



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Objectification and belittling of Sibyl Vane in Oscar Wilde's Novel  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray***

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study is to locate elements of feminism in Oscar Wilde's novel 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'. It is argued that the male characters are the main focus of the story, while the female characters are treated as supporting characters. Through their gaze and words, the male characters objectify and denigrate the female characters. Females are regarded as nothing more than pretty faces for pleasure-seeking. Elements of objectification are highlighted in the novel by employing the theory of objectification. An in-depth examination of the novel through the lens of objectification theory reveals the shocking reality of male characters treating female characters, particularly Sibyl Vane, as objects. It is concluded that men in the novel treat women brutally. They are either regarded as fools or empty pots. They are treated as something that can be bought, sold, and replaced rather than as a human being with autonomy and subjectivity. Furthermore, other studies could be conducted on the same while applying different linguistic approaches such as pragmatics, critical discourse analysis (CDA) etc.

**KEYWORDS**     Autonomy, Belittled, Feminism, Ill-Treatment, Objectification, Subjectivity

**Introduction**

Oscar Wilde is regarded as one of the Ireland's greatest writers. In 1854, he was born in Dublin, Ireland. His love for literature and art is heightened by the fact that his mother was a poet and his father was a writer. He was the face of the Aestheticism literary movement in England. Oscar Wilde's only novel, "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*," was published in 1890. It is a stunning work of art. He was successful in bringing the various themes together in an ethereal way. The Victorian society harshly criticized *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when it was first published in 1890 in a literary magazine called Lippincott's Monthly. Later on in 1891 it was changed and distributed again with specific increments as a book. A prelude was composed with the second distribution because of the extreme judgment towards the novel and Wilde's standards. This novel was viewed as scandalous and immoral by Victorian readers. Oscar Wilde encapsulates every dark aspect of the society in which he lived while discussing the moral attitudes and values of Victorian society. He was of the opinion that "diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital." According to him, "art should be appreciated for the sake of art". He stated in his preface that there is no moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written.

The story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is philosophical and covers a lot of ground. The story's premise centers on Dorian Gray and his portrait, which is painted by Basil Hallward, a talented artist. Dorian is a very attractive man who meets Lord Henry and Basil Hallward, two of his friends. Dorian will be the subject of Basil's portrait. Despite Basil's objections, Dorian wishes to keep the portrait for himself. Dorian wants to move out of the portrait because he wants his youthful fairness and flawless beauty to last forever. He is conscious of his sins and wants to replace them with the flawless beauty of his portrait. Their places change, Dorian has turned into the workmanship, while the composition has become soul. Painting depicts Dorian at his worst and traps his soul. The young actress Sibyl Vane committed suicide and Basil Hallward was killed as a result of the revelation of Dorian's corrupt and hedonistic nature. Dorian ultimately stabs the painting, resulting in his death and the painting returning to its original perfection.

Mills (1995, as cited in Abdullah & Mohammed, 2019) believes that the male characters in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are actively present and their actions are described vividly, whereas female characters are hardly visible. In other words, the novel is occupied by the male characters and they are gossiping about women, while female characters remain unheard throughout the novel. The most well-known female character in the book is Sibyl Vane, an accomplished singer and actress. Dorian Gray falls head over heels for Sibyl, yet one-sided and empty headed Henry Wotton, with imprudent perspectives about ladies, attempts to make contempt for Sibyl in Dorian's heart. Lord Henry makes disparaging remarks about women in general. Lord Henry responded that "no woman is genius" when Dorian praises Sibyl's dance and calls her a genius. The statement "Women are a decorative sex" demonstrates that Lord Henry characterized women as unreasonable and unintelligent. This kind of skewed and extreme opinion of Lord Henry shows how unjust, hollow, and chauvinistic he is, which is how Victorian men really were. In addition, ladies are purposely detained and darkened. Dorian is greatly influenced by Henry's opinions, and this influence prevents Dorian from even being able to sympathize with his lady love's situation which eventually became the reason for Sibyl's suicide.

In the latter part of the Victorian era, Oscar Wilde published his work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In patriarchal Victorian society, where women were at the forefront of subjugation after the Second World War, there were strict codes of conduct. The novel incorporates Victorian sexuality concepts and gender roles. The Victorian era was renowned for its oppressive moral codes and sex and anything related to sex was strictly forbidden (Muldoon, 2005 as cited in Abdullah & Mohammed, 2019). Victorian novels depict the societies and values of the age. Giving greater say to the male characters while female characters are belittled through words and their worth is measured via their appearance and physical beauty. Mills (1995, as cited in Abdullah & Mohammed, 2019) argues that men tend to be described by their personalities, whereas female characters are typically described by their appearance. These aspects are strikingly apparent in the exploitation of women in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Men are introduced as to such an extent that the focal point of consideration is towards them and are given a bigger say in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde while the females in the novel are treated as optional characters (Li & Yi, 2015).

It is common knowledge that women in Victorian England were regarded as inferior to men in most aspects of life. At home, all that was expected of them was to be good wives and mothers. They were instructed to serve as "angels of their houses" (Demir, 2015 and Afaq.M et al, 2022). Such disparity may be observed between the characters in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Female characters are treated as an

object of pleasure for the male characters, whereas male characters are given greater prominence. The researcher is compelled to study the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from the feministic perspective and highlight the gender based issues because the novel is not yet been examined from the perspective of objectification theory; a theory within feminism. The research aims to demonstrate the subjugation of female characters in the novel, which accurately depicts the society in which it was written.

## Literature Review

According to Dar (2015), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a philosophical novel with a variety of plot points and themes. Despite the fact that the novel is about artistic idolatry and aestheticism, it also contains a lot of negative, sexist, and stereotypical images of women. Women are socially and linguistically constructed in the novel. Female characters are certainly and unequivocally skewed and they are depicted as regrettable, uncalled for and irrational by the male characters. Negative epithets are used against female characters, and the sadistic, prejudiced, and shallow men of the just society treat them brutally with epistemic violence. Epistemic violence (harming and torturing a subject through discourse) threatens the female character when they are spared physical torture. Lexical terms were always used by male writers to introduce their female characters. They not only exploit and beautify women, but they also use words to lock them up.

In addition, Klimeová (2015) addressed the gender issue, primarily through the lens of three primary gender roles and identities. The findings portray Sybil Vane as a femme fatale, the Duchess of Monmouth as a New Woman, and Dandy as a type. This description is appropriate for Henry, Basil, and Dorian, who spent a lot of time together, and one can see there the homosexual overtones not only between Dorian and Harry but also between Basil and Dorian.

According to Kersten (2014), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an accurate portrayal of Victorian society. It depicts the diverse spheres of male and female life during the Victorian era as well as the strict moral codes. Because it promotes a lot of prejudice against women, this book is very misogynistic. The novel's male protagonists prefer to spend more time with their male friends than with their wives. Both genders have distinct spheres, each of which is associated with a particular function. The society that is led by men assigns reproduction and household chores as the only duties to women, making them seen as sexual objects. In the male-dominated novel, there are no female characters, which raise interesting questions.

Li (2015) investigated how Oscar Wilde's character's gender roles differed. By contrasting how he depicts male and female characters, he discusses Wilde's gender awareness. In the novel, Wilde's spokesperson, Lord Henry, embodies his awareness of gender to the world. In addition, the adjectives used to describe Sibyl Vane present a charming image intended to attract men's attention. Sibyl is portrayed as an appealing figure by these adjectives for the pleasure of men. Words like "charming," "loveliest," "exquisite voice," and "beautiful" are among these adjectives. The novel also uses a variety of metaphors to objectify Sibyl Vane. Women are depicted as being naive, indifferent, and sensitive. The author may have inherited his gender awareness from his homosexual life, as evidenced by the characters' lack of consideration.

According to Simion (2015), Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reflects his views on hedonism and aestheticism. Lord Henry Wotton, who aspires to the fullest enjoyment of life, vividly illustrates Wilde's concepts regarding aestheticism,

morality, art, and life. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's charming character Dorian Gray promotes his philosophy of creating the most beauty and pleasure in one's life. Additionally, because he only adores Sibyl Vane for her acting and beauty, Dorian's love for her is superficial. He doesn't like her personality, but he likes her aesthetically. When Dorian gives up his soul in exchange for eternal youth, his true nature emerges. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the analysis of aestheticism reveals the hypocrisy of the English upper classes. Lord Henry uses eloquent language to support independent thought, selfishness, and defying convention. The primary focus of the aesthetic and hedonistic movements was on art and the pursuit of pleasure in art. Taylor (2015) is of the view that the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* truly depicts art, culture and identity crises of the age in which it was written. Two major characters, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry discuss about the portrait of Dorian. Dorian in the novel is given feminine characteristics and is being admired as an epitome of beauty. Dorian's objectification by other men alters his views about the world and he starts objectifying other people around him, especially Sibyl Vane. Initially Dorian appreciation of Sibyl makes it clear that he believes in her as a talented artist, but later she is denounced and degraded by Dorian Gray.

Zabala (2015) revealed the novel aspects of Oscar Wilde's works by applying Butler's performative gender theory to them. The evidence gathered from the text backs up the assumption that gender acts take place. Both Sibyl Vane in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the reed and swallow in *The Happy Prince* show that they are willing to give their lives for love. When talking about gender performativity, Sibyl Vane's character deserves more attention. Additionally, the characters in the book, including Dorian, Henry, and Basil Hallward, violate their gender roles. In response to the oppressive Victorian society, the characters, according to her analysis, exhibit both masculine and feminine traits. Shakespeare's heroines exhibit the characteristics of a sibyl-feminine character. Society expects her to act the way she does on stage, but when she took up real-life performance after falling in love with Dorian, her talent waned, and society rejected her subversion of the feminine ideal. Lord Henry criticizes Sibyl's acceptance of real life following Dorian's proposal, describing her as unreal. Dorian rejects Sibyl's new identity because it conflicts with his conception of femininity. Sibyl portrays a variety of heroines on stage, but she has never performed as Sibyl Vane, which Dorian really desired. She is rejected by Dorian because he wants her to keep role-playing for him. Basil and Henry, on the other hand, admire Dorian for his beauty because of his feminine traits; however, in the end, when Dorian adopts masculine traits, he becomes less attractive to his friends.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher has identified women as societal weaklings by employing the Objectification Theory, an extended branch of the second wave of feminism. The researcher's use of qualitative data analysis has brought to the attention of the readers of the novel the appalling treatment of female characters by men. The researcher has investigated the objectification and denigration of women during the second feminism wave.

A movement that advocates for female rights is called feminism. It began in the 19th and 20th centuries following the Second World War and has been divided into three waves of feminism. History was witness to the offshoot of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, which was primarily concerned with the equality of men and women in social and domestic settings. This movement began in the United States of America and eventually spread throughout Europe. The individual's overall personality and image are shaped and shaped by society's predetermined roles and

labels. The role of women in society and cultural disparities were emphasized by the second wave of feminism. The theory of objectification proposed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi Ann Roberts is used by the researcher to conduct an analysis of the relevant text through the lens of feminism. This theory of objectification is broken down into two main parts by them: self-objectification and sexual objectification. Further, Martha Nussbaum divides sexual objectification into seven components, of which the researcher uses four to comprehend the novel's sexual objectification of women. The theory is applied to Sibyl Vane and the other prominent female characters in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to demonstrate how women in that society were subjected to objectification and piercing by male gazes; how the venomous criticism of men degraded and ridiculed them, and how they were subjugated by them throughout their lives.

### **Theory of Objectification**

Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts proposed the theory of objectification in 1970. This theory was initially developed to investigate the situation of women in the United States; however, its applicability and significance have been questioned over time when it is applied to the diverse population. According to this theory, the media and, more specifically, the male gaze are contributing to the objectification of women. Women are viewed as objects, things, and commodities rather than as individuals. The theory of objectification provides researchers with a fundamental framework for comprehending the lives and roles of women in the socio-cultural context in which they are objectified. Women's physical appearance has been made a criterion for determining their worth. Because of their bodies and beauty, women are devalued and denigrated. During interpersonal discussions between men and women, male gaze and visual inspection are used to objectify females. However, the media also has a significant impact on the attitudes of men toward women. Women are made to feel like objects in advertisements and other forms of media. Self-objectification and sexual objectification are the two main components of objectification theory.

### **Self-Objectification**

The term self-objectification is self-explanatory, which means to objectify oneself. Women are objectified more than men in every patriarch society, which forces the women to adopt the persona which the society demands from them. Women as a minority group of the society are affected by the male gaze and they internalize the negative commentary of men which creates psychological disorders in women. According to Simon de Beauvoir (2011), when a girl becomes a woman, she plays two roles. The first role is a persona that the woman wears for the pleasure of society, while the second role is her actual identity. Female self-objectification, which forces women to treat themselves as an object, is largely influenced by culture. Women have a greater perception of being "looked at" than men do, and as a result of social pressure, they keep their bodies under surveillance in order to please the men in their lives.

### **Sexual Objectification**

The practice of treating other people, particularly women, as commodities that can be manipulated and defined by their physical properties is known as objectification. It thinks of women as sexual objects for men to enjoy. It is a form of dehumanization in which an individual is regarded as an animal rather than a person. In feminist theory, sexual objectification is a technical term that indicates bad intentions and criticism of

others. It makes people act skeptically toward other people. When women are given chances to show off their bodies in public, the social practice of demoralizing women leads to sexual objectification. Sexual objectification is made possible by immoral behaviors like sexual harassment, rape, gazing, and pornography. The majority of women, according to feminist theorists, internalize their experience of sexual objectification, leading to a variety of mental health issues like depression and anxiety. The dominance of men's beliefs and desires has always caused women to prioritize their own desires over those of men when it comes to the objectification of women. In *The Second Sex*, Simon De Beauvoir writes: We are made to be women, not born women.

### Seven Elements of Sexual Objectification

Several feminists have discussed the topic of objectification. One of the well-known feminists is Martha C. Nussbaum. Martha is an American philosopher who gave seven elements or ways of treating someone as an object and thing in 1995. She is of the opinion that mostly every objectification includes these seven elements, which shows treatment of one person towards other. The first element is instrumentality, which means that a person is used and treated as tool for another purpose. The second element is denial of autonomy: when a person is treated as lacking self-determination and autonomy. The third element is inertness, which means that a person is treated as lacking in doing any action or activity. The fourth element is fungibility: treat any person as an exchangeable with any other thing and object. The fifth element is of violability, which means that a person is treated as a thing which can easily be broken. The sixth element is of the ownership, which means to treat a person as if you own it and it can be replayed, sold and bought. The last element of objectification is the denial of subjectivity: when a person is treated as an object, which feelings and experiences are ignored and neglected.

The researcher used four elements, out of seven elements, to understand and highlight the sexual objectification of the Sibyl Vane throughout the novel. The elements used by the researcher are instrumentality, denial of subjectivity, fungibility and denial of autonomy.

### Material and Methods

The qualitative method has been used by the researcher to carry out the research. After thoroughly reading the text, the researcher conducted a textual analysis, and the findings serve as the basis for the conclusion. The objectification of female characters has been examined. The researcher discussed the factors that contributed to the objectification and denigration of female characters in Victorian literature, particularly Sibyl Vane.

The tools used in this research for data gathering comprise on different sources including text of the novel as primary source and research articles and journals have been referred and consulted throughout the research as secondary source.

- The primary data collection tools used for this research will be:

Text of the novel

- The secondary data collection tools used for this research will be:

Research Articles

The discussion is based on the textual analysis of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In this novel the researcher is particularly concerned with the denounced and the suppressed social status of women in the Victorian society.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Oscar Wilde does not only knit different themes, but he also shows the true picture of the society in which he lived. The researcher has collected data by reading the text of the novel "*The Picture of Doran Gray*" thoroughly. Based on the textual analysis, the researcher has highlighted the elements of feminism broadly and finds out the element of objectification of females in particular. Female characters, especially Sibyl Vane, are objectified as sexual objects, which lead them to self-objectify their self. Women characters are introduced and influenced by the men in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and they treat themselves as an object, which is appealing to the male's gaze. However, the researcher has dug out the female suppression systematically to show gender inequality presented by Oscar Wilde. Initially, the researcher has highlighted the reification and belittling of Sibyl Vane by Dorian Gray and Lord Henry and then the self-objectification of Sibyl Vane is highlighted.

The novel begins with the description of beautiful painting of Dorian Gray made by Basil Hallward. In the meanwhile, Basil introduced Dorian Gray with another male character Lord Henry. These three characters are sitting in the Basil's studio and befriended there. Lord Henry is the one who takes initiative and starts discussion about the women. Later on, Dorian Gray treats females with cruelty and he treats them as trivial things and objects. They objectify women, especially Sibyl Vane who has seen as a commodity. Through objectification theory, the researcher has highlighted the subjugated status of Sibyl Vane because theory of objectification depicts the conditions of women in any particular society. As Fredrickson and Roberts say, "*Objectification entails....really not a thing*" (Fredrickson and Roberts, *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks*, 1997, pg.9). There are several references which provide evidence about the sexual objectification and self-objectification. The elements of sexual objectification such as instrumentality, fungibility, denial of autonomy and denial of subjectivity are present in the novel.

Fredrickson and Roberts say "*Sexual objectification.... gender oppression*" (Fredrickson and Roberts, *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks*, 1997, pg.174). It means that sexual objectification is one of the ways through which men belittle women. Women are oppressed, not through physical power rather they are pierced out by the male gaze and negative comments. Similarly, in the novel the female characters are discussed by male characters with negative comments. They are speculated as object and animals. The first example of how male treats women is when Lord Henry replies to Basil's remarks about Lady Brandon that she has "*Curiously shrill voice*" and Lord Henry replies "*she is peacock in everything but beauty*" (p.06), shows the objectification and belittling of the female characters. Lord Henry degrades Lady Brandon and treats her as if she can be exchangeable with the bird. They make fun of her voice that she is only good at making noise like a peacock. She is a senseless creature for them, but her beauty is attracting them. It shows their lust for physicality and objectification of women, for they just see them as an object of beauty to look at. Lady Brandon is measured through her beauty, because only her beauty is pleasing for Lord Henry. She is substituted with peacock.

There is another line, which shows reification of women when Henry says to Dorian that women are "*So sentimental*" and "*Never marry at all .... Both are disappointed*" (p.44). Lord Henry warns Dorian never to marry because women know nothing about life. They are very emotional and enthusiastic about marriage. They are sentimental

because they rely on their hearts and do not have brain. Here again the female character is sexually objectified. Henry is treating her as if she lacks the ability of doing any action or activity. They are emotional and sensitive but not rational and logical. Similarly, Lord Henry treats women as an empty pot, and they do not know worth living about life. He devalues and belittles women by passing negative remarks towards them.

Initially, the researcher has highlights the biased views of male characters towards minor female characters in general, now the researcher has highlighted the references where the major character of the novel, Sibyl Vane, is objectified and degraded.

In their theory of objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts say, "*The second route.... perpetrator*" (Fredrickson and Roberts, *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women' lived experiences and mental health risks*, 1997, pg.186). These lines mean that the torturing of women through physical power is not severe compared to the situation when women is treated as an instrument which exist only for the amusement and pleasure of the one who treats them as an object and instrument. Men treat women not as a human rather an object which born to satisfy the needs of men and that is the extreme of every brutality on the women. Similarly, in the novel the protagonist treats the major female character as an instrument which has no intellectual power and can be tamed as an animal.

Dorian Gray describes Sibyl Vane to Lord Henry that she is genius and he is in love with her. Henry replies, "*My dear boy....The triumph of mind over morals*" (p.45). The negative remarks of the Lord Henry are evident to the objectification of Sibyl Vane. Initially Lord Henry sees Sibyl as a stupid creature who is not genius. He sexually objectifies and belittles her by treating her as a sexual object which sole purpose is to please men. Henry thinks of women as a sexual creature, which is "*decorative*", it shows that he treats women as a decorative object which is appealing to the men's gaze and they are only created for sexual purpose. He means to say that women are created for sexual purpose and their beauty is worthy enough to look at. He thinks that females are known just for their bodily beauty because they are having pretty faces, but they have no intelligence. Lord Henry sexually objectifies Sibyl Vane, who believes that woman is merely an object of sex. He treats Sibyl as an instrument which is used for sexual pleasure.

Dorian talks about Sibyl Vane by saying "*One evening....she is Imogen*" (p.48). Dorian superficial love for Sibyl can be seen in his these words. He loves her because he loves her performance as an actress. It is her acting which makes him fall in love with her. Her bodily beauty and performance of acts makes him mad for her. He does not love her truly because he only appreciates her role playing which is soothing for him. Dorian admires the reification and substitution of Sibyl Vane with other things and characters. He only admires the characters which she plays on the stage, but he does not admire true character of Sibyl Vane. Every evening Sibyl performs different characters which is appealing for Dorian Gray. The elements of instrumentality can be seen here, when Sibyl is used and treated as a tool for another purpose.

Dorian says to Sibyl that "*I loved you because you were marvelous....you are shallow and stupid*" (p.83). Dorian sexually objectifies her when he declares that he only loves her physical beauty and acting. He treats her as a person who is used and treated as a tool for another purpose, which means that the element of instrumentality is present here. For him Sibyl is important just because of her beauty and performance on the stage. He believes that Sibyl is a genius and intelligent actress, but when he realizes that she



cannot perform well anymore, Dorian thoughts change and he calls her a stupid creature. To put it simply, he means that without acting Sibyl Vane is nothing. He considers Sibyl not as a human, but as an object of beauty which is there for the entertainment of the men. If she acts as a puppet in his hand then she is acceptable, but it is all went the other way round.

Nussbaum talks about the ill treatment of women by the hands of men. She is of the view that men treat women badly and brutally and women are placed in the situation where the independence and determination of women are enchained. Women are kept in a state, as Nussbaum says, "*Where questions of autonomy.... treatment of persons*" (Nussbaum, *Objectification*, 1995, pg.258). These lines mean that women have no autonomy and subjectivity; they are treated as an object which feelings and emotions are not taken into account and they are not independent in their decisions as well as in life. They are owned by the men. In the novel, Sibyl Vane is treated as an object by her own mother, who does not let her daughter to think about any other activity than acting on stage for earning money.

When Sibyl falls in love with Dorian Gray, she is so happy and tells about her love story to her mother, but her mother says "*Happy! I am only happy... We owe him money*" (p.57). These lines show that Sibyl's family is very poor and they owed money from the owner of the theatre and in return of money Sibyl is performing on the stage to support her family. Sibyl's mother is one of the reasons behind the objectification of her daughter. She scolds Sibyl to avoid and ignore Dorian Gray. Sibyl's mother says that she is happy when her daughter acts on the stage and earn money. It is evident here that Sibyl is forced by the society (including her mother) to continue role playing for them. Both the males of the society and her mother treat her as an object which is used to amuse others. Sibyl has no identity of her own. She is own and dictated by others to perform the roles which is soothing for them. Sibyl's mother rejects the idea of loving someone, when her daughter tells her about his relation with Dorian. She ignores the subjectivity of her daughter and Sibyl's happiness is denied.

Nussbaum says, "*Women as creatures.... of male desire*" (Nussbaum, *Objectification*, 1995, pg.280). In these lines Nussbaum says that women are the only creature on the earth who does not have autonomy and subjectivity. Male creature views women as an empty pot. According to Nussbaum, men view women as an object without any feelings and emotions. The experiences and the affection of women creature is ignored and denied by the men creature. Similarly, Dorian Gray speculated Sibyl Vane as an object who lives only to entertain him and the audience in the theater. Moreover, he wants to display Sibyl in front of the world as an object and symbol of beauty which does not contain any feeling and emotions. Another example of Sibyl's objectification is when Dorian says "*She will make the world.... She has made me*" (p.52). This lines contains several hidden meaning. Here again Sibyl Vane is belittled, devalued and degraded by Dorian Gray, because he does not only want to own her, rather he wants to show her acting and beauty to the world. The subjectivity of Sibyl Vane is denied because Dorian does not care about her feelings and emotions. He treats her as if she is just a puppet in his hand that is controlled by him. The way she has made Dorian mad in the same way she will attract the world through her acting and amuse them with her beauty. Dorian here treats her as a beautiful object which he wants to display for everyone. He is a shallow man because his inner being can be seen in his treatment of Sibyl as an object and thing which initially amused him, and now she will be displayed before the world as a piece of wonder.

When Sibyl performs badly on the stage Dorian scolds her that “*You make yourself ridiculous.... I was bored*” (p.82). These words portray the real character and thoughts of Dorian Gray. This utterance is evidence of the objectification of Sibyl Vane and it also highlights the trifling affections of Dorian towards Sibyl. She does not perform well on the stage and consequently Dorian rejects Sibyl as well as the society ignores her. Dorian only cares about her body and acting. When she fails to attract him through her acting, Dorian calls her acting ridiculous. Here again the subjectivity of Sibyl is denied and she is treated as a person who lacks any feeling and experience. Dorian taunts her brutally, for her acting bores him and his friends. It means, in general, that when she plays different roles well she is genius, but on the contrary when Sibyl falls in love with Dorian she wants to leave the unreal life of the stage and to adopt the real life, her efforts for accessing real life is ridiculize and mocked at by Dorian and Lord Henry. They feel bore because she stops playing role for them and that is not acceptable for the men.

The element of fungibility is also present in the text of the novel. As Nussbaum says, “*The very tool like treatment.... by a machine*” (Nussbaum, Objectification, 1995, pg.264). These lines mean that the tool like treatment of a human being is a kind of objectification which entails the element of fungibility. The fungible treatment means that a person is considered merely as an object which has no value and worth, and it can be replaced with other material things. Human body is treated as a thing of no importance and it can be sold, bought and replaced. Similarly, in the novel Sibyl Vane is treated as an object which can be substituted with other things which are not human. Most of the time Sibyl Vane is not mentioned by name rather her body parts are used to call her. Dorian Gray compares her body with different things and objects. He talks about her and remembers “*her reed-like throat...in every costume*” (p.48). These lines show again that Dorian Gray does not see Sibyl as a human; rather he compares her with different things and plants. It is the objectification of Sibyl Vane through the element of fungibility, which means to treat a person as an exchangeable to other things. Dorian views Sibyl as a person who has beautiful physique and he links her body parts with other object and by doing so he belittles Sibyl Vane. Dorian claims that he observes Sibyl in every age and persona. He does not say that he really knows the soul of Sibyl. He only knows the costume she wears. It means that Dorian only looks for the character which she performs on the stage. Instead of looking for inner being of Sibyl Vane, he is attracted and infatuated towards the personas, which she wears.

Nussbaum says, “*Treating as fungible.... or a prize*” (Nussbaum, Objectification, 1995, pg.290). These lines suggest that a person who is treated and used as a commodity, object and tool is a fungible. In the novel, Henry asks Dorian about the moment when he met Sibyl and Dorian replies that he met her on “*The third night. She had been playing Rosalind*” (p.50). These lines mean that Dorian first saw Sibyl when she was wearing the persona of another character. The element of fungibility can be seen because the exchangeability of Sibyl Vane’s character with Rosalind is more admired by Dorian Gray and he falls in love with Sibyl. He appreciates Sibyl when she is not herself and playing someone else’s character. It also highlights the reification of Sibyl’s beauty and acting by Dorian Gray. He loves her acting and eventually becomes her lover. Here, the objectification of Sibyl Vane is visible when she performs the role of Juliet, Dorian falls in love with her. On the other hand, when she performs as Rosalind, he approaches her. It suggests that he does not love her truly, rather he loves the characters which Sibyl Vane is mimicking on the stage.

Dorian says to Lord Henry “*I must admit that .... I have not been wounded*” (p.96). Dorian’s belittling and thingification of Sibyl is continue after her death. Sibyl after leaving this world is still remember by Dorian and his friend Henry with bad thoughts.

Dorian devalues Sibyl's acting and objectifies her death by comparing it with the ending of a wonderful play or drama. They do not care about a person who suffers a lot and leaves the world with pain. They are soothing each other, while calls her death as a natural process and actress's stupidity. The element of fungibility is visible here; the way Greek tragedies are wonderful and their end is catastrophic, similarly Sibyl Vane is seen as one of the beautiful chapters of Dorian's life which ends drastically. Dorian causes Sibyl's death, but he views her death as a beautiful end of one of the romantic dramas of his life. He does not care about her death, because he believes that wounds are only for women and they have to suffer.

The denial of autonomy of female characters is striking in the novel. Nussbaum in this respect says, "*Treating as instrument may well imply treating as non-autonomous*" (Nussbaum, *Objectification*, 1995, pg.259). This means that when a person is treated as an object, he/she is deprived of autonomy. However, the females' autonomy is always in trouble. In the novel, the female's characters are deprived of autonomy and they are treated as a thing which has no self-determination. When Lord Henry says to Dorian that Sibyl Vane is not innocent because as an actress it is her duty to make audience happy. She knows how to attract people and how to pay compliment. Dorian replied, "*She knows nothing of life*" (pg.51). This line contains element of sexual objectification, that is, denial of autonomy. Dorian objectifies and degrades Sibyl Vane by saying that she does not know more about life. She does not have the ability to live life independently. Dorian devalues her existence by ignoring her autonomy because he believes that she is not able to perform any useful work than acting. Dorian treats her as a thing, which can be easily broken and lacks the ability to perform any genius action. These points provide the evidence that Dorian does not treat Sibyl as a human, rather he considers her as a senseless person who knows nothing about the life.

There is a small discussion between Dorian Gray and Lord Henry about Sibyl Vane which shows the cruelty of Dorian Gray towards Sibyl Vane. Dorian says, "*To-night she is Imogen and to-morrow night she will be Juliet*" and Henry asks Dorian "*When is she Sibyl Vane*" and he replied "*Never*" (p.52).

All the brutality of males and the objectification of Sibyl Vane is visible in these lines. Dorian Gray degrades Sibyl Vane. He eagerly waits for every night to watch Sibyl's performance on the stage. He admires her acting and beauty. He is happy in the circumstances in which Sibyl Vane is playing different roles for him. He does not want her to abandon her acting for any reason, for he feels comfort and solace in her acting. He denied her autonomy. When Lord Henry asks Dorian about her real life, Dorian says clearly that she will never be Sibyl Vane. Dorian does not want to see real Sibyl Vane because he loves her acting not her soul. He treats her as an object of his amusement and he never wants Sibyl to adopt her real character. This shows the objectification of Sibyl Vane and the thoughts of Dorian towards her.

Nussbaum says, "*Once one treat...one's own purpose*" (Nussbaum, *Objectification*, 1995, pg.264). These lines mean that the autonomy of a person is denied when one uses and treats that person as a tool or object. They are treated as a material thing which can be owned and sold whenever needed. In the novel, Dorian tells Lord Henry that tonight "*I want you....to pay him something*" (p.52). In these lines the social conditions of Sibyl Vane are striking that she is being forced to act. She is not performing the role of an actress willingly. It means that she is subjugated by her family's poor financial conditions and the men of the society. It is also clear here that she has no power of autonomy, and most importantly she has no right on her own body. She is owned by someone and now Dorian wants to own her. Dorian wants to pay that person under

whom Sibyl performs on stage and to buy her for himself. She is not considered as a human because everyone uses her for his own needs. She is treated as a material thing and an object which can be owned, replaced, sold and bought.

Here are some points, which are evident in the self-objectification of Sibyl Vane. Fredrickson and Robert say, "*Objectification ....of their physical selves*" (Fredrickson and Roberts, *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women' lived experiences and mental health risks*, 1997, pg.2). These lines mean that women and girls internalize the comments and views of other on them. The primary source of the women self-objectification is that women absorb the observer's perception about them. In the novel, Sibyl Vane treats herself as an object and a person who is of no value. She shows her submissively and treats herself as a person who is dictated by others. When Sibyl Vane confesses about her love to her mother, she does not believe it because she says "*I am not worthy of him... I feel proud, terribly proud*" (p.58). It is the first time when Sibyl self objectifies herself. She really thinks of herself as an object whose sole aim is to amuse people. The reification of Sibyl by men has effected Sibyl to internalize the views of people towards her. After falling in love with Dorian, she narrates all stories to her mother, but on the other hand, she thinks of herself as an inferior to Dorian Gray. She believes that she is not worthy enough to be loved. She thinks about the reason, which makes man like Dorian Gray falls in love with her because she views herself as an object which has no specialty. Sibyl degrades, belittles and objectifies herself, for she thinks that she does not possess anything worthy. She believes that it is only her acting, which makes Dorian to love her.

Fredrickson and Robert say, "*Girls and women....appreciated by others*" (Fredrickson and Roberts, *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women' lived experiences and mental health risks*, 1997, pg.180). Women internalize the appreciations of others and then they present their self as an object of beauty in front of men. They are of the view that women are also responsible for the objectification of their physiques which lead them to self-objectification. Another example where Sibyl self objectifies is when James says to his mother that a gentleman comes every night to see and talk to Sibyl. Sibyl's mother replied by saying that "*In the profession we are accustomed.... Many Bouquets at one time*" (p.61). Sibyl's mother legitimizes her daughter's acting by saying that it is their profession to display themselves to the people to gain attention. It is a kind of self-objectifying herself and her daughter. Sibyl's mother has greater contribution in the objectification of the Sibyl Vane. She tells her son that it is their profession and job to welcome every attention, for it is the only way they earn money. It suggests that she is aware of the fact that her daughter is being degraded and treated as an object of male's gaze, but she believes that it is their duty. Sibyl's mother convinces her son about their acting on the stage by saying that she also used to act on the stage in the same way her daughter is doing.

Sibyl says to her brother "*I wish you could come to the theatre ....to surpass one's self*" (p.64). It is Sibyl Vane who one way or the other presents herself as an object of pleasure to men. Though poverty compels her to perform acting on the stage, but she herself enjoys the moments when she pleases the men of her society through her acting. She requests her brother to join her at night in the party. She is conscious that Dorian will come to the theatre. Sibyl knows what pleases Dorian and she feels excitement about playing a role in front of Dorian. Sibyl Vane says it clearly that she plays the roles to delight Dorian. She wants to please Dorian through her acting. On the other hand, her brother knows the mentality of men of that society and he wants his sister to avoid conversation with Dorian and leave stage as soon as possible.

Fredrickson and Roberts are of the view that the cultural milieu of objectification culture has forced women to internalize the observer's view and then women treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated. The outsider's perception becomes the primary view of physical self of women. Similarly, in the novel Sibyl Vane look down upon herself because she sees herself as an inferior compared to Dorian Gray. Another example of Sibyl's self-objectification is striking when Dorian tells Lord Henry that *"I told her that I loved her ...not worthy to be my wife"* (p.73). This line of Dorian Gray shows that Sibyl Vane once again devalues herself. Dorian proposes Sibyl Vane and she replies that she is not worthy to be his wife. Sibyl believes in the dominancy of the men, for she thinks of Dorian Gray as a superior creature and herself as an inferior. She views herself as a low creature whose only job is just to look beautiful and please males on the stage. This self-reification damages her personality severely which later leads to her death.

The striking reality that women are discriminated against in the presence of male characters is revealed when this novel is examined from the perspective Feminism in general and the Theory of Objectification in particular. The majority of the male characters in the novel treat female characters with contempt, particularly Lord Henry, who makes the claim that he knows more about women than anyone else. It shows that woman as a weak member of society who requires assistance to survive. The choice of independence drowns them in a male dominant society and shows that it is totally unacceptable for a female to row her own boat of life. They are treated as nothing more than pretty faces to enjoy looking at. They are nothing more than naive creatures who must be subjugated for the men of that society. They are either regarded as fools or empty pots, but they do not possess genius or intelligent minds. In point of fact, Victorian men regarded such women as an alarming threat because of their assertiveness and independence.

The textual analysis of the novel proves that females are subjugated and degraded by the men. They are treated as an instrument for men's pleasure, while their autonomy and subjectivity is denied, whereas they are owned by the men. However, the major female character Sibyl Vane objectified herself, by considering herself inferior to Dorian Gray. Oscar Wilde's indifferent treatment of female characters is evident for the degraded and denounced status of women in the society. The researcher analyzed several references from the novel to highlight the elements of objectification.

## Conclusion

All in all, the negligence of female characters in the novel mirrors despise of men for the women. It shows the dominance of men over the feminine characters. Because he portrays women as naive creatures and men as geniuses, Oscar Wilde presents gender inequality. Lord Henry, Oscar Wilde's spokesperson, and Dorian Gray are demeaning and objectifying female characters in their roles. Dorian Gray's personality is altered by his corrupt ideals as a result of Lord Henry's poisonous influence. In addition to these two prominent characters, the painter Basil Hallword is occasionally seen making fun of the women. The female characters are portrayed as inferior beings who are dependent on men and as an object. The study's findings lead the researcher to the conclusion that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the epitome of the idea that women are objects. The women characters, especially Sibyl Vane are considered as an object for the pleasure of men. The elements of sexual objectification and self-objectification are present in the novel. Sibyl Vane is treated as an object and instrument which can be replaced to other things, her autonomy is denied and she is ruled and owned by Dorian Gray. Moreover, she is speculated as a non-living thing, which has no feeling and

emotions, and through these patriarchal stereotypical behavior the subjectivity of Sibyl Vane is ignored by Dorian Gray. The Picture of Dorian Gray is multifaceted novel which encapsulates different themes and aspects of the Victorian England, either explored earlier by the researchers, or yet to be explored including Marxist study, psychoanalysis, stylistic analysis and many more.

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