The Relief of Immorality: Upper-Class Victorian Men's Escape from the Patriarchy in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Abstract

The Picture of Dorian Gray, a story about a young man who falls victim to temptation, addresses matters of immorality, temptation and the leading of *double* lives in the Victorian period. Resisting temptation was a symbol of strength in the Victorian world: it denoted a sense of morality, and it was considered a virtue, especially among the upper-class. However, *immoral* paths were still taken, even if the individuals who chose to do so tried to hide this from their social circle.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a clear reflection of this situation, and this TFG will analyse this work and compare it with the history of the upper-class Victorian society in order to understand the reasons that might drive men in these contexts to commit what were considered immoral actions that could potentially ruin their status in society. Even if it was men who inhabited the public sphere and who had the most freedom and the greatest privileges, society's rules and oppression also affected them in a very direct way. This can be seen in the pressure they were exposed to in order to maintain appearances and to be *manly*, stoic and unemotional, as well as being physically strong, the sole provider and the truly public face of their family. All of this brought a heavy toll on such men.

The aim of this TFG is therefore to analyse upper-class society in the Victorian era and both the understanding of what was considered immoral—that is, what was thought of as "sinful"—and the two-faced reaction that a double life caused in members of this society. This reaction involved both a repulsion against and a fascination towards the "offender". This analysis will concentrate on the upper-class men and the pressure—brought by the patriarchy—that they faced, which (I will argue) may account for why they engaged in immoral activities. To this end, the characters of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton will be compared and examined to see in what ways they reflect the expectations placed upon men of their status, and how these expectations could lead such individuals to commit immoral actions. Moreover, and in relation to this, the hypocritical reaction to the double, immoral lifestyle led by some men will also be studied, as the fascination that it gave rise to could also be related to patriarchal oppression and to the desire to escape from it.

Keywords: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, immorality, Victorian upper-class, patriarchy, oppression.

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Introduction

The Victorian Era ran from 1837 to 1901, marking the reign of Queen Victoria. This period is defined as a time of change: Britain had become an industrialised nation, and with that came many developments. Science and technology had been evolving, the British empire was expanding, the world of politics was in flux, and, of course, the Arts and Literature began adapting too, adjusting to reflect a new society. Certainly, society's distribution had also changed: the middle-class had begun to gain greater prominence in the eighteenth century, and it would acquire great power throughout the Victorian period, to the extent that the wealthiest middle-class could socialise with the upper-class, which nevertheless continued to have the most power.

Men, especially upper-class men, were the most privileged citizens, the ones that had most power and lived most freely. Men could vote, they could work or study and be openly proud of it (unlike women), and they were allowed a life in the outside world, their public sphere, while also having their place in the private sphere. There is no doubt that men had all the advantages, but with that in sight it is sometimes difficult to remember that the patriarchy was harmful to everyone, even if the effects of its oppression were clearly less obvious. Victorian men were expected to adhere to a certain model of masculine behaviour, leaving little to no room for deviation, and upper-class men—the centre of study in this project—were not exempt from these expectations. A form of behaviour was expected from men in every social class: manliness—or masculinity—and this had some specific "rules" that had to be followed. For the Victorians, appearance was very important, so much so that it was almost everything; no matter the social status, everyone tried to fulfil roles and expectations and display their best outward image, and upper-class men, as leaders of the nation, had to be impeccable. However, some people

deviated from the path that was set for them. Often, this deviation meant that people could end up committing acts that were considered immoral, and morality was another important trait for the Victorians: there was a strict moral code, a set of values that had to be followed to be considered a good, respectable person. Nevertheless, people still engaged in activities that were considered bad and immoral, risking their social status and exclusion, and upper-class people were not an exception.

Upper-class men and immorality are, therefore, the topic of this project. The expectations that upper-class men had to face and the roles they had to fulfil will be studied, as well as the harm and sense of social oppression[1] that they endured from the patriarchy. This study will include an analysis of upper-class men's roles—how they were introduced to these roles and their duties, and what shape their obligations could take—along with an investigation of the form in which patriarchal oppression to men presented itself. In addition to this, the notion of immorality will also be analysed, addressing questions such as what the Victorians considered immoral and what specific form such immorality took.

The Picture of Dorian Gray, by Oscar Wilde, is the chosen novel to be studied in relation to the topic. Novels reflected life: society and everything that came with it—like class hierarchy, gender roles, or social values—were depicted with great accuracy, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not an exception. The novel's reflection and addressing of the topics this work will focus on are the reasons why it was chosen. Oscar Wilde himself was part of high society—the upper-class-, and so are his main characters. Dorian Gray

[1] The term "oppression", however it might be qualified, is an unusual one to apply to a clearly hegemonic sector of society as is that of upper-class men, which comprises the patriarchy's "favoured" sex as well as the wealthiest and, consequently, most privileged people in Victorian society. However, this term is used intentionally in this project to indicate that the assumption that such men *only benefitted* from their class is false, and that (although to very different extents) the patriarchy was harmful to everyone. From this point in the TFG onwards, I simply refer to this as "oppression", although I mean it in the sense indicated here.

and Lord Henry Wotton, the two characters that will be analysed, are aristocratic men, part of the top upper-class, and therefore two good models to study their portrayal of upper-class Victorian men and their lifestyles, as well as the roles and expectations that were set upon them. Moreover, the novel addresses the subject of immorality, another central topic for this project. Again, Oscar Wilde was an extremely controversial, scandalous, and immoral character, and so is his protagonist, Dorian Gray—with the difference that the latter keeps his immorality a secret-. Dorian's morality declines as the story advances; this will be analysed with the purpose of understanding what was considered immoral, and why some upper-class men ended up tainted by it.

The sources supporting this project are varied, covering a wide array of topics that are essential to this discussion. These sources mainly consider class, gender, and psychology, all of them important issues to understand upper-class men's life as well as what expectations and oppressions they faced (if any). The critical framework in relation to class and gender is quite wide. Some works that are fundamentally relevant to my own study are "Victorian Values and the Upper Classes" (1992), by Mark Girouard, who addresses the upper-class and some of the characteristics they valued in men, discussing three different types of upper-class Victorian men and the importance of the "gentleman", along with the expectations placed upon upper-class men. Also, John Tosh discusses nineteenth-century masculinity in "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain" (1994). Tosh argues that there were different factors that affected masculinity, all of them of importance to be perceived as a worthy, masculine man. James Eli Adams highlights in "'The boundaries of social intercourse': Class in the Victorian Novel", in *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2005), how class worked in the Victorian period, and traces its reflection in the Victorian novel. Adams discusses the importance of the hierarchical structure of class, how each class

functioned, and the "bias of the novel towards representation of more affluent modes of life" (52).

On the other hand, the critical framework on immorality —the part of this project that most impinges on Victorian psychology— is not as broad as class, and much of it is not directly relevant to my own topic. I base my remarks in my discussion on works such as Roger Luckhurst's "Perversion and degeneracy in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" (2014: online) or Susie L. Steinbach's *Understanding the Victorians. Politics, culture and society in nineteenth century Britain* (2017), which concisely illustrate what was considered licentious towards the end of the nineteenth century, and which are particularly relevant to Wilde's novel. Another relevant work is "Victorian Psychology" (2002), by Athena Vrettos, which discusses Victorian psychology and the belief that morality and immorality were reflected on someone's appearance.

In light of this critical panorama, I bring together the two main concepts under discussion to pose a double thesis question for this TFG, namely, how were upper-class men oppressed by the patriarchal system? Could immorality be a way for upper-class men to escape and find relief from the oppression and expectations they faced?

The reason I chose to work with upper-class Victorian men's oppression and immorality is because the Victorian period was a time in which gender roles were very marked, and while research has recently focused on women's roles and their oppression, not as much research has been done into how roles established by the patriarchy affected men. I decided that my TFG would address what I consider to be this less-studied area, that is, the way in which the patriarchy was also harmful to upper-class Victorian men. Furthermore, the concepts of immorality and scandal have always been of great interest to me, so I decided to fuse these two topics together—upper-class men and immorality—

to investigate whether and how immorality could be used by upper-class men as a possible relief and escape from the patriarchy's pressure.

The structure of this project is as follows: Chapter one focuses mainly on a depiction both of class and gendered roles within Victorian society. Upper-class men's roles in Victorian society will also be analysed, and I will argue that the pressure that social expectations exerted upon these men could have seriously detrimental effects on them. A first analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* will be done, and the characters of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton will be object of analysis to see to what extent they reflect the roles or fulfil the expectations that were placed on upper-class men

Chapter two will focus on immorality and "the double life". The concept of immorality and what it meant for Victorian society will be studied, as well as the idea of immorality as an escape from the oppressions imposed by the patriarchy. Linking this with the previous chapter, upper-class male oppression will be assessed as a possible reason for wanting to escape or evade reality. This chapter's analysis will focus on immorality and the double life in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and how the topics previously discussed are reflected in this novel: Dorian's character and his immoral double life will be interpreted to see whether his scandalous lifestyle, rather than simply being hedonistic excess, might be—and represent—a way of finding some escape from relentless social pressure.

1. Chapter One

This project focuses specifically on upper-class men in Britain, men who belonged to the highest rung in the Victorian social hierarchy. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*[2] follows the life of Dorian Gray, an aristocratic young man through whom we are shown, throughout the novel, glimpses of the upper-class lifestyle, as well as fragments of the middle- and lower-class ways of life. It is important, then, to understand how important class was in the British nineteenth century.

Victorian society was structured as a hierarchy, and class in the Victorian period was of great importance, "so much so that Victorians could hardly make sense of the world without it", as James Eli Adams observes out in "'The boundaries of social intercourse': Class in the Victorian Novel" (48). We can say that this hierarchy was roughly divided into three classes: the upper-class, at the top of the pyramid and the 'smallest' in population; the middle-class, at the centre of the pyramid and with an increased—and increasing—population; and the lower-class, at the bottom of the pyramid and with the widest range of population. Yet, "the boundaries in such schemes are always blurred" (Adams 50); the division between classes was not clean cut. There was a consolidation of the middle-class during the nineteenth century, little after Britain started its industrialization process in the eighteenth century—which brought new opportunities for people-; thanks to this, the middle-class became a ruling and powerful class by the end of the century. Due to this growth of the middle-class and the change brought by industrialization, "the impacts on social order were profound and paradoxical. […] the

[2] *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was first published as a complete narrative in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* (July 1890). It was then extended and revised by Wilde and published in book format in 1891.

new economy offered unrivalled potential for the accumulation of capital, and hence for social mobility" (Adams 48). As Adams points out here, social mobility became increasingly possible: lower-class people could ascend to the middle-class, and the middle-class population could make enough money to become part of what was known as the "polite society", a *mix* of "the lower gentry and the upper middle-class", as Susie Steinbach indicates in *Understanding the Victorians Politics, Culture and Society in 19th Century Britain* (136). However, the fact that social ascension had become possible did not mean it was an easy thing to do; it was still hard to climb the social ladder, and, furthermore, being able to do so also meant that it was possible to fall, losing money and status in the process, which became a common fear primarily amongst the middle-class.

1.1 Money, Class and Gender

Money had an important role to play in deciding to which social class someone belonged, but it did not dictate how class worked, at least not in its entirety. But it was important, and differences between incomes could be very wide, although they could also overlap: according to Steinbach, the lower- (or working-) class income "derived from wages, was usually under £100 per annum, but could go as high as £300 per annum" (128); the middle-class families could have incomes going from £100 to £1,000 per annum (Steinbach 128), and the upper-class' families, the smallest percentage of the population, could have incomes ranging between "at least £1,000 per annum, and often many times that" (Steinbach 128), with the wealthiest aristocratic families earning "£10,000 or more per annum" (Steinbach 135). But there were other important factors besides money, such as family background, which could translate into titles and lands. At least until before the *fin de siècle*, titles and land were chiefly what mattered in being part of the aristocracy. A middle-class citizen could make the same amount of money that an upper-class individual

made, and that income could cause the two parties to establish some type of relationship, but the fact that the middle-class individual did not have titles or land was what differentiated the two of them. At all events, mixing between certain sections of these two classes did happen. As stated previously, class is not a simple matter, and its divisions are not clear cut. It is therefore important to point out that within the same class there were different types of status. As Adams observes, "the upper-class comprised primarily the aristocracy and landed gentry, whose income derived principally from the ownership of land" (50). The aristocracy was the social strata that had titles, land and money—although it was possible that one of those three features might be missing—and aristocratic men formed part of the House of Lords (Steinbach 129), while the gentry, or "landed gentry", were the lower upper-class, "which included baronets (the lowest title) and untitled large landowners and probably numbered several thousand people" (Steinbach 129). Due to the constant progress and success of the upper middle-class—success acquired as a result of trade and commerce—the wealthiest families would eventually come to socialise with the gentry, despite the former not having any titles.

As Adams mentions, most Victorian novels that dealt with this topic focused on the upper- and middle-class lifestyle (52), and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not an exception. Lord Henry Wotton is an aristocrat, and Dorian Gray descends from an aristocratic family, so he is one of them too. Consequently, this novel manages to address—from an upper-class point of view—all the classes that existed in the Victorian hierarchy, but focuses principally on the upper-class way of life. Nevertheless, class was not the only thing that could determine one's life and its quality: gender also was a hugely important factor. While a woman born into aristocracy would live a better life in economic terms, a man (any man) would always have something else that women did not: a higher degree of freedom. Women were heavily oppressed by the roles imposed through

patriarchal society, roles that deprived them of several aspects, one of these being independence, so it is extremely important to acknowledge their oppression.[3]

Once we have recognised the oppression that women faced, it is important to state that, while they were the ones that faced the heaviest and most evident oppression, the patriarchal society that ruled during the Victorian period was also harmful to men, even if their oppression presents itself to us as coming in subtler ways and being of a lower level in comparison to that of women. To understand the expectations the patriarchy set upon men, as well as the oppression that those expectations could create, it is necessary to comprehend that class and gender came together to create a specific character depending on men's social status, so even if there were some widespread traits that were expected of them, their class would also determine which roles and expectations they had to fulfil. However, ultimately the upper-class *lifestyle* was the most desirable and the one the other classes mostly aspired to imitate. Male aristocrats and men from the gentry were the most privileged, living what looked like an ideal life of power, pleasure, and luxury. As mentioned beforehand, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* illustrates what upper-class life was like, reflecting that life of excess, power, and privilege. Wilde's main characters, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray, very clearly reflect that kind of life. But, aside from this life of privilege, what expectations were these two men expected to fulfil? In fact, was anything actually expected of them at all? And if so, what?

[3] The topic of women's oppression and their roles in the Victorian society is as broad as it is important. Due to the length and topic of this project—and the fact that the subject of women would make a project of its own—I have not been able to carry out any further research on this matter. However, it is a subject that presents an interesting and crucial perspective, and I therefore return briefly to it in "Further Research", as a starting point for additional study.

1.2 Upper-Class Men: Roles, Expectations and Masculinity

First, it is important to point out that the imposition of men's roles and expectations began at a young age, and was present both at home and in education. Education was a gendered space, and depending on the social class children were born into, education became increasingly more gendered. Lower-class children, if educated at all, received a less-gendered education; when it came to the middle and upper-classes, education became clearly gendered, and it began introducing boys and girls to the gender roles that they would have to fulfil throughout their whole lives (Steinbach 171). Upper-class boys' education lasted significantly longer, was formal, and was much more academically and character-focused. Wealthy middle-class and upper-class boys were usually sent to boarding schools, such as Eton or Harrow, which "were thought to develop discipline, character, and self-control, both through the mental discipline of the curriculum and through the social discipline of younger boys by older ones" (Steinbach 171). The expectations were clear: young boys had to be disciplined, show a sense of authority and be restrained, at least in appearance. Men were thought of (and thought themselves) the rational sex, so they had to follow orders and be stoic. If they committed any kind of mistake or failed at something, they were physically punished; young boys were treated with severity. As John Tosh states, "Manliness expresses perfectly the important truth that boys do not become men just by growing up, but acquiring a variety of manly qualities and manly competencies as part of a conscious process" (181).

Manliness—the traits or characteristics thought as typical of men—was a code to be followed by men to reaffirm their masculinity. Manliness is important in understanding nineteenth-century masculinity, since it was part of it; it consisted in keeping to "manly" behaviour, separated from emotions and feminine traits, such as domesticity or nurturing.

These nurturing and emotional traits, however, were likely to be acquired by children, since they were brought up mainly by nannies, and probably seeing their mothers more than their fathers. Male children would then have to "erase" those skills and keep the ones they learned about manliness, which would be enhanced at school. However, young boys would feel that their knowledge of manliness "had been filtered through a feminine sensibility, [and] their own code of manliness was accordingly more brittle and less tolerant of the 'feminine within'" (Tosh 196). This, then, would lead to the end-of-the-century masculinity, which presented itself as "hostile to emotional expression" (Tosh 196). And as Tosh points out, "writers on manliness were essentially concerned with the inner character of man, and with the kind of behaviour which displayed this character in the world at large" (183); appearance was extremely important to the Victorians, and acceptance into the adult world very much depended on outward appearance, that is, how men presented and behaved themselves, which other people would judge and then deem them as worthy and respectable or not. According to Tosh, there are three main aspects that men—also upper-class men, of course—had to take care of before being perceived as a masculine: "home, work and all-male associations" (184).

As Tosh confirms, building a house of their own—not only leaving the parents' home, but building a family and household—was one of the first steps for a man to be seen as masculine, respectable and independent, "a governing condition of the transition to adult life" (185). For the upper classes, this could also mean producing an heir, and, of course, not just an heir, but a male one. Upper-class men who were quickest in conforming to these patterns "settled down" once they reached their marrying age—which Steinbach states was around thirty years old—found a wife, a place of their own, and produced an heir. The quicker all of this could be achieved, the sooner they would be perceived as respectable and reliable. Additionally, the man had to sustain the entire

family and bring money home. This was especially true for the lower and middle-class, but something similarly happened in the upper-class households. Being born into upper-class or aristocratic families could mean that money was less of a problem (as the income in this class derived from land), but it did not mean that economic problems were absent: financial stability could be threatened if the master's management was not appropriate. Even if public and private spheres could become one on most occasions—in upper-class households—and, as Steinbach points out, both husband and wife worked together in political affairs such as dinners or meetings (136), men still were the ones in control, the head and face of the family, the one with an occupation, be it politics or the management of lands. Most especially, it was the man who was the ultimate figure of responsibility in overseeing the acquisition and management of money. However, finance was not the most important thing inside the home. The man of the family had to be the household's authority; this was obligatory if he did not want to be ridiculed by society. The private sphere was the woman's space, but it was not her domain alone; men ruled there too: "home might be the 'woman's sphere', but the husband who abdicated from his rights in the cause of a quiet life was in common opinion less than a man" (Tosh 185). Of course, men always had other options that could last for some time before marrying, especially wealthy men who could afford them. Bachelorhood was one of these options. Sometimes men could opt, preferably temporarily, to stay as bachelors and have a place of their own, even if it was usually seen as an "ambivalent status" (Tosh 185), its appeal varying. This is Dorian Gray's status: he lives alone in a fine house.

The other two traits that Tosh discusses are work and all-male associations. Men were the working sex; thus, a job could be part of their identity. For them to be seen as masculine men, to fulfil expectations, the job had to be a respectable, dignified one, and this meant, for the middle-classes, to stay away from servility. For upper-class men,

however, work was always dignified: they were politicians and landowners, and were involved in the military, all this besides having money thanks to their inheritance. Their task was to be the dominant figure, to control everything and be good at it. This could mean that great expectations were set upon these upper-class men. Something that was also connected to work, or business, were all-male associations. These "associations" were a privilege: men had other spaces for themselves outside the home, where they could spend time, enjoy themselves, and socialize. These places could be men's clubs or bars, or even other spaces, and they were intended as an ambit in which to cultivate "friendship, politics and leisure (as well as business)" (Tosh 187). This aspect might be less relevant than those of home and work, but it is still important: masculinity required camaraderie; a man had to maintain a network of friends and acquaintances, necessary for men to uphold the system that had put them at the top of the pyramid. Of course, these relationships between men had to be "manly", that is, there could be no physical desire between men, no love, and if there was affection for a friend, it had to be carefully manifested, if at all, since, especially towards the end of the century, emotional displays were not considered masculine, but emotional and, therefore, feminine. As a result, "male bonding is prescribed, homosexuality is proscribed" (Tosh 187); rumours about homosexuality (still illegal and punishable by imprisonment)[4] could ruin a man's social life, and with that came everything else.

Having now touched on these three important aspects, it must be highlighted, as John Tosh states, that "the precise character of masculine formation at any time is largely determined by the balance struck *between* these three components" (187). Also, it is

[4] It was not until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 that partial legalisation was established for same-sex acts in the UK between men over the age of 21, conducted in private.

essential to point out that some men, in the same social class, were considered inferior to others for certain reasons. Tosh argues that these "inferior" men were young men and homosexuals. Homosexuality, of course, was prohibited. Young men, on the other hand, were problematic because they were not fully adults, but they behaved as such, copying "masculine behaviour in exaggerated or distorted modes" (Tosh 191), and, therefore, ridiculing masculine behaviour.

1.3. The Gentleman

Another important concept of masculinity, especially for upper-class men, was the idea of the gentleman. As Adams maintains, this *concessionary* "title", was "the most potent of status markers for men" (56). Adams adds that this "status marker" had always been linked to inherited status, in a way that upper-class men had been considered gentlemen solely because they were born into a high rank; but, from the second part of the century on, and mainly towards the end of the century, certain other traits were necessary to be considered a gentleman: "independence, courage, fidelity, and, above all, honor" (Adams 56). The upper-class gentleman already had status in his favour but was still required to possess these characteristics. However, before fully focusing on upper-class gentlemen, it must be pointed out that, even if the concept of the gentleman was widespread and desirable, the ideal was not the same for every class. Indeed, although the traits that have been mentioned were applicable to all ranks, there were certain important distinctions. The classes that were more concerned with this concept were the middle- and upper-class. The upper-class gentleman did not trouble himself with details of trade or business; the upper-class felt scorn towards these activities (Adams 56). This could be the beginning of a problem for aristocratic men, since there was a division between their idea of the gentleman and the middle-class idea of the gentleman. The middle-class gentleman was

a productive, hardworking, and self-made man, while the upper-class gentleman was, thanks to his status and wealth, a far more relaxed, pleasure seeking individual, certainly not seen as hardworking as the middle-class. As the middle-class had become extremely powerful, and the upper-class, the aristocracy, began to be challenged in importance—even if it still held a great deal of power—the middle-class concept of gentlemen could potentially undermine upper-class men's image: it was possible for them to start being regarded as lazy and unworthy of their privileges and wealth.

Focusing again on upper-class men, Mark Girouard's distinction in "Victorian Values and the Upper-class" (1992) must be pointed out. He distinguishes between upper-class earnest Victorians, Victorian swells, and Victorian gentlemen. Earnest Victorians were serious, moral, religious, and devoted to helping others; they were also in possession of a strong sense of duty and honour (Girouard 50). Earnest Victorians spent little to no time involved in leisure activities. The type of upper-class man completely contrary to the upper-class earnest Victorians were the Victorian swells. "Dash and style were the qualities expected of a swell" (Girouard 53), a Victorian upper-class swell cared especially for his appearance, glamour, and leisure. Their values differed from those of an earnest Victorian: faithfulness to their wives was not expected and devoting time and energy to others was not part or their life; they used their money on themselves, on glamourous things and events, such as parties, or they wasted it on gambling, particularly in horse racing (Girouard 53-54). As Girouard observes, a swell "lost his money in style" (54). The last type of upper-class men described is the gentleman, discussed earlier in this chapter, This is a concept that, according to Girouard as well as to Adams, was of great importance to the upper-class Victorians. This gentleman "provided a synthesis of two sets of values" (Girouard 57), he had the serious mind of the earnest Victorians but also an appreciation and taste for the glamorous, exactly as the Victorian swells; it could be

said that he was a mix of the two, or at least of their best features. Moreover, the ideal of the gentleman recovered chivalry as a lifestyle: gentlemen respected and courted their wives, and were devoted to helping others, especially the poor, which could take the shape of charity; they "despise[d] mere money-making or too much cleverness (for character, it was stressed, was more important than intellect), and train[ed] their bodies in manly exercise or sporting tournaments" (Girouard 57), as exercise had now become if not one of the most important features of social life, certainly an outstanding one.

1.4. Analysis: Class in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

As mentioned beforehand, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* illustrates what upper-class life was like, reflecting a life of excess and power. Wilde's main characters, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray, are two upper-class men who belong to the aristocracy. Dorian Gray, the protagonist of the novel, is a young man (at least at the beginning of the novel) who descends from the aristocracy, and therefore pertains to that social sphere. He is "the last Lord Kelso's grandson" (Wilde 32), has inherited a fortune, and leads a life according to his station, a life of luxury, society, and status. Nevertheless, his background is "tainted" by scandal through his mother, since she "made all the men [her suitors, upper-class men] frantic by running away with a penniless young fellow, a mere nobody, sir, a subaltern in a foot regiment, or something of that kind" (Wilde 33). Then we learn, through this information given to Lord Henry by his also aristocratic Uncle George, that Dorian's background is not fully upper-class: his father was lower-class, lower middle-class at most, which serves as an example to illustrate how this novel addresses all the classes of Victorian society from an upper-class point of view, reflecting how society's highest rung thought of the lower-classes.

Henry Wotton, also called Harry by his friends (Wilde 3), is another main character as well as part of the aristocracy, and the honorific "Lord" is often used when talking about him, which indicates that he is in possession of a high status. As said in the previous paragraph, we even meet his Uncle George, also an upper-class man, wealthy and powerful, which is useful to understand that Lord Henry also comes from an aristocratic background, and exemplifies how important this background was where rank was concerned: family was the almost exclusive factor that determined if an individual belonged to the upper-class or the aristocracy, and we can see that through Lord Henry and Dorian Gray—even being the latter the son of both an upper-class woman and a lower-class man, power and status impose themselves, and Dorian, being raised by his Lord grandfather, belongs to the aristocracy.

These two characters very clearly reflect the kind of life that high society led: they dine with other ladies and gentlemen in their fine houses equipped with servants. Lord Henry's house is in Mayfair (Wilde 44), an affluent neighbourhood, and Dorian lives in a fine house, hinted at in descriptions of luxurious bedrooms and great halls furnished with expensive and foreign objects (Wilde 90). Moreover, both characters are seen going to the opera regularly, which Steinbach highlights as part of the usual leisure pursuits of the upper-class while in the city of London (137), and having dinner in private rooms at the Bristol (Wilde 73).

It is important to recall that a masculine, moral, respectable, and decent upper-lass man had to meet some "requirements" before being considered as such. Since appearance and behaviour were extremely important, men had to present themselves as decent and moral, as well as in possession of all the qualities that were expected of them. Going back to what Tosh exposes—discussed earlier in this chapter—marrying and establishing a household were two crucial aspects that had to be accomplished to set the bases of being

considered a man. Of course, marrying also meant that a family would be established to inhabit the household, and, most importantly, to produce an heir. A man that left home to build one of his own was a man that began to enter adulthood and wanted to make himself respectable. Certainly, a marriage did not have to occur for love; in fact, a great deal of marriages were arranged and happened for the mutual benefit of the two parties. We learn early in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that Lord Henry is married, even if it is not a "love marriage" or even a fully happy one: "I am married, and the one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing" (Wilde 4). Lord Henry has fulfilled one of the requirements: he has married and established a household in Mayfair; in the eyes of society, he has settled down and is a respectable man. It does not matter if the marriage is a love match or an arrangement agreement: appearance was all that mattered, and the only important thing was that he was a husband in possession of a wife; what happened between them—or did not happen—was of no consequence to Lord Henry's status.

On the other hand, Dorian is not married; he is a young man at the beginning of the novel, just entering adulthood, and thus he does not need to marry imminently, since men were allowed more time before marrying. Dorian is a bachelor, an "ambivalent status" (Tosh 185) that was not always well regarded by society. He has a house of his own, but no family; even so, that would not be reason enough for him to be not considered a moral and respectable man yet: he is young and still has time to marry in the future, but he will be expected to marry, and not just marry, but do so with someone from the same rank. In a certain point in the novel, it seems as if Dorian was about to settle down and marry and that way take the further step to become both a full man and adult, but there is a problem: his fiancé, Sybil Vane, is an actress, and someone a long way below his rank.

As Basil states, “It would be absurd for him to marry so much beneath him” (Wilde 73), it would be frowned upon by upper-class society, and stain his reputation. In the end, this does not happen since Sybil commits suicide because of Dorian’s rejection.

Taking up again the topic of Dorian’s youth, there is something else worth pointing out. We could say that Dorian is unconventionally emotional for a Victorian man, or at least unconventionally open about showing his emotions. This could be attributed to the fact that he is a very young man at the beginning of the novel, when these fits of emotion take place—like the one he has when he sees the picture for the first time, flinging himself to a divan and crying dramatically (Wilde 27)— and young men entering adulthood were not seen as full men yet, and were even looked down upon, so it could be overlooked or even expected of them. However, the sooner a man started showing maturity and masculinity, as well as proving that he had left behind his childhood and the *femininity* of emotional display that came with it behind, the better.

Work was another important part of male life in the upper-class, not because it was needed, but to enhance the sense of authority and control. As discussed previously, upper-class men were often involved in politics, and that was often their fundamental employment. Charity was also a “job” in which the upper-class busied themselves: it could also provide a sense of authority and control. However, none of the two main characters under discussion provide any hints of having employment or being involved in charity; they seem to spend their time in society or pursuing pleasurable experiences. At one point, Lord Henry and Dorian are dining at Lady Narborough’s house, when an example of the importance of work—and politics—for upper-class men appears. Mr Chapman, one of the guests, begins talking about political affairs as the ladies are withdrawing and the men are the only ones present (a long-standing custom), with Lady Narborough warning them not to stay late talking about politics: “The men laughed, and

Mr Chapman got up solemnly from the foot of the table and came up to the top […]. Mr Chapman began to talk in a loud voice about the situation in the House of Commons" (Wilde 186). Dorian and Lord Henry do not pay any attention to this speech, and not once do they show interest towards political matters.

Even if they lack employment or anything close to it, what these two men certainly have is camaraderie between themselves. In fact, the main characters of the novel—Henry, Dorian, and also Basil Hallward, the painter and creator of Dorian's portrait—are friends and spend time together. As stated earlier, camaraderie between men was an important feature of masculinity, and men were expected to have friends and colleagues to consolidate male dominance. We can see these relationships in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, since the three men maintain a friendship and attend social events, such as dinners, the Opera and the theatre, or gentlemen's clubs together. However, an extremely tight relationship between two men was dangerous, and we will see how this ends up being a problem for some characters in the novel.

Lastly, as discussed earlier, Mark Girouard (1992) makes a distinction between types of men in the upper-class. In this analysis of Oscar Wilde's novel, two of these three types are the ones that interest us: the Victorian swell and the Victorian gentleman. The third type, the earnest Victorian, was the most moral, serious, and strict type of man, also devoted to religion and to helping others, but this kind of man does not concern us in this study, since none of our two main characters fit its description. Focusing on the two types that are relevant to this analysis, we must briefly recall the qualities of each one. Victorian swells were those most interested in leisure and pleasure. They spent their money as and when they wanted to, they were attracted to glamour, and their lives revolved around themselves, not others. The Victorian gentleman, however, was a mix of the other two: serious-minded but also attracted to glamour and leisure—although measure and control

were an important part of gentlemanly behaviour—and devoted to others as well. An upper-class man had to strive to become a gentleman, the highest ideal for men. A gentleman was a completely moral, an honourable and respectable man, the pinnacle of masculine identity. We could say that Lord Henry is halfway between a Victorian swell and a Victorian gentleman despite his talk of pleasure and beauty being the only worthy things in life:

> To me, Beauty is the wonder of wonders. […] You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. […] Ah! Realize your youth while you have it, Don't squander the gold of your days, listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar […] Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. (Wilde 22)

It is true that he lives—partly—by this motto of his, characteristic of an aesthete, but he is not necessarily the most devoted to this life of pleasure; he does not exactly practise what he preaches. Victorian swells were not expected to be faithful to their wives, and we must remember that Lord Henry says he and his wife Victoria barely see each other: "I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing" (Wilde 4). Consequently, we would not expect him to be faithful to her. Unfaithfulness to one's wife is another characteristic of a Victorian swell. We also know that he is not interested in charity, that is, in helping others:

> Had he gone to his aunt's, he would have been sure to meet Lord Goodbody there, and the whole conversation would have been about the feeding of the poor, and the necessity of model lodging-houses. Each class would have preached the importance of those virtues, for whose exercise there was no necessity in their own lives. It was charming to have escaped all that! (Wilde 13)

Consequently, we can see that he is not what a Victorian gentleman should be, since he is not generous to others or even courteous to his wife, but he does not indulge so ruthlessly in pleasure as he states one should do, and as a Victorian swell would do. He goes to the Opera with his friend and other members of high society: "You [Dorian] must come and dine with me [Lord Henry], and afterwards we will look in at the Opera" (Wilde 99); he dines in luxurious places and is invited to fine houses by other upper-class people, as well as to country houses for parties and hunting, and lives his live without a hurry: "'Well, Harry,' said the old gentleman [Henry's Uncle George], 'what brings you out so early? I though you dandies never got up till two, and were not visible till five,'" (Wilde 32). As has been mentioned, he encourages a life full of pleasures and immorality, a life for the senses, and states that "moderation is a fatal thing" (Wilde 185); nevertheless, we do not get any hint about any extremely scandalous activity, so we can conclude that he does not follow his own advice, at least not to the fullest. Perhaps he is closer to being a Victorian swell that he is to being a Victorian gentleman, but it can be said that he is somewhere in between because he still has some gentlemanly attributes. He has a taste for the glamorous—as we have just seen—but he also has a more serious, or at least reserved and cautious mentality than would be expected of a swell, and, as Girouard said, he "despise[s] mere money-making or too much cleverness" (57), and talks to Dorian about how beauty is greater than intellect: "You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr Gray. Don't frown. You have. And Beauty is a form of Genius—is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation" (Wilde 22).

Dorian Gray, on the other hand, goes from an innocent young man to a full Victorian swell. Henry maintains that "there is no such thing as a good influence. […] to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions […] He becomes an echo of someone else's music"

(Wilde 17), but exactly his influence, his speech about youth, beauty, and living life solely for the pleasure—moral or immoral—that it can offer, is what changes Dorian, what influences him to become what we will see could be an extreme kind of Victorian swell, or something even more outrageous. Dorian adopts Lord Henry's ideals and follows his advice, and becomes someone who cares solely about pleasure, glamour, beauty—including his own—and leisure, just as was stated that Victorian swells do. His money and status as an upper-class man descended from the aristocracy allow him to pursue this ideal, this lifestyle, but we will see in the following chapter how this could also be a problem.

In the novel there is a full chapter (Chapter Eleven: Wilde 129-149), devoted to his research of pleasurable things, from perfumes, jewels, or clothes, to music and stories. Dorian's life revolves around that, the search for pleasure, and, exactly as happens with Henryr, he does not care about others. It is precisely because of Henry that Dorian quickly overcomes the possible guilt he feels when Sybil, the young (probably lower-) middle-class actress to whom he was going to get married, commits suicide after his rejection and proclaimed death of his love for her; in fact, he attends the Opera with Lord Henry and his sister, Lady Gwendolen, the very same day he learns about her death: "I think I shall join you [Lord Henry] at the Opera, Harry. I feel too tired to eat anything. What is the number of your sister's box?" (Wilde 105). Dorian, as a good Victorian swell would do, indulges in all kinds of leisure and pleasurable activities he can find, both harmless and immoral: Dorian also attends the Opera, and dines at other people's fine houses, places where there would be an excess of alcohol; he also participates in trips to his country house, Selby Royal, in Nottinghamshire, where hunting is one of the main entertainments, and where seemingly a life of excess and immorality is the rule. In Chapter Twelve, Basil confronts Dorian about this: "What about your country house, and

the life that is led there? Dorian, you don't know what is said about you" (Wilde 155). In his quest for pleasure, Dorian neglects the ideal of the gentleman; he does not try to become one, not the perfect upper-class gentleman: a gentleman, as Basil Hallward points out, "is interested in his good name" (Wilde 152), but Dorian does not seem to care. In fact, his lifestyle could be described as even more scandalous than that of a "simple" Victorian swell, since dreadful rumours about him are spread, "stories that [he has] been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London" (Wilde 155).

We can conclude this section saying that both Dorian and Lord Henry are great examples of male Victorian upper-class life, or at least an example of part of it. Both men are wealthy, and their money allows them to live a luxurious life full of privileges. However, roles and expectations are still set upon them, even if they do not seem to want to fulfil them. Since life has never been simply black and white, but shades of grey, something in between, it is interesting to see how Lord Henry stays positioned between two stereotypes, and we will see in the next chapter how this relates to immorality and how it plays a part in Dorian's development and decadence as a character.

2. Chapter Two

Victorians, as observed earlier, were very concerned about outward morality and appearance. It has been observed that several roles and rules had to be fulfilled to be seen as respectable people—respectable men, in this case—worthy of society's approval, especially in the middle- and upper-classes. To be a respectable and dignified upper-class man, qualities such as stoicism, rationality, and, consequently, a lack of emotionality (since the latter was a feminine feature) had to be part of one's personality. Having a household was essential to achieve respectability, as well as having a dignified job—which for upper-class men usually meant politics-, and camaraderie among men was also part of the picture. In addition, they had to strive to become the perfect upper-class gentleman, who was a mixture between rationality and level-headedness and an enjoyment of glamour and leisure—but to a certain extent, and certainly not like the life Victorian swells led. This was considered moral behaviour for upper-class men: it was "normal", it was expected of them, and their appearance had to reflect or prove their moral lifestyle. However, it happened that some upper-class men became immoral people, frowned upon by society, and in fact falling from grace was not extremely hard.

Immorality could be described—in a rather simple fashion—as those actions or behaviours that differed from what was considered normal, respectable, or moral. There were actions and lifestyles that were considered less dignified than others, but were still moral and respectable; this could be the case of, for example, servility as a job, especially seen from an upper-class point of view: it was not considered a dignified job, but it was still moral. The same happened with lifestyles or behaviour, but then, when actions strayed too far from the marked path, morality began to give way to immorality.

2.1. Leisure

For upper-class men immorality could be socially devastating, and for Victorians being socially "stained" could mean the end of a respectable life. As observed, upper-class men had a lot of freedom, especially compared to their female counterparts, and this freedom translated, among other things, in men enjoying from varied leisure activities that no one else could enjoy—not lower-class men and their poor income; not middle-class men and their more rigid values and ideals; not women due to their oppression. Some male upper-class leisure activities were attending gentlemen's clubs where they could talk about work (that is, politics), but, mainly and most importantly, where they could socialise with other men, since it is important to remember that camaraderie between men was essential to nineteenth-century masculinity, and vital for social relationships that could be key to professional success. In such place, men could, among other things, meet their friends, drink, or play games such as billiard or cards, as well as gambling. Also, the upper-class (and this was not limited to men) could attend the opera or the theatre, as well as attend glamorous hotels or restaurants where they went dining. Steinbach highlights some other upper-class leisure activities, such as travelling to continental Europe, having second homes, or (focusing on men) drinking, gambling, and sports (148). Sports-related activities that the upper-class—again, mainly men—enjoyed during the Victorian period were "riding and hunting in the country, [and] spending time at the course betting on horse races, as well as football and other team sports" (Steinbach 156), all of these current throughout the entire Victorian period until its end. Sports were a moral pastime, since they encouraged male camaraderie, as well as physical activity, but other activities were not as clearly moral as sports could seem.

Drinking was a widespread activity during the Victorian period, “a big part of Victorian leisure” (Steinbach 148), and pursued by all classes and exclusive to none, but practised mainly by men. Upper-class men drank anywhere, at home, at work, at their gentlemen’s clubs. As Steinbach states, “in the middle and upper classes, the drinking of various beverages could be associated with relaxation at certain times of the day, with entertaining, or with social status, as well as with drunkenness (which was certainly not confined to the working class)” (150). However, the morality of this practice could be dubious, since it was considered moral, respectable, until the alcohol took hold of someone, and that man became a drunkard, someone who lost control, which was very criticised in nineteenth-century masculinity. Drunkenness had its appeal, then, in the world of entertaining until being drunk meant losing control, which in turn could mean losing respectability and behaving immorally. In addition, upper-class men had to be careful when getting drunk, and where they were getting drunk, since drunkenness could lead to violence, and even if violence was associated with masculinity (Steinbach 150), it was also linked to the lower-class, as was crime, and being compared to the lower-class was inconceivable for the elite, since it would strip them of their power and respectability. Yet, even if drinking could turn an upper-class man’s respectable and moral life into an immoral one, drinking was still an enormous and important part of Victorian society, and especially of male society, since it was “associated with virility and masculinity” (Steinbach 150). This could pose a problem, since, once more, upper-class men had to maintain control of a situation that could quickly develop into a loss of that control and lead to immorality, but they still had to be part of that situation, for it reaffirmed them as masculine, manly men in possession of authority. By the end of the century, alcohol consumption began to decline, which in turn meant less tolerance for drunken behaviour.

Another widespread form of entertaining was gambling. Gambling was linked to both sports and games in gentlemen's clubs, such as card games. As happened with drinking, "many opponents depicted it as a moral problem" (Steinbach 152) that spread to all the classes; it was considered immoral by a large part of society, while others doubted its morality, not knowing exactly what to make of it. Gambling would eventually be regulated or made illegal since it was believed that it was ruining the lower-class, those who received a low income; however, the upper-class could continue gambling without restriction, since they were supposed to have enough money for this activity (Steinbach 152). Still, even if upper-class men had the money to bet in games or sports, it does not mean that gambling could not ruin them. A man who gambled his money and power away could not be seen as respectable; on the contrary, he would be seen as immoral and not in control of his life. Again, just as happened with drinking, gambling was considered manly, so upper-class men engaged in it. And once more, an issue emerged: upper-class men could feel compelled to gamble, whether in sports or in their clubs playing card games with their colleagues. But then they would need to control and be careful with their money, money that needed to be correctly managed to support the upper-class family and their lifestyle, as well as their fine houses and land. This capital could vanish if gambling became a problem or even an addiction, taking with it that man's respectability and morality.

Opium was also part of life in the Victorian era, and it could be used for both recreation and health issues. Virginia Berridge states in "Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Use in Nineteenth Century England" (1978) that, during the early years of this period and until 1868—when the Pharmacy Act began restricting its use-, opium could be sold by anyone, to anyone, and anywhere (438-439). Opium was used by all classes, from the upper to the lower-class, but the main costumers and users were the

working-class, who started using it as a medical remedy: "In the absence of other effective drugs, opiates were widely used despite a general lack of knowledge of how the drug really worked" (Berridge 440). It was used for everything, and, inevitably, its consumption would start increasing, since uncontrolled opiate use would cause people to become addicts. Its use could, of course, be recreational as well, and this implied that everyone could use it at least from time to time, which increased the possibilities of addiction. Addiction was precisely what made opium use immoral, at least to the eyes of the upper-class, as it "was seen as a 'self-inflicted disease,' an 'intemperate habit.' And most commonly as a vice—a bad habit" (Berridge 456). Once more, we go back to the concept of control: an addict, someone who could lose the reigns of their lives for a substance, was someone immoral and not worthy of a place among respectable society. It could be possible that the reasons the upper-class had for considering opium use (and addiction and opium dens) immoral were the loss of control it caused in upper-class men and its association with the lower-class: we have seen how opium use and addiction were more extended in the lower-class, so it became something related to the poorer section of the population. Establishments where opium was used, known as opium dens, were thought of as extremely dark and dirty places where addicts went to consume opium. However, Berridge states that "opium dens" did not really exist as such, that is simply as places were people went only to smoke opium, nor were they as abhorrent as literature frequently reflected (460). Such places in London— mainly serving as a place to stay or to spend time for Chinese seamen or citizens[5]—were largely located in the East End, a poor area of the city that was visited frequently by upper-class men who wanted to see

[5] The opium trade, called the "Indo-Chinese trade" (Berridge 459), took place between India (ruled by Britain at that time) and China, but also with Turkey (Berridge 438). Chinese immigrants were a fundamental part in the introduction of the opium smoking practice in Britain. As Berridge points out, it was believed that "encouragement of opium smoking in Chia could lead to an opium smoking problem in Britain itself" (460).

how the poor lived, and also by upper-class men who made use of the opium dens. Oscar Wilde's description of an opium den—one that Dorian visits—reflected how these places were seen by people, how they were perceived, especially by the people belonging to the highest spheres of society. The place is described as follows:

> Shrill flaring gas-jets, dulled and distorted by the fly-blown mirrors that faced them, were ranged around the walls. Greasy reflectors of ribbed tin backed them, making quivering discs of light. The floor was covered with ochre-coloured sawdust, trampled here and there into mud, and stained with dark rings of spilt liquor […]. At the end of the room there was a little staircase, leading to a darkened chamber. As Dorian hurried up its three rickety steps, the heavy odour of opium met him. (Wilde 193)

Wilde proceeds to describe what Dorian sees: men on the floor, sprawled in misshapen mattresses, and looking absent, even half dead (193-194). Even if that description did not reflect reality in its totality, it did reflect how the middle- and upper-class saw and thought of opium use and addiction; it was believed that opium dens were depraved, hideous places that physically mirrored the addict's inner moral decay.

2.2. Sexuality

Sexuality was also a complex area in terms of morality, as well as a good reflection of the hypocrisy or the double standard of Victorian society. The Victorian era saw an increase in writing, thought and information about sexuality; it was more talked about than it had ever been before, but mainly by professionals such as doctors or medical enthusiasts—as well as by highly educated people-, but certainly not by non-specialist citizens or even by most of the population (Steinbach 240-241). For such people, sex was acknowledged, but not talked about. Male and female sexuality were differently approached: it is important to remember that women were not supposed to feel any kind of sexual desire but, instead, should be passionless. Men were the ones with a sexual drive, the sexual creatures.

However, the fact that men were considered sexually active did not mean that they should always act on their sexual desires. In fact, male sexuality during the Victorian period was based almost entirely on restraint. Their sexuality had to be expressed only to their wives, but marriage did not mean that sex should happen often except as a means for reproduction. As Steinbach observes, "Victorian couples saw sex as something that tarnished or diminished the purity of their love for one another. Men were expected to desire sex, but husbands were expected to be able to control their desires; demands for marital sex for purposes other than procreation were ungentlemanly" (242), it was immoral to have sex for the sole purpose of pleasure. Moreover, if a man could not restrain himself and had to have sex simply for pleasure and not to reproduce, "he was expected to hire a prostitute (this was still considered immoral, but not unnatural)" (Steinbach 242). The use of prostitution was immoral, then, but not uncommon; prostitution was very widespread during the Victorian period, and many men made use of it. Prostitutes we considered "fallen" women, and sometimes not even that; using them was supposed to be some sort of last resort: when a man could not resist the urge to have sex any longer, he could turn to prostitution. That practice was acknowledged, but not accepted; it was a well-known secret, but the matter was not addressed, since it was immoral. In fact, there was only so many times a man should resort to prostitution without drawing undesired attention upon himself; if a man was too frequent a user of prostitution, that would reflect badly on him. What would then be uppermost was his immorality and not someone who had turned to the "lesser" evil simply to maintain the established order. Upper-class men were also users of prostitution, but among the upper-class "Discreet extra-marital sex was common […] (although it became less common over the nineteenth century)" (Steinbach 242). Again, this practice was known about, but not openly addressed.

We have seen how (unrestrained) male sexuality and prostitution were immoral, but these two are not the only immoral concepts related to sexuality. Masturbation—male masturbation, since female masturbation was publicly inconceivable to the Victorian world—was not only immoral, but also a threat to masculinity (Steinbach 242). In fact, and according to Steinbach, masturbation was considered a medical issue, since it could cause "spermatorrhoea", a supposed illness that caused the involuntary loss of seminal fluid and leading to symptoms such as sensitivity, crying or melancholy (242), all of these related to female behaviour. Masturbation was seen as extremely immoral, and a vast range of books, remedies or other types of advice appeared against it, indicating how to avoid it. Publicly at least, the Victorians thought of it as "immoral, disgusting, and physically weakening" (Steinbach 243).

Another sexuality related issue, also deemed immoral, was homosexuality. As stated in the previous chapter, camaraderie and socialising with people from the same sex were encouraged, but homosexuality—which in the Victorian period was known as "sodomy"—was illegal; people could be—and indeed were—arrested and punished for it. However, friendship between men became "a flexible and ambiguous concept that encompassed both sexual and non-sexual relationships" (Steinbach 247). Despite being illegal and immoral, sexual relationships between men still happened, and were "recognized but not tolerated, shameful and secret but openly recognized" (Steinbach 247). Sexual relationships between men happened in every class, and even between classes. In addition to being immoral and shameful, sex between men was seen as effeminizing, and therefore was even more shameful because such men were perceived as something close to being female: weak, submissive, and not rational. This was less the case when a man who maintained sexual relationships with another man controlled the second party, imposed himself and his desires onto those of his partner (Steinbach 247).

However, this did not mean that sex with other men stopped being shameful, it still was, and it was better kept a secret. Especially in the upper-class, "the accusation of having sex with another man was a serious affront to a man's character and honour" (Steinbach 247); if sexual encounters between upper-class men happened, they had to be kept a secret, strictly private, for it could ruin one's life: if the secret were known, those men would lose their respectability and power, and their lives would be filled by ridicule and shame; they would probably be rejected by the majority—if not the whole—of society. The *fin-de-siècle* did not bring with it many changes: male sexuality was still based on restraint, as was sexuality in general—there was an emphasis on chastity, and male restraint was even more valued-; male masturbation was still seen as a problem and immoral, and homosexuality—a term that began being used only at the end of the century—was still extremely immoral and shameful. A real-life example of how homosexuality could be fatal for an upper-class man's life was Oscar Wilde's trial in 1895. Wilde was one of the most famous and scandalous characters at the end of the nineteenth century in Britain, a writer, and an aesthete. He had a male lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, whose father accused Wilde of sodomy; Wilde was then tried, and one piece of evidence used against him to prove his indecency was his own novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde's life started its downfall shortly after the publication of his only novel, after which he began to be accused of immorality; the accusation by Lord Douglas's father triggered the trial, and Wilde lost. He "was found guilty of gross indecency" (Steinbach 257). He lost all respectability, and he was sent to prison where he spent three years. He died shortly after his release, in 1900.

2.3. Double life

As has been observed, upper-class men had access to many things, to many ways of socialising and spending their money, and a great deal of freedom compared to the rest of society—and most especially women-. These men could enjoy their glamorous surroundings and look for pleasure there, or they could go to the *lower* places of the city, looking for different experiences. Freedom was part of their privilege as members of the highest sphere of society; but precisely this liberty, this freedom, could end up being the cause of their fall into immorality.

Control was an enormous part of the upper-class male lifestyle, and a critically important factor if a respectable life as a gentleman was a man's objective. Upper-class men were society's most privileged citizens in every sense: they had money, status, power, and freedom, as well as being part of the "strong sex", and they also had a great deal of expectations set upon them. These expectations had to be fulfilled if men wanted to be considered as such: completely adult, moral, and competent, worthy of a life in the highest sphere of society. Consequently, these men had to bring everything in their lives under control, or at least it had to look that way to others. What society saw—the outward appearance and behaviour—was extremely important, and everything had to look as if it was perfectly under control. We must remember the expectations that upper-class men had to live up to: they had to control the household, both the family and the service, as well as their employment. Control in social relationships was important too, since camaraderie between men was important: they had to maintain male acquaintances, but they had to be careful, since too much familiarity or proximity to another man could lead to rumours about homosexuality, which could in turn be, quite literally, fatal. Upper-class men, then, had to exercise control over everything, and that could end up taking a toll on

them. Because of this, their freedom could be used to escape from this control, both bestowed and demanded by the patriarchy, and to temporarily seek forms of release. It is at such moments that freedom could become the start of their fall into immorality: they were granted access almost anywhere thanks to their status and power, and they *could* do everything they liked, even if they *should not*. Everything was possible to escape from the patriarchy and the roles they had to fulfil, as long as they went back to their lives as if nothing at all had happened: the immoral activities upper-class men took part in had to remain a secret, and their action could not show on their outward appearance or behaviour. It was possible that upper-class men ended up engaging in all sorts of immoralities, but if they wanted to remain being regarded as moral, respectable, and acceptable men, they had to go back to their lives and to control as well as being controlled through their own person by society and the patriarchy.

As can be seen, wanting to escape from a life—or from some of its aspects—but also wanting to keep being a part of it was a duality that some upper-class men incorporated in their lives, leading them to live a double life. This double life consisted of the moral appearance on one side, behaving properly and according to society's standards as to how an upper-class man should be and behave among the high society; and on the other hand, there is immorality, the secret life that could signify a relief from their duties. However, engaging in a double life was dangerous: high society's discovery of immoral attitudes and activities could mean the end of the "immoral" man in question: the rest of the upper-class would shun him, which we must be remember was a great disgrace for Victorians, especially for the upper-class; society was everything, and its learning of an immoral lifestyle would most certainly mean the loss of a man's status and power. Then, an upper-class man had to be extremely careful when carrying out the immoral side of his life, but also with his appearance once back to his proper, upper-class

lifestyle. As Athena Vrettos states in "Victorian Psychology" (2002), Victorians believed in the scientific (pseudo)theories of physiognomy and phrenology scientific theories, "which shared the premise that external features of the body corresponded to internal features of the mind, soul, or character […] and that an individual's inner moral qualities were directly embodied in the features of the face" (Vrettos 80). The difference between these two theories, as Nicholas Dames points out in "'The withering of the individual': Psychology in the Victorian Novel" (2005), is that physiognomy concentrates "on the mobile or soft, fleshy aspects of face and expression" (101), while phrenology concentrates "on the bony structures of the forehead and skull" (101), but both of them were used to describe someone's personality and character, which Dames calls "the *surfacing* of character: the ability of mental habits to express themselves visibly" (104). As a result, it was believed that an individual's morality was written in their appearance, in their face and body, and that way everyone else could know this person's character. This means that it was believed that someone's immoral lifestyle was drawn on their appearance, and consequently could be easily discovered by society; a double life, then, had to be extremely concealed, and even then, could possibly end up deteriorating the individual's exterior. Vrettos also speaks of phrenology as related to mental multiplicity and self-division. She refers to William James, a Harvard's psychology professor and a major psychologist in the nineteenth century (and brother to the novelist Henry James) who "argued that the "self" was really a multiplicity of "selves"" (Vrettos 81).[6] We could therefore argue that the double life we have been talking about could be a division of the self, the self that wants to remain part of the privileged, male, and upper-class life, and the self—the man—that engages in immorality, in a vastly different lifestyle from the one expected of him, precisely to escape such expectations and roles.

[6] William James is credited with having invented the term "stream of consciousness".

2.4. Aestheticism and Decadence

Finally, it is important to address the *fin de siècle* Aestheticism and Decadence movements, which are profoundly related to immorality. Aestheticism, as Carolyn Burdett explains in "Aestheticism and decadence" (2014: online), went against the notion that most Victorians had about art and literature. While "many Victorians passionately believed that literature and art fulfilled important ethical roles [and that] literature provided models of correct behaviour" (Burdett, 2014: online), aesthetes believed that art was not moral, it did not convey a moral meaning, and that it should be admired for its beauty and the pleasure that such beauty could provide: that is, art for art's sake. For people who held this view, life was essentially about the pursuit of beauty and pleasure. According to Burdett, the "mixture of radical politics, sexual dissidence and privileging of the individual's experience of beauty was highly alarming to more conventional Victorians" (2014: online), and it was condemned and criticised, as well as satirised, in an attempt to protect moral behaviour. Another notion related to Aestheticism is Decadence, which also followed the pursuit of sensuous pleasure and defended the view that art's aim was not moral enlightenment. Decadence could be referred to as a more pronounced branch of Aestheticism, following the same principles but enhancing them, and, as a result, presenting itself as even more immoral. As Burdett observes, "The word literally means a process of 'falling away' or decline" (2014: online), and among its qualities or principles we find an interest in sexuality and unorthodox ways of living it, an attitude of boredom towards the notion of hard work—instead of the moral seriousness that most Victorians felt and expressed towards this topic—or the appreciation of the artificial over the natural (Burdett, 2014: online). In view of this, for conservative Victorians—who were the majority—these two movements were seen as extremely

immoral, since they challenged the moral values of a society to which appearance and propriety meant everything.

Once more, it is of relevance to talk about Oscar Wilde himself. Wilde was seen as a symbol of both Aestheticism and Decadence, and "was identified as central to the English decadent tradition" (Burdett, 2014: online). His pursuit of both sensuous beauty and pleasure, and of unconventional, immoral things or activities—such as homosexuality, as seen previously—made him an outstanding figure not just inside the movement, but everywhere, turning him into one of the most famous and scandalous characters of his time, all of which finally became an extremely important part of his downfall.

2.5. Analysis: Immorality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) is a very suitable work with which to analyse immorality from an upper-class point of view, as well as from a male perspective. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the two main characters being studied in this project are Dorian Gray, the protagonist of the novel, and Lord Henry Wotton, a character of great importance in the development both of the events and of Dorian's character. The two characters are upper-class men, thus in this section an analysis of their actions and their morality or immorality will be carried out with the aim of determining how male upper-class immorality is reflected in the novel, and with the additional objective of exemplifying and backing up the notion of immorality as an escape from upper-class men's lives and the expectations they had to fulfil, that is, immorality as release.

As discussed at the end of the previous chapter's analysis, both characters live a life of luxury and leisure—Dorian more so than Henry—thanks to their wealth and status.

It has been explained in this chapter that leisure could take many forms, such as drinking, gambling, or sports, and that they were either not considered completely moral in their entirety, or else that they could ruin a man's morality if he lost control of himself while engaging in such activities, such as getting extremely drunk—which could lead to a loss of control over behaviour—or losing a great quantity of money due to gambling. We have also seen how other activities, such as going to the poorer places of London and attending opium dens, were directly considered immoral and degrading. Dorian is the character that indulges most in "leisure and pleasure" activities, but it is of importance to highlight, as Roger Luckhurst comments in "Perversion and degeneracy in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" (2014: online), "there is actually no [or little] explicit statement of what Dorian's vices really are: it is left to the lurid imagination of the reader to detail them"; yet, the hints are there. Drinking is mentioned in some instances in Wilde's novel, such as at Lady Narborough's dinner, where it is said that Dorian ate nothing, but "From time to time the butler filled his glass with champagne. He drank eagerly, and his thirst seemed to increase" (Wilde 182). However, no emphasis is placed on drinking, which is not strange: alcohol was part of the Victorian era, could be found practically everywhere, and it was very normal for men to indulge in it. Gambling is not emphasised either, and sports, while mentioned on some occasion—in Dorian's country house, for example, where men go hunting—were not only considered moral, but also necessary for becoming a proper man and also for obtaining the title of gentleman. Nevertheless, opium consumption and opium dens do appear in the novel and occupy a fairly lengthy section: Dorian goes to one, and we suspect that it is not his first time there: he directs the hansom towards the East End, where the dens are, and once there he "reached a small shabby house, that was edged between two gaunt factories. […] He stopped, and gave a peculiar knock" (Wilde 192); that he knows exactly where he is going and that "peculiar knock" lead us to think that

this is a regular occurrence for him. Also, immediately before his trip to the East End, Dorian extracts something from a cabinet at home that seems to be some kind of opiate substance:

> Between two of the windows stood a large Florentine cabinet […]. He watched it as though it were a thing that could fascinate and make afraid, as though it held something that he longed for and yet almost loathed. His breath quickened. A mad craving came over him. […] At last he got up from the sofa on which he had been lying, went over to it, and, having unlocked it, touched some hidden spring. A triangular drawer passed slowly out. His fingers moved instinctively towards it, dipped in, and closed on something. It was a small Chinese box […]. Inside was a green paste waxy in lustre, the odour curiously heavy and persistent (Wilde 188).

In this fragment we can see that Dorian is probably addicted to opium, precisely the aspect that was considered the most immoral about opium consumption; through addiction, Dorian has reached an immoral state of being. He has lost control; he craves the substance and the state it will leave him in.

During the scene where Dorian enters the opium den, he encounters a man named Adrian, which leads us to the next point: sexuality. If it did not have the purpose of reproduction, sex was immoral. Men had to control their sexual desires, and not act on them: they were the sexually active gender, but masculinity was based on control. Restraint was considered a virtue, but in the event of this not being possible, men then required prostitutes—which was also immoral, but done for a "greater good"—since they should never propose recreational sex to their wives, who were supposed not to feel sexual desire. The novel hints at the fact that Dorian acts, immorally, on his sexual desires, in the search of physical and sexual pleasure. But in his case, this happens not with prostitutes, but with other women from the upper-class, both married or not. Dorian is a flirt, so we see him toy with women throughout the novel, but it is in Chapter Twelve, when Basil—his friend and one of the people that truly loves him most—confronts him

about his lifestyle and the rumours that are being spread about him. Here, Basil tells Dorian about how a man called Lord Staveley has said that Dorian was "a man whom no pure-minded girl should be allowed to know, and whom no chaste woman should sit in the same room with" (Wilde 153). After that, Basil asks him about Lady Gwendolen, Lord Henry's sister and a married woman: "When you met Lady Gwendolen, not a breath of scandal had ever touched her. Is there a single decent woman in London now who would drive with her in the Park? Why, even her children are not allowed to live with her" (Wilde 154). This suggests that something scandalous happened between them, almost certainly of a sexual nature. Yet, as if being a rake was not immoral enough, Dorian takes this a step further by maintaining homosexual relationships. He is also confronted by Basil in this matter, who asks him "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men?" (Wilde 153), and carries on with a list of young men who Dorian has supposedly ruined:

> There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. you and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent's only son, and his career? I met his father yesterday in St James's Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him? (Wilde 153)

This litany makes us think that Dorian has had a relationship, of a sexual kind, with all these men. Homosexuality was at the time in which this novel was published, seen as one of the greatest immoralities and could ruin an upper-class man's life completely, surely enough as to have to leave England because of a "tarnished name". Basil also mentions Adrian, the character we referred to at the beginning of this paragraph and whom Basil describes as having a "dreadful end". Certainly, Adrian is found by Dorian at the opium den: "'You here, Adrian?' muttered Dorian. 'Where else should I be?' he

answered, listlessly. 'None of the chaps will speak to me now'" (Wilde 193). Adrian has been rejected by his own, by the upper-class, probably because of a homosexual relationship with Dorian; no one wants to interact with him, and the shame is so great that he was planning to leave England. He has also become an addict, and states at the opium den that "As long as one has this stuff, one doesn't want friends" (Wilde 193). Clearly then, Dorian has not controlled his sexual desires at all and has harmed a great many people through them.

However, it is almost as if Dorian did not *need* to restrain himself or put himself under control, since this double life of his does not seem to completely ruin him. It could be said that Dorian is only half ruined: there are many terrible rumours about him and a great section of the upper-class reject him, but not all of them, since he is still invited to places and people still go to his parties and trips to Selby Royale, his country house. This could be because of his appearance. As we have seen and as Luckhurst (2014: online) states, "Victorians, trained in moral physiognomy, believed that sin was written on the body", and Dorian is beautiful and young-looking throughout the novel, which means that his sins do not *write themselves* on his appearance—as we know, it is the portrait that Basil paints for him that reflects the degeneracy of his soul and the damage of his sins. It is Basil who puts this into words when he says "I can't believe these rumours at all. At least, I can't believe them when I see you" (Wilde 152). Nevertheless, Basil knows (although perhaps to a lesser extent) the kind of life that Dorian leads in places such as his country home, and therefore listens to the rumours, and (rightly) doubts his friend's honesty. The portrait and its ability to reflect his sins in his body's place makes Dorian become increasingly immoral as the novel progresses (Luckhurst, 2014: online), and he knows that it will be difficult for society to discover his double life of immorality or accuse him of it because of his appearance. He even commits murder, the capital sin—

and worse still, of his own friend, Basil—and no one ever discovers this. This reminds us of how important appearance was for the Victorians; vice would usually show itself on the outside of a person (so it was believed), probably displaying a decay of the body due to addiction or venereal diseases, or maybe because of the loss of an important quantity of money. But Dorian remains young and beautiful, and much of that society would have agreed with Basil's comment when he states: "But you, Dorian, with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvellous untroubled youth—I can't believe anything against you" (153).

Despite his looks, we have seen the immoral acts that Dorian has committed, or at least some of them. And so we know that Dorian is indeed an immoral character who leads a double life, one that is increasingly difficult to conceal. However, we do not yet know his reasons for living like that. Why does he do it? It is crucial for us to remember that Lord Henry has been the greatest influence in his life. Lord Henry is the one who encouraged Dorian, the first time they met, to pursue a life of pleasure and beauty, and to cling to his youth as much as he could. This is a way of thinking related to Aestheticism, the movement that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and that followed a premise that, as Greg Buzwell states in "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: art, ethics and the artist" (2014: online) "that art should be judged purely by its beauty and form rather than by any underlying moral message ('art for art's sake')". Buzwell also comments that Lord Henry Wotton exemplifies this movement in the novel, since, as we have said, he is the one to encourage Dorian to live this kind of life. Yet, we do not see Lord Henry living a life as extreme as Dorian's. He talks about pleasure and beauty and experiencing immoral acts, but we do not see him to go to that extreme, even though he keeps encouraging Dorian. Buzwell states that "Throughout the book Lord Henry treats Dorian as a beautiful subject upon which to experiment […] a wish to abandon the restraints of morality"

(2014: online), and this allows us to introduce the possible reason why many upper-class men engaged in immoral activities: the search for relief or escape from the insistence of public perfection made by patriarchal society. Henry's character, with his not-so-immoral lifestyle and his influence, treats Dorian as an experiment because of his (more than probable) fear of escaping society's rules and the roles imposed upon upper-class men: he does not dare evade his own life through immoral actions, since he does not know how bad the consequences might be. Because of this, he drives Dorian to such actions and observes. Henry wants to live as Dorian ends up living, but he is scared, so he pushes Dorian to this kind of life that their freedom—and money—as upper-class men made possible for them, even if it endangered their lives. He urges Dorian to pursue all kinds of pleasure, to live the life that Henry wants to live but doesn't dare, a life drawn to immorality that would help him escape the pressure that upper-class men were under. Henry is an example of what probably happened to a lot of upper-class men: they wanted to live more freely, not to be so crushed by expectations and the ideal of the gentleman, and that could mean doing the exact thing that patriarchal society was against.

Another important point worth highlighting again is the Aesthetic ideal. The Aesthetic movement has an important role here, not simply in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but in the lives of upper-class men in general. Taking Lord Henry as an example and reflection of certain upper-class men again, we can say that he is clearly an aesthete, and being an aesthete and supporting Aestheticism, a movement that favoured the search for pleasure, might allow them—Henry and upper-class men in general—to remain in society while indulging in mild immoral practices to try and find minimum release from intense social pressure, and not be irreparably harmed by their own actions or words. It must be recalled that men were given considerable flexibility as regards behaviour, and that "minor" immoralities could often be overlooked. Consequently, it was possible that

aesthetes could lead a slightly more immoral lifestyle than other upper-class men and not be completely shut out of society. However, the life of the aesthete could turn out to be insufficient to escape the roles that upper-class men had to endure. Furthermore, this lifestyle could be taken to an extreme, could become totally immoral, requiring concealment, a double life, in order to be able to remain within society and, at the same time, find release from it. Dorian's case, through Henry's intervention, is a clear example of this.

Finally, we can state that the "oppression" of upper-class men came in the shape of roles and expectations to be fulfilled, and not as the privation on freedom and independence as happened with women (although they also had many roles to fulfil). The requirement to accomplish these roles could be demanding and place great pressure on upper-class men, since their duties were many and were sometimes far from simple; these duties went from marrying and establishing a household, having a "job" and a network of colleagues, to becoming the perfect upper-class gentleman, one who had a serious mind but enjoyed controlled leisure. Control was key in upper-class men's lives. Everything had to be under their control, from their family and household to their own actions; if control slipped from their lives—and, for example, they could not control their wives, or their sexual impulses, or their vices—such men would suffer direct social consequences and would be ridiculed and disrespected. Logically then, a way of escaping this pressure was sought out by these men, and this could swiftly lead to immorality—the very thing that they would avoid in their everyday life—and to a double life that would conceal their activities and still allow them to be part of society. Dorian is an example of what many upper-class men wanted, and also a symbol of what could happen to these men that were trying to escape: they could become monsters in society's opinion, and risk everything. Lord Henry, on the other hand, is the reflection of the upper-class man that wants to

escape, to remove himself from his reality, but who—through fear— does not fully do so. This includes the fear of being discovered, of being ridiculed and cast out of society, and the fear of no longer being considered a man, but, instead, a failure.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, it must be said that Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is indeed an unusual novel for the Victorian period, since it reflects immorality exactly as it took place in society and addresses this directly and in a straightforward manner. The novel focuses on upper-class men, specifically on Dorian Gray and (less so) Lord Henry Wotton; it reflects immorality and how this could affect these men. This TFG has studied both this novel and the social notions of class and immorality in the Victorian period with the objective of determining whether immorality (that is, actions considered to be immoral in this period) could serve as a relief from the social pressure that these men were submitted to.

Even if upper-class men were the most privileged group in the Victorian hierarchy, patriarchal society oppressed everyone. Of course, this oppression came in different degrees depending on gender and class, but what is of importance here is that, even if upper-class men were the least oppressed, they still were under pressure in certain ways. It was precisely their rank and privileges that could make it easier for them to gain access to immoral activities or places, since, through their money, there was almost nothing that escaped their reach. This search for immorality was a way for some of these men to let go of their roles and avoid the corresponding pressure, that pertaining to the perfect character they were expected to be, always in control. Control was a key concept

for upper-class men: they had to successfully manage everything both in their own lives and in the ones of those depending on them, and all the while they had to try to become the perfect man, the perfect gentleman. Leading a double life could therefore become their relief. However, this was clearly dangerous, for if their double lives and immoral acts were discovered, they risked expulsion from society. And being an accepted part of society, together with outward appearance and behaviour, were of an extreme importance in the Victorian era.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a perfect reflection of how upper-class men could indulge in immorality, how it could damage them, and also how not all of them dared to look for relief from their social pressures for fear of the possible consequences. Dorian is the reflection of the man who dives into immorality and commits almost every immoral act conceivable; Henry is the reflection of why Dorian does so. He is the one who truly represents the upper-class man, the aristocrat, who wants to escape from the pressure, the roles and the expectations, but at the same time does not dare to do so, so he drives Dorian to it. The novel also reflects the feared consequences: Dorian Gray ends up having what could be considered the worst outcome, suicide, since it is yet another immoral act, a sin, and his final one. The novel also shows other ways in which immorality could ruin men: disgrace, being rejected by society, ridiculed and disrespected, or even having to leave the country.

Finally, it can be said that immorality could indeed become a relief from the pressure that upper-class men lived under, but it is important to remark that, while escape could be found in immorality and in a double life, it would never be complete liberation: the fear of being discovered by society and losing status, honour and respectability would always be there, and it would always be a very real threat.

4. Further research

The focus of this project has been the topic of upper-class men's sense of social oppression, but, inevitably, whilst researching and writing this TFG, the pressures faced by women's oppression has come to the surface. This latter topic is as important as it is broad-ranging. However, due to the subject and length of this current study, an in-depth analysis on women and the many types of oppression to which they were subjected has not been possible. Nevertheless, some research has been carried out here in order to determine how vastly different the lives of men and women were, as this is simply too important not to refer to. In this sense and within this ambit, I propose that further research might be carried out into the ways in which literature reflects the distinct social pressures facing *upper-class* women, to complement the already vast body of critical work on the *general* social condition of women (often taken as a single group).

Moving to another topic, we have seen in this project how important appearance was in the Victorian era. Dorian's inner malignity is hidden by his outer beauty. This undermines an apparently well-held Victorian belief in phrenology, which essentially predicted depravity through physical ugliness (although this is a simplification). In light of this, it would be interesting to trace through literature similar responses that appear to challenge this pseudo-scientific belief in order to suggest that the now-popular view of the Victorian identification of criminality and depravity with unsightly physical characteristics was perhaps not as widely held as currently believed.

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