lot about today's society and how little our ideas of masculinity have changed (Irmak). Harry hates the idea of marriage, objectifies women, goes out drinking whenever he wants, and smokes, all traits of "manly men," that have survived to today.

Harry and Victoria

The biggest anachronism that exists in *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* as a result of modernization is the relationship between Harry Wotton and his wife Victoria. Victoria appears once in the series in "Ep. 7- Marriage, Music, and Other Assorted Trivialities," and it is clear from that appearance that her and Harry's relationship is not one based in

love or mutual affection. Harry and Victoria act very coldly toward each other, barely even looking at each other when they speak. This same relationship exists in the novel, however, it can be explained by the typical customs of the time. In Wilde's time, arranged marriages based on wealth and benefit were still popular, and so Victoria and Harry having no mutual feelings for each other is not unusual, and their disdain for each other makes sense. However, the modernization takes place in a time where marriage is almost always based on mutual attraction, and so a couple that acts as though they have never had any sort of attraction to each other, and who actively proclaim to dislike being married seems out of place in the modernization.

Transmedia

Transmedia involves using multiple media formats to tell a story and build an in-depth story-world around the characters (Jenkins). For a transmedia adaptation to be successful, however, there should be one dominant media platform through which the main narrative is revealed. Any other narrative platforms should be used to showcase supplementary material that is not necessary for the audience's understanding of the narrative because not all audience members will be dedicated enough to hunt down each contributing piece of the story (Jandl). In the case of *Picture Perfect Dori Gray*, those different media platforms are two YouTube channels and six Twitter accounts, and the primary medium is Dori's YouTube channel. The secondary medium is Jim's channel, as it contains information most closely related to what is happening on Dori's channel, and the third and smallest supplementary media platform is Twitter.

Seven out of the eight characters have Twitter accounts of varying activity. The first purpose the accounts and their tweets serves is character building. Because the media format is so character-centric, it is necessary for these characters to be interesting and dynamic at all levels of the transmedia. The Twitters act as a place where audience members who are invested in the characters can go to get more of a sense of their personalities. The Twitter also allowed me to introduce certain characters to the audience and build those character's personalities before the audience was officially introduced to them in the show. For example, Gwen Wotton, Harry's sister who Dori has a complicated relationship with, does not appear on Dori's channel until Episode 19, but has a prominent presence on Twitter long before that. Audience members who follow Harry on Twitter would have found Gwen early on, as Gwen and Harry do communicate over Twitter quite a bit. In late September, toward the beginning of the show, Harry tweeted, "The great sins of the world take place in the brain," to which Gwen responded, "So that time you tried to push me into the lion exhibit was all in your head?" These interactions introduce Gwen long before the audience knows how she will be relevant and gives the audience a chance to observe not only her but her relationships with the other characters, namely Harry. Still, finding Gwen's Twitter is not necessary to the audience's understand of who Gwen is and how she fits into the narrative, but is merely supplemental information that highly interested audience members might enjoy.

The second purpose of the Twitter is to support the illusion of realism. The purpose of using social media is to make the audience believe that the lives of these characters continue even after the video ends and the camera is turned off. The Twitter supports this be being a platform through which the show can appear and interrupt

people's daily lives (Dann). Dori and the other characters are tweeting at all times of the day, even on days when an episode has not been posted. The desired effect is that audience members will see tweets from these characters pop up in their normal feed, reminding them that the plot is still moving and making them wonder what the characters are up to at that exact moment.

A benefit of the Twitter component is the availability for a different narrative platform. Some scenes in the story could not be told through the YouTube channel because it was impossible to justify Dori taking her camera with her into those scenes, for example, the party at Agatha Wotton's house or the night Dori takes Basil and Harry to see Sibyl perform. These are important scenes, and while they can be told in the main vlog by the characters recounting the events, it is more effective to tell them through a platform like Twitter that allows an in-the-moment telling of these events. These events are told using "live-tweeting" in which the tweets are formatted so that it seems like the characters are at that event at that very moment on their phones tweeting about it.

An aspect of the Twitter and the social media format in general that did not come to fruition in *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* is audience interaction. The Twitter and the comments section under the YouTube channel were meant to act as a forum for invested audience members to talk to each other and the characters, and have the characters occasionally speak back to them. In the past, audiences have responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to interact with the characters (Tepper), and audience interaction is a hallmark of the transmedia format, however, that did not happen with this adaptation. The Twitter accounts were not nearly as popular as hoped, with Dori only having 13 followers who were not involved in production, none of whom ever directly interacted with Dori.

17

Another issue caused by the lack of Twitter interaction is that the audience had difficulty finding Jim's YouTube channel because they were not connected to Dori and the other characters on Twitter. It is not possible for an audience member to find Jim's vlog through Dori's YouTube channel alone, and so the way they were meant to find it is through Twitter. If an audience member followed Dori, they would see tweets in which Dori had tagged Sibyl Vane, leading them to follow Sibyl, and if they followed Sibyl, they would see tweets in which Sibyl had tagged Jim leading them to follow Jim where they would have access to all of his vlogs. Unfortunately, since few audience members were connected to Dori on Twitter, even fewer found Jim's channel, meaning most of the audience is missing two-thirds of the entire transmedia production.

Vlog Format

The video blog or vlog format affects the narrative more than was originally expected. Vlogging involves a static camera and static setting and a first-person narrator who speaks directly to the audience through a camera that the narrator is fully aware of. This format changes the narrator from a third-person omniscient perspective to a first-person limited perspective. This simple shift in narrator changes quite a bit about the structure and the characters.

First, in order to accommodate the loss of omniscience, the story must have more than one first-person narrator. Therefore, Dori and Harry act as co-narrators within the main vlog. Because there are certain scenes that Dori likely would not have posted, such as the scene in which she calls Harry to tell him of her secret engagement, and the subsequent scene where Harry reveals Dori's engagement to Basil, Harry has to act like a

second narrator and be the one to post those scenes. The decision to have Harry act as a second narrator was also influenced by Harry's role as the driving influence over Dori's downward spiral. The idea that Harry not only has some control over Dori, but over her social media as well, strengthens Harry's position as the driving negative force of this story. It's made clear that Harry on many occasions has been the one to turn the camera on and begin filming by the number of times episodes begin with another character asking Harry why the camera has to be on, and it's made especially clear that Harry has access and the ability to post to Dori's channel at the end of Episode 7 when he finds the camera Dori left behind and says, "I'll upload this for her later," (Campbell).

Another effect of the change in narration is that it creates unreliable narrators that did not exist in the original novel. An omniscient narrator is generally considered trustworthy, however, a first-person narrator offers themselves up to skepticism simply by being first-person. That skepticism is increased by the severe limits of the vlog format. The audience is only able to see what Dori and Harry are able and, most importantly, willing to show them. Couple that with the fact that the static nature of the vlog format requires many events to be told word-of-mouth by these characters and this creates two very unreliable narrators. The audience must now approach this narrative questioning always if what they are being told is true and wondering what they might be missing when the camera stops filming.

Gender-Swapping

The decision to gender-swap Dorian Gray was made in the interest of curiosity. Gender-swapping literary characters is not a new concept, and the inspiration actually

came from another literary transmedia production, *Frankenstein M.D.,* in which Victor

Frankenstein becomes Victoria Frankenstein. I was interested in the motivations behind

that decision and the effect feminizing had on the character of Frankenstein. Since I was

not as familiar with *Frankenstein,* I decided to use a character I was more familiar with.

Dori was the first character to be gender-swapped. Other characters then had to be

gender-swapped in order to keep the sexualities of those relationships consistent to that of

the original novel. Basil Hallward was the next to be gender-swapped, as her same-sex

attraction to Dori is central to her character. Originally, I had not planned to swap Sibyl

and Alan Campbell, however, after much consideration, I decided keeping the sexualities

of those romantic relationships constant was important.

I had hypothesized that a female Dorian Gray would have been treated much

more critically and harshly by a modern audience in accordance with the typical attitude

of our society toward women who act out in what can be called a deviant manner like

Dori does. This hypothesis was proven wrong. A female Dorian Gray is actually more

sympathetic and relatable than her male counterpart. The reason for this is likely that

society tends to stereotype women as being more vulnerable and emotional than men, and

we see that vulnerability as a quality with which we can sympathize. The character of

Dorian Gray really has no redeeming qualities. He is a vain, murderous opium addict who

maliciously ruins the lives of all those who he has any type of relationship with. That

vulnerability in that cruel character is something that the audience seems to view as a

redeeming quality.

Technical Work

The technical work on this project, planning, filming, and editing was done within about two months. This project was completed under a small budget and limited resources, however, I like to think that supports the overall feel of the vlogs which are supposed to seem like they've been put together by a total amateur.

The first step in preparing for filming was planning the stage. Because it is a static setting, the plan was to model the stage after the proscenium stage used for classic plays with a downstage, middle stage, and upstage. Downstage is the area nearest to the camera, most often used for solo monologue vlogs and conversations between two characters. Middle stage is used mostly for movement. It is where characters move in and out of the scene and where Basil does most of her agitated pacing. The upstage area consists of the couch and the back wall. The couch acts as a setting detail for most of the show, except for most episodes when Harry is in the scene. Harry can typically be seen spread out on the couch on his phone, showing his desire to be included but inclination to not pay attention and take part in the main action.

The set was built in my dorm room. The couch is made up of two chairs, a trunk, and several pillows covered by a blanket. The camera, which was borrowed from the EKU IT Geeks, rested on top of a stack of books instead of a tri pod. The lighting comes primarily from a lamp held over the scene by me, while I watched the camera and scrolled down the script on my computer which was connected to a T.V. so the actors could see it. The actors that could not see the TV screen kept the script available on their phones, which is why Harry Wotton spends so much of the show "texting." Behind the camera, a fitted sheet was stretched from the wall to my bed in order to keep sound from

bouncing and echoing on the episodes. Any time the scene is supposed to be dark, we hung dark colored bedsheets over the windows and turned the lights off. This was a very low-budget production.

A few mistakes were made in the planning of the set. I forgot to remove the Darth Vader wall hanging that belonged to my roommate before filming the first episode, and in the interest of consistency, I left it throughout the rest of the show, and justified its existence through a tweet. Though it is less noticeable, I also left a carnation in a mug on one of the windowsills, and because the episodes were not filmed in order, that carnation can be seen to be in varying stages of death throughout the show. One episode it is wilted and dying, and in the next it is bright, red, and alive.

A part of keeping the timeline consistent was decorating the set so that it matched the season in which that episode would be published. In October, ghost lights hang on the wall, and in December there are Christmas lights. Unfortunately, because filming was spread out over several days, I would sometimes forget to hang the lights, especially in the October episodes, so the ghost lights can be seen to come and go in different episodes. Filming was done based on when my actors were available, so all episodes were filmed out of order, and primarily on the weekends.

Another issue that came up in filming was the fact that I would not always be able to check out the same camera from the Geeks. It alternated between an HD camcorder and a Sony camera. The differences in the episodes filmed with each camera are very clear. The HD camera captured high quality video, but only recorded audio on a mono track. Episodes filmed with the HD camera have a sharper picture and more saturated color, but the sound quality is less full. On the other hand, the Sony camera recorded

audio in stereo, but had less clear video quality. I preferred the Sony camera, and had I been able to use it for the entire project, the video and audio would have been much more uniform.

The editing was done on LightWorks, a free editing software. The program was, for the most part, user friendly, and the only issues I had were the lack of an in-program tutorial and one major issue in which Episode 7 would not export. Episode 7 is the longest episode in the show at 10 minutes long, and the length might have affected its ability to export out of LightWorks, so that particular episode had to be edited in Windows Movie Maker.

I made a few mistakes in the editing process and actually had to pull episodes off line, edit them and republish them a couple of times because I did not realize those mistakes until they had been published. For example, I had to republish Episode 7 because I had left in an extra couple of seconds during which you can hear me start talking behind the camera. A mistake that made it onto the YouTube channel a couple of times that I did not catch until much later was that sometimes several minutes of black screen and silence would be left at the end of the episode because I would not specifically cut the blank parts of the timeline in LightWorks. I've solved most of these mistakes, as far as I know.

The technical production of this project was likely the most difficult part. It was the aspect of production that I had the least experience with, and I realized only after beginning the filming process, that I was unprepared to be a director. The editing process was not as difficult, but it was definitely a challenge to complete.

Conclusion

The purpose of *Picture Perfect Dori Gray* was to take an old narrative and make it more accessible to a larger modern audience. The reason more people are not familiar with the story of Dorian Gray is because the story exists in a medium that is not easy for the entire population to access and enjoy. The Victorian language of the novel, and long flowing passages make it a difficult novel to read, causing people to avoid it if they can. By bringing this story into a medium that many modern-day people are familiar and proficient with, it makes that narrative available to people who might not have otherwise been able to enjoy it. Modernizing puts the story in a time and context that otherwise would not have been possible. And if the accessibility of the new media encourages people to dig deeper into the story and they find themselves enjoying the original medium, then it can only be for the better.

Bibliography

Boozer, Jack. *Authorship in Film Adaptation*. vol. 1st ed, University of Texas Press,

    2008. EBSCO*host*,

    libproxy.eku.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&d

    b=nlebk&AN=252298&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Campbell, Darby. *Picture Perfect Dori Gray,* YouTube.

    https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmwyn514A4OgeJ1f_DJvLSQ

Clausson, Nils. "Culture and Corruption: Paterian Self-Development versus Gothic

    Degeneration in Oscar Wilde's 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.'" *Papers on*

    Language and Literature, 39.4, pp 339-364, 2016, Web.

Dann, Lance. "Only Half the Story: Radio Drama, Online Audio and Transmedia

    Storytelling." *Radio Journal: International Studies In Broadcast & Audio*

    Media 12.1/2 (2014): 141-154. *SocINDEX with Full Text*. Web. 14 Feb. 2017.

Davis, Helen H. "I Seemed to Hold Two Lives": Disclosing Circumnarration in Villette

    and the Picture of Dorian Gray." *Narrative*, vol. 21, no. 2, May 2013, pp. 198-

    220. EBSCO*host*,

    libproxy.eku.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&d

    b=a9h&AN=86992686&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Freeman, Matthew. "Up, Up And Across: Superman, The Second World War And The

    Historical Development Of Transmedia Storytelling." *Historical Journal Of Film,*

    Radio & Television 35.2 (2015): 215-239. *Communication & Mass Media*

    Complete. Web. 14 Feb. 2017.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation.* 2nd ed, 2013, print.

Irmak, Burak. "Acting out Gender: Performativity and Becoming Lord Henry Wotton in Oscar Wilde's the Picture of Dorian Gray." *B. A. S.: British and American Studies/Revista De Studii Britanice Și Americane*, vol. 21, 2015, pp. 77-82. EBSCO*host*, libproxy.eku.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2015384328&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Jandl, Silke. "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: Adapting Jane Austen for the Internet Age," *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik.* Vol 40. 2015, pp 167-196

Jenkins, Henry. "Searching for the Origami Unicorn: *The Matrix* and Transmedia Storytelling." *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press, 2006, Web.

Laird, Karen E. "The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature, 1848-1920: Dramatizing *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, and *The Woman in White.*", Web.

Leitch, Thomas. "Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ." Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007. Print.

"Lying." *At The Interface / Probing The Boundaries* 87.(2014): 151-170. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

Mellet, Laurent. "From Defining to Categorising: A History of Film Adaptation Theory." *Interfaces: Image Texte Language*, vol. 32, 2011, pp. 99-110. EBSCO*host*, libproxy.eku.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2013296914&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Nicklas, Pascal and Eckart Voigts. "Adaptation, Transmedia Storytelling and Participatory Culture [Special Issue]." Adaptation: The Journal of Literature on Screen Studies, vol. 6, no. 2, 2013,pp.139-241.EBSCOhost, libproxy.eku.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2013443253&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Transmedia Storytelling: Industry Buzzword or New Narrative Experience." *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies,* Vol. 2 No. 2, University of Nebraska Press, 2015.

Shohet, Lauren. "Medusa's Shield: Literary Adaptation And The Lightness Of History." *Western Humanities Review* 65.2 (2011): 6-14. *Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

Tepper, Allegra. "Lizzie in Real Life: Social and Narrative Immersion Through Transmedia in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.*" *Film Matters,* Vol. 6, Issue 1., 2015, Web.

West, Nancy, and Karen E. Laird. "Prequels, Sequels, and Pop Stars: 'Masterpiece' and the New Culture of Classic Adaptation." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2011, pp. 306–326., www.jstor.org/stable/43798804.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Pocket Books, 1890, ebook.

Yingyi, Li1 and Yi1 Li. "The Gender Awareness of Oscar Wilde: Comparison between His Women Characters and Men Characters." *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, vol. 6, no. 5, Sept. 2015, pp. 1020-1025. EBSCO*host*, doi:10.17507/jltr.0605.14.