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**Class Struggle and Oppression, a Marxist approach to  
Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray"**

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## **Dedications**

*I gratefully dedicate this work to my loving parents.*

*I wish you would stay forever by my side.*

## Acknowledgments

*First and foremost,*

*To my unique and patient supervisor and her endless encouragement, Dearest Dr.Saadoune,*

*I could still recall the first distinguished lecture she gave me regarding patience on my very first day here, I shall never thank you enough,*

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*To my supportive father and his ever-standing support,*

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*To all the teachers who accompanied and enlightened me through this journey,*

*And to my loved ones.*

## Abstract

In spite of the substantial amount of critical work that has categorized him as a lazy aesthetic artist who has always been associated with the “art for art’s sake” movement, Oscar Wilde may have proven that he had a deeper level of social consciousness as far as the capitalist Victorian society goes. This dissertation joins a voice to the argument that Wilde has veiled his moral codes and objections to the social situation of his time through his only novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray” first published in Lippincott’s Magazine in 1890.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to hire the Marxist literary criticism approach in order to highlight the critical vision of the novel, which, on a much more profound level, was actually found to be behaving as a Marxist criticism in itself to the capitalist and social ideologies of its Victorian era. Accordingly, a descriptive, analytical, qualitative method was adopted in order to better convey the findings of an extensive library research. Hence, the initial –theoretical- part of this research paper provides a general rough sketch of the Marxist theory, how it came to be one the prominent critical theories of our time and last, what makes it the best way to approach this particular corpus.

As we move towards the second – practical - part, emphasis is put on class, socioeconomic status and power relations among the various segments of society and those characters who represent them through analysing the corpus. The selected evidence is to be interpreted based on the aforementioned theory. In the conclusion part, it will be asserted that within the critical venue provided by this approach, the existence of deep social criticism themes serve as proof that Wilde, beneath the shell surface of his aesthetic values, is indeed a socialist critic who followed the steps of Marxist critics in his depiction of Victorian society. Hence, his writings are an expression of a socially-responsible writer after all.

**Key terms:** marxism, marxist literary criticism, oscar wilde, social classes, class conflict.

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## **I. General Introduction**

### **Content:**

- 1. Background of The Study**
- 2. Motivation of The Study**
- 3. Objective of The Study**
- 4. Problem Statement**
- 5. Research Questions**
- 6. Hypothesis**
- 7. Proposed Methodology**
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## 1. Background of the Study:

Artists have always found ways to add meaning into their work, it is after all the meaning that the artefact holds that actually determines its value, and literature is no exception. If we were to look for the common factor between the bestselling books throughout history, we would most certainly land the discovery that it is what people relate to the most that they tend to read.

During the Victorian era, the most prominent literary works were all influenced by the Aesthetic movement. At first it was all tea parties and dance balls, until the inevitable arrival of the Industrial revolution. All of a sudden, people found themselves living in a capitalist society where they could no longer fantasize nor day dream, since they were “enslaved” in factories all day making profit for those rich enough to afford to own the means of production.

Hence, like all artist of that time, writers sought to connect to their audience. Perhaps even more desperate to find a way to express their frustration at the prevailing social system due to the undeniable importance that literature holds. The power of literature to mimic society and shed light on what needs to be corrected is the reason why its change was crucial.

Aestheticism was no longer efficient because society no longer needed daydreams about the good life, they needed a wakeup call to fix the one they had. Conveniently enough, a new movement that fit the profile was laying around and waiting to be used as a tool to criticize that unfortunate social situation and help writers deliver a more socially-conscious literature and manifest their objection to the capitalist Victorian social system.

The socio-economic Marxist theory was the wakeup call. And sure enough, many writers picked up the phone. Despite the contradictory aesthetic values he once held, Oscar Wilde had strong Marxist tendencies to oppose to the social and economic unfairness of his time.

Oscar Wilde has been perceived as a contemporary of Karl Marx to a certain extent, due to his own political writings such as “The Soul of a Man under Socialism”. What is far more interesting about him, is his ability to disguise his profound socially –conscious beliefs such as social and economic equity under the disguise of aesthetic and hedonistic characters he hired in his short stories and most importantly his 1890’s masterpiece “The Picture of Dorian Gray”.



## **2. Purpose –Motivation of the Study:**

This research paper's scope of study is to highlight and analyze to social conflict in Oscar Wilde's only novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray". This study is also expected to shed light upon the Marxist Literary Theory and the difference it makes on students perception of the novel.

Discussing the social conflict themes within the novel in accordance with the aforementioned theory, aims to assess the degree of sympathy the corpus holds to the Marxist principles, as it also aims to reveal the Marxist tendencies of the author and the influence of the Marxist theory in determining the level of social responsibility authors of the Victorian period reflected.

### **3. Objectives of the study:**

Through conducting this research paper, I have been guided by several aims, the basic starting point was to narrow down the historical track of the Marxist Literary Critical Theory. However, my ultimate goal was to explore Oscar Wilde's gothic novel "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*", and dive into the events of the novel equipped with the fundamentals of the Marxist theory.

And finally determine whether a Marxist analysis is actually applicable and to how extent, in this particular context.

#### **4. Problem Statement:**

This humble research is an attempt to investigate the aspects of the Marxist values expressed in the British novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray”. It is sought through this work, to reveal whether Oscar Wilde did feel more responsibility as an author than he lead others to believe, and to explore the possibility of him being a committed Marxist writer who did not perceive literature as mere art, but treated it as a moral message that should be considered in relevance to its social context.

## **5. Research Questions:**

- 1) To what extent was Oscar Wilde committed to the cause of exposing the corrupt ways of the Victorian society?
- 2) How did Oscar Wilde apply Marxist concepts in exposing the Victorian society? And was he successful in doing so?
- 3) Is the Marxist literary Theory the most suitable theory to approach Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" novel within particular?

## **6. Proposed Methodology:**

The conducted research paper was realized by taking a qualitative approach seeking to explore the themes of deep social criticism from a Marxist perspective. This study is corpus –based and takes a descriptive analytical route, following the Marxist literary theory blueprint. It is attempted to explore the author’s level of social-awareness, as well as determining his attitude towards the capitalized upper classes and their agency over the lower working class. The data used in conducting this research has been taken from the novel through extracting important quotes, containing implications of socially criticizing themes. This data is then analyzed and interpreted from a Marxist angle. The outcomes of such analysis are essential in determining how the novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray” handles the debate around the critical vision of the Victorian society.

## **7. Dissertation Structure:**

This research paper is divided into three main sections, each of these sections are divided in their turn. The first section is a general introduction that contains details regarding the aim, background, motivation behind the study and even questions that have guided the research process. The Theoretical part within the second section, contains one chapter that aims to introduce the overall approach and theory to be adopted in the analysis and reading of the selected corpus. In this case, The Marxist Critical Theory by Karl Marx.

This chapter is divided into several headings in order to guarantee a smoother delivery of information to the reader. The third and last section in this research is the practical one, which will also contain one large, but divided chapter. This chapter is an attempt to explore the Marxist aspects of Oscar Wilde's only novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray", which would result in answers to the previously set questions.

## **II. Theoretical Part:**

**A. Chapter One: Marxism in a Painting**



## **Chapter's Content**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Marxism Revisited**
  - 2.1. What Is Marxism**
  - 2.2. The Origins of the Marxist Theory**
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    - 2.3.1. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**
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- 3. A Reflection On Society & Class Struggle- Marxian Class Theory**
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- 5. Chapter's Conclusion**

## 1. Introduction

*“For Marxism, getting and keeping economic power is the motive behind all social and political activities, including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media, and so on. Thus, economics is the base on which the superstructure of social/political/ ideological realities is built. Economic power therefore always includes social and political power as well, which is why many Marxists today refer to socioeconomic class, rather than economic class, when talking about the class structure” (Tyson; Lois, 2006)*

*“The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men’s material behaviour . . . we do not proceed from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at corporeal man; rather we proceed from the really active man . . . Consciousness does not determine life: life determines Consciousness” (Marx and Engels, 1845)*

Someone who is not familiar with literary critical theories whatsoever, might argue that reading literature and conducting a literary criticism have nothing to do with embracing knowledge from other disciplines; such as economics or politics. The same way a painter; who makes a living through art, should let politicians do the politics instead of running for congress elections. In reality however, other disciplines are fundamental for achieving a clear explanation of a literary work or even making any sense of it.

In this chapter, it is mainly sought to provide the reader with a brief overview of the Marxist Theory, how it came to exist, its history and how it found its way towards becoming not just *a* critical literary theory, but a crucial one for that matter. Since Marxist critics focus on socio-economic aspects of literary materials, this theory is perceived as the best candidate to adopt in the analysis of the selected corpus “The Picture of Dorian Gray”, due to the fact of its efficiency in contradictory discussions such as the discussion of social moralities and ethical conflicts surrounding themes of class struggle within the Victorian society in this particular study.

## 2. Marxism Revisited

Marxism is a subject of great complexity and intertwined elements, making what is known today as Marxist literary criticism an even more complicated one. This part of this dissertation paper will be providing a broad outline of the Marxian theory and its approach to literature.

The following sections will allow us to see (in a rough sketch) what is meant by Marxism. We would also have a brief introduction into the Marxian theory and its birth. How it came to develop over the last century and what lead it to turn towards literature to begin with.

### 2.1. What is Marxism

Marxism is a tradition of thought which includes numerous interpretations, developments and modifications of the insights of Marx himself, some of which constitute necessary amendments to the inherent limitations of those insights whilst others result from attempts to be consistent to then in historically changed circumstances (*Alderson, 2004*)

According to (Burns, 1939) , Marxism is “a general theory of the world in which we live, and of human society as a part of that world”. Marxism is an analytically powerful social theory tradition that is critical for scientifically comprehending the challenges and possibilities of social transformation and social reproduction in modern society.

It could also be argued that Marxism is a source of suggestive concepts that maintain their level of significance in relation to contemporary social scientific analysis. Marxism have always been a crucial weapon to those who wish to bring fundamental change and equity into the world.

Simply put, Marxism is set of notions and beliefs that gives people an interpretation for the modern world they live in, and motivates them in the same time to take actions to change it.

In the sections to follow, we will be discussing Marx’s basic theory, the contributions it has made to our perception of social organizational forms, and lastly the relevance and of the Marxist theory of class struggle to this study in particular.

## 2.2. The Origins of the Marxist Theory

Brought into this world through the philosophies of the radical economist Karl Marx, and the significant contributions of Fredrich Engels, the main collaborator of Marx, Marxism was first publically authored in these two philosophers “Communist Manifesto” back in 1848. Where they set the bones of their historical materialism theory anticipating the decline of capitalism by the lower classes. Engels took it upon himself later on, to edit following volumes of Marx’s analysis of capitalism “Das Kapital” and published them after the death of the German social activist.

The scientific approach to the development of society is based, like all science, on experience, on the facts of history and of the world around us. Therefore Marxism is not a completed, finished theory. As history unfolds, as man gathers more experience, Marxism is constantly being developed and applied to the new facts that have come to light. (*Burns, 1939*)

The fuzz around this theory that gained momentum over history, should be regarded as proof that Marxism is a never ending wheel of change. Since its beginning, it has witnessed unprecedented level of expansion not just in social studies, but has reached far beyond the limitations of its socio-economic roots.

Marxism came as a result to Marx’s view of society and what he believed should be corrected upon his realization that; the capitalist bourgeoisies of his time, were only connected to their lesser significant working class through exploitative power relations and that would inevitably lead to what came to be known as “class conflict”, and both Marx and Engels could not emphasise this enough In Their *Communist Manifesto*; they wrote that “[...] the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. This brings us to one of Marx’s core beliefs, and that is the economic power should belong to the public mass, so that the people would not suffer from being held captives of the capitalist economical system.

Marxism justifies revolution. That is controversial –extremely so. It is the fundamental reason why Marx has been accused of totalitarianism. It is also the reason why the encounter with Marx is transformative, not only for the way people think, but of their lives as well (*Boucher, 2014*)

Marxism is of such broad philosophy that has made it “a distinctively historical theory that normatively challenges liberalism in a way no other modern theory does” (*Boucher, 2014*)

## **2.3. A Marxian Legacy- Historical Contributions**

This section will primarily elaborate the basic contours of the historical achievements the Marxist Theory has been surrounded with. We will begin by outlining the key Philosophical figures who stood behind the progress of the Marxist school of thought, and contributed in the shaping of the Marxist notions into the theory we know today.

### **2.3.1. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**

The importance of Hegel's Phenomenology . . . lies in the fact that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, objectification as loss of object, as alienation and as supersession of this alienation; that he therefore grasps the nature of labour and conceives objective man – true, because real man – as the result of his own labour (Marx K. , 1975)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (August 27, 1770 – November 14, 1831) was a German philosopher who is often regarded as one of the most influential characters in German idealism. He is one of the most influential personalities in Western philosophy, influencing both the analytic and continental traditions on a wide variety of modern philosophical concerns, from aesthetics to ontology to politics.

Hegel's greatest achievement was the invention of a separate articulation of idealism, known as absolute idealism, in which the dualisms of mind and nature, as well as subject and object, are transcended. Psychology, the state, history, art, religion, and philosophy are all thematically integrated in his philosophy of spirit. His master–slave dialectic influenced many people, particularly in twentieth-century France. The dialectic was Hegel's most significant idea. Hegel provides a systematic overview of the foundations of dialectical philosophy in his book *The Encyclopedia Logic*. He implies by dialectic that the universe is contradictory: phenomena are not isolated, but rather stand in opposition to one another. They "negate" each other, according to Hegel, or two opposing phenomena attract and repel each other.

According to Michael Hardt, the foundations of post-structuralism and its unifying basis are rooted in a general hostility not to the philosophical tradition tout court, but particularly to the "Hegelian

tradition" that dominated philosophy previous to post-structuralism in the twentieth century. It could be easily argued that Hegel set the foundational stones of modern philosophy in general and The Marxist theory in particular. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) wrote that "all the great philosophical ideas of the past century—the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis—had their beginnings in Hegel.

### **2.3.2. Karl Heinrich Marx**

For many, Marx has become more of an icon than a thinker deserving of serious study. The symbolism of his name tends to muddle understanding of his ideas. Marx is the only theorist we will study who has had political movements and social systems named after him. He is probably the only theorist your friends and family have strong opinions about. He is often criticized, as well as praised, by people who have never actually read his work. Even among his followers, Marx's ideas frequently are reduced to slogans such as "the opium of the people" and "the dictatorship of proletariat," but the role of these slogans in Marx's encompassing theory often is ignored. (*Ritzer*)

Karl Heinrich Marx was a philosopher, economist, and a revolutionary activist who was born on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1818 in Trier, Prussia, He passed away on March 14, 1883. He is well known for co-finding Marxism with Frederich Engels and improving the concept of class conflict. He demonstrated historical materialism and the significance of means of production in the formation of history in his Communist Manifesto<sup>1</sup>. He also stressed the importance of a society's economic foundation in shaping its overall social structure, as well as the psychology of its citizens.

Marx received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin, a school heavily influenced by Hegel and the Young Hegelians. He went on to work as a writer for a liberal-radical journal after college, and within 10 months he had risen to the position of editor in chief. The government, however, closed the daily soon after because of its political stances. Marx's early works reflected a lot of the positions that would influence him throughout his life. Democratic ideas, humanism, and young optimism were generously peppered throughout. He despised Hegelian philosophy's abstractness, utopian communists' naive dreaming, and activists who advocated for what he saw as premature political action.

He claimed that continual class conflict ultimately leads to a proletarian revolution, in which the proletariat class triumphs and a non-class society spreads. This was one of the final phases of a series of stages in the historical transition.

Marx is credited with the creation of Marxism as well as the development of contemporary socialism and communism.

### **2.3.3. Friedrich Engels**

Friedrich Engels was a German philosopher, economist, historian, political theorist, and revolutionary socialist who lived from November 28, 1820, to August 5, 1895.

Together with Karl Marx, Engels created what is now known as Marxism. Based on first-hand observations and study in English towns, he wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1845. Engels co-authored *The Communist Manifesto* with Marx in 1848, and he also wrote and co-authored (mostly with Marx) a number of other publications.

Later, Engels financially supported Marx, allowing him to do research and publish *Das Kapital*. Engels revised the second and third volumes of *Das Kapital* after Marx's death. Marx's notes on the *Theories of Surplus Value*, which were eventually published as the "fourth volume" of *Das Kapital*, were also organized by Engels. On the basis of Marx's anthropological study, he wrote *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* in 1884.

Following Marx's death, Engels spent the rest of his life revising Marx's unfinished volumes of *Das Kapital*. He did, however, make a major contribution in other areas. Using anthropological data from the period, Engels argued that family patterns evolved through time and that the notion of monogamous marriage arose from the need for men to dominate women in class society in order to ensure that their own offspring would inherit their property. He claimed that in the future, a communist society will empower people to make relationships decisions without regard to economic restrictions.

Despite co-finding most of Marx's works; Engels did not like to take credit, he even once said "Marx could very well have done without me. What Marx accomplished I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher, saw farther, and took a wider and quicker view than the rest of us. Marx was a genius"

The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State is one of the greatest illustrations of Engels' ideas on these subjects. Engels died of throat cancer in London on August 5, 1895, at the age of 74. His ashes were strewn off Beachy Head, near Eastbourne, after cremation at Woking Crematorium, as he had desired.



### 3. Reflection on Society & Class Struggle- Marxian Class Theory

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles... Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, and new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. (*Marx K. F., 1972*)

One of Karl Marx's greatest contribution to social sciences is his theory of class for the powerful sociological explanation of social conflicts it provides. Marx class Theory was driven from precedent philosophical schools such as Hegelianism and Anglo –French Political economics. His view of class was and class formation were based on the concept of “origin of income”.

This theory asserts that a person's placement in their society's class hierarchy is set according to their role they hold in the production process. It also states that a society's ideology or political consciousness even; is in fact determined by the class position. What is meant by class in this particular context; is a group of individuals sharing the same interests, on an economical level, and making group efforts to benefit these interests.

Classes are constituted by the relationship of groupings of individuals to the ownership of private property in the means of production. This yields a model of class relations which is basically dichotomous [since some own and others do not, some work and others live off the fruits of those who labour]: all class societies are built around a primary line of division between two antagonistic classes, one dominant and the other subordinate (*Giddens,1971*)

When it comes to Marxian class theory, the way the production process is structured determines the basis of all class construction within a society. Based on David Ricardo's theory of capitalism, Marx divided society into three categories, Rentier, Capitalist, and Worker.

Marx was aiming to change the perception of class according to the productive relations within society instead of social status, in other words, he was interested in production rather than distribution, and this change of thought resulted in the emergence of a radical concept of class.

In the Marxian analysis of society, the existence capitalist class, relies on the very existence of the proletariat, or vice –versa. This contradictory class relationship is what is known as class struggle, (Rummel, 1977)puts it:” class struggle or conflict, the active opposition of classes, is of course the meat of class theories. The utilization and importance of political power in the struggle is also recognized “. Simply put, fundamentally existing in opposition, classes opposing interests eventually lead to conflict. Hence, Marx’s social classes are defined by conflict, and the latter was the steering wheel pf history driving force.

However, this conflict cannot be achieved if the interest within the same social class are unified, which is known as consciousness. Class consciousness is a crucial aspect of the Marxist theory that defines the individual’s ability to distinguish their class allegiance.

the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it. ( *Giddens & David , Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates, 1982*)

#### 4. A Socio-Economic Direction towards Literature

*It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the*

*Contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.*

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.*

Marxist perspective towards a literary text requires a number of different approaches either from the author's or the dominant social group's or the reader's point of view. Marxist criticism encourages readers "to see the unhappy truths about material/historical reality, for whether or not authors intend it they are bound to represent socioeconomic inequities and ideological contradictions" (Lois, 2006)

Marx's social critique of capitalism and its development in western societies had a great impact on the entire sphere of social criticism. However, this impact had no intentions to stop, instead; it spread to literary circles in the early twentieth century and changed the game.

A Marxist literary critic usually tends to evaluate a literary text in terms of its being true to life and verisimilar descriptions of the situation in a given society. That is why realistic novels have always been the primary focus point of Marxist literary critics. Another option is that the critic may try to analyse the text in relation to its author's potential political and social objectivity and its reflections on the process of creation of the text. A third way of analysis depends on the possible ideological impositions of the politically or economically dominant groups on the reader via the author through the text. The question at this point is that the author may have aimed to propagandize some specific individuals' or group's ideologies as the accepted ones.

## 5. Chapter's Conclusion

This chapter has provided us with a comprehensive overview of Marxism, tracing its origins and evolution into a critical theory essential for conducting our study.

We began with a succinct exploration of Marxism's transformation from a political ideology to a potent analytical tool within literary criticism, laying the groundwork for our examination. Additionally, we delved into the adaptation of Marxist principles within the Victorian era, elucidating how the burgeoning industrial revolution in Britain catalyzed the expansion of the Marxist movement and reshaped societal perspectives.

Moreover, this segment of our inquiry illuminated the profound impact of Marxist theory on contemporary analyses of Victorian literature, offering insights into the shifting paradigms of literary interpretation.

In conclusion, given the Marxist approach's remarkable aptitude for dissecting and critiquing the capitalist ideologies pervasive in Victorian society, it emerges as not only highly relevant but indeed indispensable for conducting a thorough interpretation and gaining a profound social understanding of Oscar Wilde's seminal novel, "The Picture of Dorian Gray."

### **III. Practical Part:**

**B. Chapter Two: A Marxist Glance into Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray"**

## **Chapter's Content**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. A "Wilde" Marxist Side**
- 3. Clash of Classes: Conflict & Struggle**
- 4. Labour and Oppression, Behind the Scene of the Economic Play**
- 5. Manipulation and Deception, False Consciousness in Dorian Gray**
- 6. Split Between Appearance and Essence, Fetishism of Commodities**
- 7. Chapter's Conclusion**

## **1. Introduction:**

In Oscar Wilde's seminal work, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray,' the narrative unfurls against a richly textured backdrop where wealth and beauty wield formidable influence, sculpting the intricate tapestry of societal hierarchies. At its nucleus lies Dorian Gray, a mesmerizing epitome of privilege and exploitation, whose manipulation of figures like Sybil serves as a poignant commentary on the intricate dynamics of class and control.

Lord Henry, with his disconcertingly persuasive rhetoric, articulates a perspective on the bourgeoisie that reverberates with Marxist ideology, positing that their purported benevolence towards the impoverished primarily serves to fortify their own social standing. Throughout the expanse of the novel, resonances of wealth and inheritance reverberate, echoing Marxist critiques of capitalism and portraying success as inexorably tethered to one's financial stature and lineage.

This chapter endeavors to cast a luminous spotlight on the subtle Marxist undercurrents coursing through the veins of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.' Rather than striving to encapsulate the entirety of Wilde's opus, our focus lies in the meticulous dissection, profound analysis, and vivid exemplification of Marxist principles nestled within the text. Through this meticulously crafted lens, we embark on an expedition to unravel Wilde's searing critique of capitalist society, offering a nuanced expedition into the labyrinthine web of socioeconomic tensions meticulously interwoven into his narrative.



## 2. A “Wilde” Marxist Side

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde emerges as a multifaceted tapestry intricately interwoven with Marxist themes, deftly delineating the socio-economic landscape of Victorian England. From its inception, Wilde's narrative astutely identifies and scrutinizes the pervasive class struggles, rampant commodification, relentless exploitation, and haunting alienation prevalent in the era. At the heart of this narrative lies Dorian Gray, a veritable embodiment of the affluent bourgeois class, whose relentless pursuit of opulence and indulgence knows no bounds, heedless of the moral quagmires that ensue. His metamorphosis, catalysed by the pernicious influence of Lord Henry, a proponent of hedonism and cynicism, serves as a stark testament to the moral decay endemic in a society fixated on material gain and social status.

Wilde's narrative unfolds against the backdrop of an era marked by rapid industrialization and societal tumult, providing a rich tapestry for his scathing critique of bourgeois values. Amidst the inexorable march of progress, Wilde's incisive wit and acerbic observations lay bare the hollowness and superficiality inherent in the relentless pursuit of wealth and social standing.

Central to Wilde's critique is the symbolic portrayal of Dorian's eponymous portrait, which serves as a haunting reflection of his inner turmoil and moral degradation, juxtaposed against his perpetually unblemished exterior. This poignant symbolism, suffused with layers of meaning, underscores the stark disjunction between surface appearances and internal realities in a society consumed by the cult of image and perception.

A deep dive into secondary sources, including Donald Hall's erudite discourse on Marxist aesthetics and Cheryl Temple Herr's penetrating analysis of ideological underpinnings within the novel, enriches our comprehension of Wilde's nuanced engagement with Marxist thought. Through meticulous attention to detail and nuanced character development, Wilde crafts a narrative that transcends its temporal confines, resonating with audiences across generations.

While detractors may contend that Wilde's focus on individual moral quandaries obfuscates broader structural critiques, his portrayal of Dorian Gray as a product of his milieu suggests otherwise. By contextualizing Dorian's descent within the broader socio-economic landscape, Wilde underscores the systemic issues of capitalist exploitation and societal alienation endemic to Victorian society.

In summation, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" stands as an enduring masterpiece, offering a poignant Marxist interpretation of Victorian society. Through its incisive exploration of class struggles, commodification, and alienation, Wilde's magnum opus serves as a timeless reminder of the moral intricacies inherent in a world driven by materialism and excess.

### 3. Clash of Classes: Conflict & Struggle:

The British Empire was at its peak of glory during the Victorian Era. Back then, Class was often defined by wealth, income, and educational attainment, arguably it would also be a crucial factor one's positions of authority in a Victorian society.

However, it was a time of stark contrasts, especially where the affluent were immensely wealthy and the poor were terribly impoverished. Oscar Wilde was of great success in capturing the drastic social contrast of that time in his novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray". His novel was simply mirroring a society he lived in. where aristocracy was the only thing everyone aspired to reach.

Oscar Wilde illustrates the Victorian era's aristocratic-middle-class divide through the employment of important elements such as setting, structure and characters...etc.

A fine example of the said contradiction is as simple as the "weather". Through the novel we come to notice that the weather is usually lovely in the upper class society, but when Wilde describes life in the lower class, it is usually gloomy, chilly, and foggy. How convenient! Location was also an obvious element of contradiction and class struggle, as London East End was correlated with poverty, while the rich were located in the far artsy West End.

In several conversations between lord henry and Dorian Gray, the weather appears to be extremely pleasant, and thus, several conversations of theirs are held mostly in beautiful and natural settings such as gardens.

*"Lord Henry went out to the garden and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as if it had been wine" (Gray, 2011)*

In contrast to the horrific reality, that Wilde presents about Victorian societies' lower strata; we also witness what life was like in the upper class, where Dorian Gray is experiencing an interesting double life, and exploring the perks of being a rich and handsome gentle man in a time where social appearances are worth killing for.

“Had he gone to his aunt's, he would have been sure to have met Lord Goodbody there, and the whole conversation would have been about the feeding of the poor and the necessity for model lodging-houses” (Gray, 2011)

Just like any typical Victorian society, the aristocracy in Wilde's novel leads a sedentary lifestyle that frowns on any form of labor. as a result of living in a never ending cycle of doing nothing and nothingness, the “superstructure” in the novel only busy themselves with gossip and scandals of members amongst them. Scandal is a key concept in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, because as exciting as it is for the upper class society and welcomed in their gossip tea sessions. Scandals could ruin one's appearance in a society. The latter, could either make or break one's social life entirely. Marriage, relationships, and even friendships would make an extremely successful scandalous gossip sittings for society back in the Victorian era. Any defiance or interference with the social structure and hierarchy of members would make a scandalous news.

“The middle classes air their moral prejudices over their gross dinner-tables, and whisper about what they call the profligacies of their betters in order to try and pretend that they are in smart society and on intimate terms with the people they slander”. (Gray, 2011)

“Crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders” (Gray, 2011)

“I should fancy that the real tragedy of the poor is that they can afford nothing but self-denial.” (Gray, 2011)

It is quite apparent that the life of crime and humiliation was reserved to the “Base” in the novel. While a life of pride and pleasurable thrills, was reserved to the *Oh Powerful Mighty* - “Superstructure”.

A division in the novel is clear between the characters of Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hayward, Dorian Gray, and Sybil Vane's family, who represent the upper, middle, and lower classes. And their order was not to something defy. For a variety of reasons, James Vane is Dorian Gray's polar opposite. James is poor, while Dorian is wealthy, but James is also a product of class struggle. His father is supposed to be a well-connected gentleman, while his mother is a low-class actress.

Dorian believed that he was in love with Vane's sister; Sybille and proposed marriage right away. Their relationship however, was doomed to fail just like both their parents' did, due to the class gap between the couple. As soon as the upper class heard about their future union, and the old Scandalous rumours started playing their role in destroying such an innocent and holy union.

*“But think of Dorian's birth, and position, and wealth” (Gray, 2011)*

#### **4. Labour and Oppression, Behind the Scene of the Economic Play**

Sybil, bereft of substantial socioeconomic capital beyond the ethereal attributes of beauty and artistic acumen, embarked upon a quest for matrimonial alliance consonant with her lofty aspirations for social ascent. Enraptured by the opulence and refinement personified by the enigmatic Mr. Gray, she envisioned in him a conduit to the rarefied realms of societal privilege. Yet, her aspirations foundered upon the shoals of class stratification and economic exigency, the contours of her fate intricately woven into the fabric of societal determinism and inherited privilege.

Confronted with the inexorable strictures of her socioeconomic milieu, Sybil grappled with the stark dissonance between her aspirations for material prosperity and the dispiriting realities of economic precarity. Cast adrift in a sea of societal inequities and existential disillusionment, she confronted the specter of a life ensnared within the suffocating confines of poverty and social marginalization. Faced with the bleak prospect of a future devoid of material comfort and social esteem, she confronted the profound existential quandary of whether to persist in the Sisyphean struggle against entrenched structures of social stratification or to relinquish the mortal coil in a gesture of existential defiance.

Ironically, it was Dorian Gray's professed affection that catalyzed Sybil's precipitous descent into destitution and despair. His ostensibly magnanimous gestures, once heralded as harbingers of emancipation from socioeconomic constraints, paradoxically served as the harbinger of her tragic undoing. As Dorian's influence burgeoned, Sybil found herself ensnared within the labyrinthine coils of dependency and subjugation, her artistic agency corroded by the corrosive miasma of interpersonal dynamics and structural impediments to self-actualization. In relinquishing her creative autonomy upon the altar of romantic dalliance, she unwittingly consigned herself to the purgatorial limbo of unrequited love and shattered dreams, her nascent prospects for socioeconomic advancement irretrievably sundered.

Sybil's poignant narrative, emblematic of the vicissitudes of the human condition, serves as a poignant testament to the enduring resonance of Wilde's scathing critique of bourgeois mores and the oppressive strictures of capitalist hegemony. Her untimely demise, a poignant elegy to the ephemeral nature of human existence and the capricious vagaries of fortune, underscores the

systemic injustices endemic to a society predicated upon the arbitrary privileging of birthright over meritocracy, thereby elucidating the perennial relevance of Wilde's trenchant critique of bourgeois morality and the inexorable march of socioeconomic determinism.

#### **4.1. Division between bourgeoisie & Proletariat:**

In "The Picture of Dorian Gray," Oscar Wilde adeptly delineates the palpable division between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, thereby elucidating the entrenched disparities in wealth, power, and privilege that characterize Victorian society. Within the narrative framework, characters inhabit discernibly disparate social strata, with Dorian Gray and his affluent compatriots emblematic of the bourgeois elite, while figures such as James Vane and other working-class individuals epitomize the proletariat.

The interaction between these divergent social classes serves as a poignant commentary on the contrasting experiences and aspirations endemic to their respective stations. Dorian Gray, ensconced in opulence and privilege, revels in a life of luxury and indulgence, shielded from the harsh realities endured by the lower echelons of society. His pursuit of hedonistic pleasures and aesthetic gratification mirrors the prevailing decadence and moral decay prevalent among the bourgeois elite, emphasizing their detachment from the tribulations faced by the proletariat.

Conversely, characters like James Vane grapple with the relentless exigencies of economic subsistence, their existence marked by toil, deprivation, and limited avenues for advancement. Their interactions with Dorian and his affluent cohort serve as a poignant illustration of the gaping socio-economic chasm separating the privileged from the marginalized, underscoring the systemic inequities perpetuated by capitalist structures.

Integral to the narrative are several quotes that provide nuanced insights into the attitudes and perspectives of both bourgeois and proletarian characters. For instance, Dorian Gray's reflection that "*Society--civilized society, at least--is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment*

*of those who are both rich and fascinating*" (Gray, 2011) illuminates the proletariat's skepticism towards the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and the perpetuation of social norms that uphold their privilege. Similarly, Lord Henry's observation that *"Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions"* (Gray, 2011) underscores the bourgeois fixation on material success and social status, epitomizing their penchant for elitism and exclusivity.

These quotes from "The Picture of Dorian Gray" poignantly illustrate the socio-economic divide between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, offering profound insights into the prevailing attitudes and ideologies that underpin Victorian society.

Ultimately, Wilde's portrayal of the bourgeoisie and proletariat in "The Picture of Dorian Gray" serves as a trenchant critique of the social and economic inequities endemic to Victorian England. Through the juxtaposition of these two social classes and their interactions, Wilde exposes the callous indifference of the bourgeoisie towards the plight of the proletariat, revealing the corrosive effects of class-based oppression on individual lives and societal cohesion.

## **5. Manipulation and Deception; the False Consciousness in Dorian Gray:**

"In societies where cultural norms and conditioning prevail, individuals often find themselves passively accepting the status quo without critically questioning its validity. This phenomenon, referred to by Marxists as 'false consciousness,' occurs when people internalize the prevailing ideologies and norms of their society, even if those ideologies serve to perpetuate systems of inequality and injustice.

In 'The Picture of Dorian Gray,' Lord Henry Wotton emerges as a masterful manipulator, skillfully shaping Dorian Gray's perception of himself and the world around him. Throughout the narrative, Lord Henry employs persuasive rhetoric and cunning persuasion to mold Dorian's identity to suit his own desires. It becomes evident that Lord Henry is not merely content with influencing Dorian's actions; rather, he seeks to exert complete control over Dorian's agency and sense of self.



Lord Henry's fascination with Dorian's youthful allure and innocence is palpable. It is as if he sees in Dorian an embodiment of his own desires and aspirations, living vicariously through him. This parasitic relationship, wherein Lord Henry feeds off Dorian's vitality and charisma, underscores the power dynamics at play. Despite Dorian's initial resistance to Lord Henry's influence, he eventually succumbs to the allure of hedonism and indulgence, forsaking his moral compass in the pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification.

Dorian's journey from innocence to corruption serves as a poignant allegory for the ways in which individuals can be ensnared by the trappings of societal expectations and cultural conditioning. His gradual descent into moral decay is not merely a personal failing but a reflection of the larger systemic forces at play. Through Dorian's story, Oscar Wilde invites readers to contemplate the nature of identity, agency, and the insidious influence of external forces on individual autonomy.

In essence, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of succumbing to false consciousness and the perils of allowing others to dictate one's sense of self. It reminds us of the importance of critical thinking and self-awareness in navigating the complexities of society and resisting the allure of conformity."

*"They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. One knows their minds as easily as one knows their bonnets. One can always find them. There is no mystery in any of them"* (Gray, 2011)

*"You have a curious influence over me"* (Gray, 2011)

Upon delving into the intricacies of each chapter in "The Picture of Dorian Gray," a reader versed in Marxist theory will discern the evolution of Dorian Gray's character throughout the novel and explore the underlying causes of these transformations through the lens of ideology and false consciousness.

At the outset of the narrative, Dorian Gray is portrayed as a handsome and privileged yet inherently naive young man who remains oblivious to the societal privileges bestowed upon him. He exists in a state of blissful ignorance, untouched by the rigid social hierarchies that govern the world around him, content in his idyllic life on his country estate.

However, upon his return to London as a young adult and his introduction to Basil's studio, Dorian falls under the beguiling influence of Lord Henry. Despite Henry's outward facade of privilege and sophistication, his worldview is anything but gentle; he espouses a philosophy of hedonism and self-indulgence that captivates Dorian's impressionable mind.

Lord Henry skillfully manipulates Dorian, shaping his beliefs and attitudes to align with his own hedonistic worldview. He instills in Dorian the notion that individuals of their social standing are entitled to wield power over society and its inhabitants, encouraging him to embrace a life of excess and pleasure without regard for moral consequences.

As Dorian becomes increasingly ensnared by Lord Henry's teachings, his once-innocent mind becomes corrupted by the allure of hedonistic indulgence. He begins to adopt a way of thinking that is not inherently his own, surrendering his autonomy in the process. Lord Henry himself, albeit indirectly, acknowledges the detrimental nature of his influence on Dorian, hinting at the destructive consequences of his tutelage.

Ultimately, Dorian's descent into moral depravity serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of succumbing to the seductive allure of false consciousness and the loss of individual identity that accompanies it. Through Wilde's exploration of Dorian's transformation, readers are compelled to confront the pervasive influence of ideology and the imperative of retaining one's own sense of self in the face of external pressures.

*“There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray” (Gray, 2011)*

In turn, Dorian undergoes a profound transformation in character and ideology, leading him to wield his own form of manipulation upon Sybil Vane, the object of his affection—or so it initially appears. Sybil, an actress hailing from a lower social stratum, initially captures Dorian's heart despite their class disparity. However, as Dorian becomes entangled in a web of deceit and

debauchery, fueled by his own desires and the influence of his hedonistic mentor, Lord Henry, he callously abandons Sybil, pushing her to tragic ends.

Initially driven by a desire to win Sybil's love, Dorian's affections sour upon achieving his goal. Faced with newfound temptations and a burgeoning sense of entitlement, Dorian's regard for Sybil wanes, leading him to manipulate her emotions and ultimately discard her. This callous act, resulting in Sybil's untimely demise, underscores Dorian's descent into moral bankruptcy and the profound impact of false consciousness on his psyche.

In this light, it becomes evident that Dorian is not merely a passive victim of Lord Henry's influence and manipulation; rather, he actively embraces and perpetuates the very ideologies that corrupted his own mind. His betrayal of Sybil serves as a stark reminder of the corrosive effects of false consciousness and the willingness of individuals to sacrifice morality in pursuit of self-gratification.

Sybil Vane is not the sole victim of Dorian's manipulation. His once-close friend Basil Hallward, captivated by Dorian's allure, immortalizes him in a portrait that becomes emblematic of his charm and wealth. Basil's artistic masterpiece not only elevates Dorian's status within the upper echelons of society but also serves as a tool for Dorian to exert influence over others.

Through Basil's artistry, Dorian secures a privileged position within society, leveraging his charm and wealth to ensnare those around him. However, this newfound power comes at a grave cost, as Dorian's descent into moral depravity leaves a trail of destruction in its wake, tarnishing the lives of those who once held him in esteem.

In summary, Dorian Gray's manipulation of Sybil Vane and Basil Hallward serves as a chilling illustration of the pernicious influence of false consciousness and the moral decay it engenders. Wilde's exploration of these themes underscores the precarious nature of individual identity and the insidious allure of power and privilege.

*“His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that from time to time he affected, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies” (Gray, 2011)*

As Dorian becomes increasingly steeped in the radical ideologies espoused by Lord Henry, he evolves into a master manipulator, surpassing even Lord Henry in his ability to control and influence those around him. Through the dissemination of a false consciousness that transcends class boundaries, Dorian exerts a pervasive influence over both the upper and lower strata of society, wielding his carefully crafted image as a tool of manipulation.

Central to Dorian's manipulation is his adeptness at projecting a façade of innocence and virtue, concealing the depths of his depravity behind a mask of charm and refinement. Despite the heinous nature of his actions, Dorian maintains an outward appearance of respectability, allowing him to evade suspicion and continue his malevolent deeds unchecked.

Crucial to Dorian's ability to maintain his double life is the cursed portrait hidden away from prying eyes. This grotesque reflection of his true self serves as a repository for the ugliness and depravity that Dorian seeks to conceal from the world, enabling him to indulge in his darkest desires without fear of reprisal.

In this way, Dorian Gray emerges as a potent symbol of the insidious nature of false consciousness, capable of perpetuating a facade of respectability while harboring a dark and sinister reality beneath the surface. His mastery of manipulation and deceit serves as a chilling reminder of the dangers posed by unchecked power and the corrosive influence of ideology on individual morality.

*“He knew that he had tarnished himself, filled his mind with corruption and given horror to his fancy; that he had been an evil influence to others, and had experienced a terrible joy in being so; and that of the lives that had crossed his own, it had been the fairest and the most full of promise that he had brought to shame” (Gray, 2011)*

*“There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence” (Gray, 2011)*

Through the intricate portrayal of key characters and their interactions, Wilde adeptly illustrates the Marxist critique of Victorian society as it grapples with the pervasive influence of false consciousness and cultural manipulation, epitomized by the concept of 'Ideology.'

In 'The Picture of Dorian Gray,' Wilde delves into the complexities of a society mired in illusions and delusions, where individuals are ensnared by the dictates of false consciousness, perpetuating a system of oppression and exploitation. Through characters like Dorian Gray and Lord Henry, Wilde exposes the insidious nature of ideological hegemony, wherein dominant ideologies serve to maintain the status quo and perpetuate social hierarchies.

By illuminating the ways in which false consciousness shapes the perceptions and actions of his characters, Wilde offers a damning critique of Victorian society, revealing the profound impact of shared cultural manipulation on individual autonomy and moral integrity. Through his nuanced exploration of ideology and false consciousness, Wilde invites readers to confront the underlying power dynamics at play in society and interrogate the forces that shape their own beliefs and identities.

## **5. Split between Appearance & Essence, Fetishism of Commodities**

As human beings, we tend to categorize those around us, put them into boxes and make sure to profile them according to those boxes. Whether we admit it or not, we identify and analyse others based on the outer image they present. I believe that by doing so, we feel more comfortable fitting in with those who are most similar to us; our *own*. In simpler words we are judgmental creators, and the history of mankind has not disappointed in proving this belief.

Appearances are most definitely crucial for the human social classification process, but they will always remain deceiving. The outside does not always reflect what is on the inside. Looks are usually nothing but a mere external show. A show we were all taught to put on for the sole purpose of impressing others. In one way or the other, all human beings are raised to believe they should check in all the “right boxes” in order to pass the everlasting social examination.

Social standards back in the Victorian era, were no different. If anything, they were worse. Looks and appearances were what people thrive and strive to maintain. What people showed to society, was how they were qualified into the higher classes.

Through the chapters of his philosophical novel, Oscar Wilde manages to address the themes of reality and appearance. He was successful in doing so by using a variety of key elements in the story, the main one being the unmistakable portrait of Dorian Gray which the entire plot revolves around.

Although it goes against our overly judgmental human nature, many of us were told at one point or the other “*not to judge a book by its cover*”. Essence is of importance as well, and if we were to invest in discovering the reality around us we would thrive as a class, nation and as race.

Every person that comes in contact with Dorian eventually faces their downfall due to the confusion they are met with once they allow his looks deceive them into not noticing the lack of his morals, thus making it the central core of it.

I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose.

Dorian makes a wry observation about Basil’s preoccupation with beauty after seeing in the finished painting how Basil idealized Dorian’s own handsomeness. Dorian accuses Basil of preferring art to his friends, because pieces of art will never change or grow old. The painting has made Dorian realize both the power and the transient nature of appearances, and he becomes jealous of anything that will remain beautiful forever. His accusation of Basil reveals that Dorian projects his feelings onto others, assuming they feel as he does. Basil has made it clear that he values Dorian for more than his looks.

“I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything” (*Gray, 2011*)

“Sibyl is the only thing I care about. What is it to me where she came from? From her little head to her little feet, she is absolutely and entirely divine” (*Gray, 2011*)

Dorian describes his adoration for Sibyl Vane to Lord Henry. Dorian previously explained that the theater manager wanted to tell him about Sibyl’s past, but he was not interested in learning more about her. Sibyl herself attracts him and he regards her history with other people as irrelevant. His observations on her petite body and porcelain skin reveal that Dorian’s feelings for Sibyl focus on her appearance rather than her personality. Dorian not only values his own good looks, but those of others as well.

"Ah, then," said Lord Henry, rising to go, "then, my dear Dorian, you would have to fight for your victories. As it is, they are brought to you. No, you must keep your good looks. We live in an age that reads too much to be wise, and that thinks too much to be beautiful. We cannot spare you. And now you had better dress and drive down to the club. We are rather late, as it is." (Gray, 2011)

Dorian says she is beautiful, and he is not often wrong about things of that kind. Your portrait of him has quickened his appreciation of the personal appearance of other people. (Gray, 2011)

As Lord Henry tells Basil of Dorian's engagement to Sibyl, he explains what he knows of Sibyl from Dorian. Her appearance made a strong first impression with Dorian, a key piece of information that Lord Henry feels necessary to pass on to Basil. Although Dorian must have been aware of his good looks before Basil painted his portrait, he did not place much value in his appearance until seeing the portrait. As a result, he now sees beauty as the only thing worth having or noticing.

"And yet who, that knew anything about Life, would surrender the chance of remaining always young, however fantastic that chance might be, or with what fateful consequences it might be fraught?" (Gray, 2011)

Dorian sees what his actions have done to his soul in the name of youth and beauty. He considers praying to undo the link between his soul and his portrait. Yet here Dorian reveals that even though he has seen his soul's decline, he does not consider this consequence severe enough to try to alter the situation. His rationalization that anyone who "knew anything about Life" would make the same choice has an element of dramatic irony: Dorian's still-young life has not given him the experience to assess the cost of remaining young and beautiful.

## 6. Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Wilde's novel, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray,' serves as a nuanced expression of concealed discontentment with the societal norms and hierarchical structures of the Victorian era. At its core, the novel offers a profound exploration of Marxist theory, unveiling key insights into the underlying mechanisms of social organization.

Through the lens of Marxist analysis, Wilde delves into the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression that underpin Victorian society. By dissecting the complexities of class struggle and false consciousness, the novel exposes the inherent contradictions and injustices embedded within the prevailing social order.

In doing so, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' sheds light on the fundamental tenets of Marxist theory, illuminating the ways in which societal structures and cultural norms shape individual identities and perpetuate inequality. Through Wilde's astute narrative, readers are invited to grapple with the enduring relevance of Marxist critique and its implications for understanding social organization and change.



## IV. General Conclusion:

Central to the aim of this inquiry was the proposition of an alternative Marxist reading of “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” departing from traditional aesthetic interpretations to underscore the latent Marxist themes woven into Wilde’s narrative fabric.

To embark upon this endeavor, a meticulous examination commenced, contextualizing the investigation within the framework of Marxist economic and political theory. Subsequently, the inquiry delved into the rich terrain of Marxist literary theory, providing a robust analytical lens through which to scrutinize Wilde's masterpiece.

The characters of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry emerged as focal points of analysis, their wielded power and manipulation serving as conduits for the exploration of Marxian concepts such as class conflict, ideology, and oppression. Through their actions and interactions, the narrative subtly exposes the inherent contradictions and injustices entrenched within Victorian society, rendering it a compelling subject for Marxist critique.

Moreover, the inquiry postulated that Victorian authors, disillusioned with the socio-economic norms of their era, sought innovative avenues to articulate their discontent and advocate for societal transformation. In this light, “The Picture of Dorian Gray” stands as a testament to Wilde's subversive commentary on the prevailing power structures and cultural norms of his time.

Upon conducting this rigorous investigation, it becomes evident that a Marxist interpretation of Wilde's work not only offers valuable insights into the complexities of societal dynamics but also serves as a potent medium for conveying notions of freedom and social justice. Through the lens of Marxism, Wilde's narrative transcends its aesthetic trappings, assuming a profound significance as a critique of the status quo and a call to action for societal change.

In conclusion, this inquiry underscores the enduring relevance of Marxist analysis in illuminating the intricate interplay between power, ideology, and social organization. By engaging with “The Picture of Dorian Gray” through a Marxist lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of literature as a tool for interrogating and reshaping the contours of society.

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