

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
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THE ART OF ANDROGYNY: ANDRO IN DORIAN, GYNE IN GRAY

PORTO ALEGRE

2018

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

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PORTO ALEGRE

2018

CIP - Catalogação na Publicação

Santos, Felipe Ezekiel

THE ART OF ANDROGYNY: ANDRO IN DORIAN, GYNE IN GRAY

Felipe Ezekiel Santos -- 2018.

50 f.

Orientadora: Sandra Sirangelo Maggio.

Trabalho de conclusão de curso (Graduação) -- Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Instituto de Letras, Licenciatura em Letras: Língua Inglesa e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, Porto Alegre, BR-RS, 2018.

1. Oscar Wilde. 2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 3. Androgyny 4. Dandyism. 5. Gender studies. 6. Literary criticism. I. Maggio, Sandra Sirangelo, orient. II. Título.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I never thought I would write this much on Literature, let alone that I would do it of my own free will. Up to a year ago or so, I was a self-professed Linguistics kid (as if Literature and Linguistics stood that far apart from each other), but life never fails to surprise us—and here I am. I suppose I owe this overturn to the inspiring knowledge of professors Sandra Maggio, whose passion for what she studies and teaches can touch the dullest of the hearts; and Rita Schmidt, who stayed for a short time working in the undergraduate degree programs after I joined UFRGS but long enough to awaken the other face of my sense of humanity, which is the literary. Thank you for being a living proof that any subject can turn out amazing if by the hands of the right teachers. You inspire me.

And of course I could not have done without my family's support because not a single time did they try to dissuade me from sticking to studying languages, in spite of the looked-down-on status of this field of study in Brazil. As an example of such support, my mom and I have always been great companions; still she did not oppose my decision to leave her in my hometown to study at UFRGS. My father has also supported me throughout my stay in Porto Alegre, so I am grateful to him as well. My beloved sister has also served as an example of dedication and effort to me, so she, too, is to be remembered as one of those who motivated me. My uncle and my aunt received me wholeheartedly in their home in Porto Alegre, and I could never have accomplished what I accomplished without them housing me.

Over the semesters, I also got to know some cool people who I know will remain my good friends for the rest of my life. Joice, Nathalie and Sara, especially, you helped me through the whole thing and I cannot really see myself getting here without the helping-hand that the three of you always gave me. Whenever I felt too lost, you guys were there. Thank you.

I love you all.

***“Come to me
With all your subtext and fantasy
Just do that thing that you do
In a perverse hue***

***Lovers' kites
Are flown on beaches for public sight
The color palette you choose
Can profit you***

***A hybrid can withstand these things
My heart can beat with bricks and strings
My ARTPOP could mean anything”***

Lady Gaga, ARTPOP.

RESUMO

Esta monografia propõe uma leitura do único romance de Oscar Wilde, *O Retrato de Dorian Gray*, na qual é investigada a presença de elementos masculinos e femininos em seu protagonista homônimo. A elevação de seu eu em uma criatura sobrenaturalmente aliciante se prova possível através da seguinte precondição: o personagem deve viver em um estado mental livre dos limites das fronteiras morais e de gênero do século dezanove a fim de se apropriar das fruições que são tipicamente restritas aos papéis masculino ou feminino. Como a irreverência de *O Retrato de Dorian Gray* ainda seja muito tipicamente atribuída ao quão explicitamente o protagonista cede à corrupção moral, revelando a fragilidade do caráter humano e sua vaidade, o presente trabalho pretende apresentar ainda outra possível razão para a qualidade dissidente do livro: a androginia de Dorian Gray como um contribuinte para o seu poder de atração. Nesta monografia, portanto, eu analiso a caracterização de Dorian Gray especificamente em respeito a como a sua não-conformidade de gênero ocasiona na figura atraentemente afetada em que ele se torna. Como um conceito importante através do qual a discussão sobre não-conformidade de gênero aqui pode ser conduzida, a androginia é definida de antemão para que não se confunda com um comportamento necessariamente derivado de homossexualidade, dado que o personagem não demonstra tendências homossexuais. Dandismo, o movimento de que Dorian Gray demonstra ser membro, ou pelo menos um entusiasta, será também abordado porque mantém conexões interessantes com as concepções dominantes de masculinidade daqueles tempos.

Palavras-chave: 1. Oscar Wilde. 2. *O Retrato de Dorian Gray*. 3. Androginia. 4. Dandismo. 5. Estudos de gênero. 6. Crítica literária.

ABSTRACT

This monograph proposes that Oscar Wilde's only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* sustains the intermixing of the masculine and the feminine elements in its homonymous protagonist, whose elevation of the self into an otherworldly alluring creature proves feasible only if the following precondition is fulfilled: the character must live in a state of mind that is free from the constraints of the nineteenth century moral and gender boundaries, so as to appropriate assets that are typically restricted to either male or female roles. As *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s irreverence is still very typically attributed to how explicitly the protagonist indulges in moral corruption, revealing the frailty of the human character and its vanity, the present work aims at putting forward yet another possible reason for its dissident quality: the androgyny present in Dorian Gray as a contributor for his allure. In this monograph, I therefore analyze Dorian Gray's characterization in specific respect to how his gender-nonconformity occasions the enticingly effete figure that he comes to be. As an important concept through which the discussion on gender-nonconformity in here can be conducted, androgyny is defined beforehand so as not to be mistaken as a necessarily homosexuality-derivative behavior, given that the character does not show tendency towards homosexuality. Dandyism, the movement of which Dorian Gray shows signs of being a member, or at least an enthusiast, will also be approached because it holds interesting connections with the ruling conception of masculinity of that period.

Keywords: 1. Oscar Wilde. 2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 3. Androgyny. 4. Dandyism. 5. Gender studies. 6. Literary criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a widely studied novel that has been read from a variety of perspectives due to its controversial uniqueness, which, I believe, resides in the mindful nonchalance with which Oscar Wilde wrote it and in the themes that lie low in its narrative. As the birth of this monograph proves, I did not escape the curiosity that this 19th century book has been inspiring in its readers since the time of its first publication in 1890. I must say that, not surprisingly, what stood out the most to me was the discussion about the sort of beauty that Dorian Gray has. According to my reading of the book, on which this monograph is built on an essayistic note, the beauty that Dorian Gray possesses is not a predominantly virile beauty. Arbitrary as a concept of masculinity may be, I find it hard to believe that none of those who have ever read this novel has thought Dorian Gray not to fit the stereotype of the masculine man. As for the possible reasons for that to be, I dare to say it is very likely a result of Wilde's idiosyncrasies, which, to a certain extent and as I briefly illustrate in this monograph, turn out to be a blend of the aesthetical legacy of other important writers and artists. Because I have decided to investigate assumptions that are subjectively mine, the discussion I propose on Dorian Gray's androgyny is to be regarded as a product of my personal reading of the character and will thus be presented in a very essayist tone.

As I count on androgyny as a guiding concept for the directions that I intend to take while elaborating on my own ideas, the term must be given a clear definition in order to not mislead the reader. For that reason, I understand androgyny here as the co-occurrence of the masculine and the feminine in a single individual on the level of the psychological; and, on the level of the physical, in the case of the male, a mitigation of his phenotypical masculinity; which in Dorian Gray, to a certain extent, is enhanced in a virtual fashion by the externalization of his psychological makeup.

It seems important to say that, after conceptually explained, androgyny will be treated throughout the analysis as no more than an implication of the behavioral and physical (when these are observable) elements that are diagnosed as being masculine-deviant—or queer, for that matter. In other words, I will not often make explicit use of the

word *androgynous* to categorize Dorian Gray's gender ambiguous elements, as the term is, in spite of my trying to define it, still too elusive to resort to. In point of fact, the reason why I chose androgyny as both a key word and a key concept to orient the reading is precisely because it is broad enough to comprise the idea of a gender ambiguity. Gender ambiguity, in turn, is visible on a person's outer appearance either by how the body has been genetically programmed to indicate this uncertainty of the biological sex; or by how the person decides to deliberately express it through a combination of sex-mitigating symbols in their stylistic choices; or 2) is noticeable by how gender non-confirming one's psyche presents itself. At the same time, androgyny is a definition restrictive enough to exclude matters of sexual orientation and reproductive system arrangement, both of which are not the object of my investigation. The reader therefore must hold on to the whole idea evoked by the word, and not expect to encounter the word itself terming the respective phenomena.

As literarily syncretic as Wilde's work proves to be when we retrospectively find traces of his contemporaries and predecessors in the foundation of his aesthetical sense, the author nonetheless imprinted a mark that was undeniably his to his writing. He came to be perhaps the most prominent personality in terms of whimsicality of taste in the 19th century Literature, thereby also charging the term "dandy" with new epithets and meanings. This very verve of his is naturally the whimsical matter out of which Wilde created most of his characters, among whom the charming Dorian Gray that Literature has been fortunate to meet also proves to be a wielder of this fanciful DNA that is so particularly Wildean. He, far more trenchantly than any other character by Oscar Wilde, aims at making life's full beauty potential come true—on himself.

However, as an attentive reader would probably wonder throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there seems to be more to the characterization of the novel's eponymous protagonist than what the mere unfolding of the events in the story unveils. Based on that premise, the following questions arose to me, thus compelling me to write this monograph: how is it possible to verify some uncanniness in the character's beauty? And that is finally to ask: to what extent can Dorian Gray be superhumanly and artistically alluring without a deviance from the ruling concept of masculinity of the 19th century?

Aiming at answering these questions, I rely predominantly on Geyer's (2012) study, which is yet another attempt at extracting the image of the androgyne from the persona of Dorian Gray, but that does so mainly by outlining the social and literary conditions under

which Wilde wrote the novel. Differently from Geyer, however, I seek to fulfill my goal by centering the text in my examination, and turning to historical records only when I feel it to be of great contributive and complementary value. I also bring a minor portion of Jung's essay "The Persona as Segment of the Collective Psyche" (1966), for, aside from the fact that he was the one who scientifically coined the term "persona" as we know it today, Jung's concept of "inflation" serves to explain Dorian Gray's dehumanization. In addition, dandyism, as a gender-bending stylistic and aesthetical philosophy of the 19th century, is in this work revisited through the voices of Charles Baudelaire and Barbey D'Aurevilly, two notable names in the dandiacal scene. Finally, I believe it is important to say beforehand that these, although accounting for the greater part of the theoretical background to this monograph, are not to be central throughout the discussion as they merely hold, as I said, authority supportive value. The ultimate goal is to place the novel's protagonist within the scope of gender studies by distilling his persona into a figure of diffracted gender: an androgyne.

Since my reading on the novel, the reading that gave the purpose to the present work, is one that understands both the beauty and, by extension, the power of attraction of Dorian Gray to be due to his demasculinization, his characterization will therefore be analyzed in respect to his ultra-romantic mind and an emphatic equation of him with Hellenic young figures, such as Narcissus, that symbolize youth as much as they promote it. In this monograph, I break these two aspects down to their minor constituents, investigating how all of them come together to create the beautiful in Dorian Gray. For such purpose, in the first chapter, "On Androgyny", I do a brief and selective overview on how androgyny has been conceptualized in Literature in order to give the reader a better idea about similar and mutually complementary understandings of the term, which can still be elusive. In the end of the chapter, as a wrap-up closure to it, I give the term "androgyny" my own definition. Following this definition, I open a new, two-sectioned chapter entitled "Dorian Gray and Art come Together", which shifts the discussion to how Dorian Gray's beauty emulates art's beauty as well as covers the character's desire for the actualization of art's artificiality, both of which aspects represent the onset of his "dehumanization" and subsequent transmuting into an otherworldly creature. Afterwards, in the third chapter, "The Aspiring Gentleman: Looking Through Dorian Gray's Dandiacal Pose", which consists of three sections, I scrutinize Dorian Gray's psychological makeup with respect to his ultra-

romantic mind, all in light of dandyism, which, as I will show, foregrounds an artistic and stylistic philosophy that works against the ruling conception of masculinity of the 19th century. To keep in mind that the novel is pervaded by the philosophical propositions of dandyism is also important for the analysis. That is because dandyism underscores the actualization of beauty in life in all possible ways, occasioning, though secondarily, the dandy's preoccupation with his own appearance and aesthetical presentation, which consequently lends him the condition of object of admiration and eventually even desire. Particularly in the third section, I propose a conflation between Dorian Gray's dandyism and his narcissistic youth, two elements that add to each other and together result in a product that is in itself the source of Dorian Gray's allure. The final part, "Youth as a Masculinity-Assuaging Tool", is a subsection of the last section of the last chapter. There, I explore the topicality of youth in the novel and how, while in Dorian Gray, it intertextually echoes the image of the effete youth from other classics such as Plato Comicus's, Ovid's and Shakespeare's.

All of that settled, I finally make it clear here that this work is to be taken as an experimental attempt at understanding the underlying mechanisms of characterization that may sometimes hint at gender-nonconformity. For that reason, where my writing intonation may seem to be trying to proselytize for my own perception of the novel, I am most likely enjoying the analytical experience of essaying, as I believe one should only develop such a long academic endeavor if genuine interest for the topic is what moves them to do so.

Lastly, if this monograph happens to reach out for the greater setting from the academic space, I hope to be reinforcing the *Zeitgeist* of my time, which has been voicing the importance of gender studies far more vehemently than any other age has ever done. If it turns out differently, then I hope this work will serve the purpose of never letting the discussion on Oscar Wilde's genius to peter out in the academic environment, for he has been as bravely dissident a figure as some scholars would like to be, but are not, for the lack of an inspirational personality. After all, some geniuses, if intimidated by their own unsettling ideas, may feel as though they should keep their controversies to themselves. However, as Oscar Wilde himself proposed by his queerness, certain thinking-galvanizing controversies may be what an age of crystallized social malaises needs the most.

1. ON ANDROGYNY

Before effectively plunging into the discussion on the construction of the persona of Dorian Gray, it seems reasonable to familiarize the reader with the concept of androgyny by both providing him or her with a little of background regarding how it has appeared throughout Literature, and delimiting the term myself. In this chapter, then, I look through more than one sort of Literature in which androgyny has been addressed and given approximate definitions so as to clarify as much as possible what it comes to be. It is not until the end of the chapter, however, that I give the definition of androgyny my own terms and restrictions.

Once the concept has been demystified as well as disambiguated, we can more comfortably move on to a reading of Dorian Gray's literary persona, wherein the idea of androgyny will run in the background of our analysis of the character. That is, the word androgyny itself will not be brought up all the time to the text as an explicit term as that would mean nothing more than an anxiety to label the character at all costs, which would somehow reduce our perspectives about his behavior. Instead, the concept must be bore in mind throughout the discussion that follows this chapter in case we feel the need of a term that lexically defines the gender duality of Wilde's character whenever and wherever it is verified.

1.1 Androgyny in Literature

The first records of gender studies being incorporated into Academia as actual courses date back to the early 1980s. (MALTI-DOUGLAS, 2007, p. 540) Because this field of study is relatively new within the academic sphere, numerous public figures who managed to engrave their names in history through their contribution for the development of either art or science before gender studies achieved their current scientific status have not had their remarkable deeds looked at from a perspective of gender. That may have

caused the literary inventiveness of a few writers to be miscredited to an incoherent set of reasons, which sometimes even reduced their works to well-knitted nets of exquisite writing skills or valued their ability to revisit over-addressed themes. That is not to say that gender-related conflicts had not emerged as a topic throughout literature before higher education institutions recognized them as an academic field of study, but rather that they had hardly ever been given as much attention by the literary theory. Virginia Woolf, nonetheless, is often regarded as the one writer in modern literature to have chiefly raised awareness of the conflation of the male and female characteristics into a single person in *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). Both the British author's and feminist American writer Adrienne Rich's "call for women's revisions of literary texts, and history as well, has galvanized a generation of feminist authors to reply with texts of their own" (PULLOCK, 2001, p. 9)—a move that certainly stirred literary theory in regards to its social preoccupations.

The Picture of Dorian Gray, in turn, although a novel in which gender-related motifs are neither central nor ever made explicit, does feature references that are inextricably associated to the symbolization of gender, or, for that matter, genderlessness; such as attested by the nearly pervasive equation of Dorian Gray with Greek figures, who often allude to lust and thus issue sexuality and gender. Being possible to spot such recurrence within the novel is what allows the latter to be placed alongside other literary works, such as Virginia Woolf's, that propound gender to be a relevant foundation for the complexity of character.

1.2 Androgyny Conceptualized

The notion of androgyny is still very broad in the sense that it is often filled with a plethora of images and definitions. In his Philosophy doctoral dissertation, Dietmar Geyer (2012) reaches out to Francette Pacteau to find support for his explanation that "'androgyné' is an elusive abstract term often defying definition" and that "it is up to the individual what he/she perceives as androgynous and what qualities can be associated with him/her". The same relevance that Geyer attaches to the differentiation between androgyny and hermaphroditism emerges for this paper, as, according to the author:

Today, both terms are often confused with one another, which has to do with the fact that in former times they were used interchangeably. In fact, whereas 'androgyny' relates to someone's psychological make-up, 'hermaphroditism' describes the genetic and physical appearance of an individual who, for example, to a certain degree displays both male and female genitalia. (GEYER, 2012, p. 4)

C. G. Jung was finally one of the most prominent professionals in the area of analytic psychology for whom androgyny came to be the ideal psychic configuration of the mind. According to the Jungian view of the psyche, the human mind carries within itself a dual sexual identity, meaning that, regardless of which biological sex the person belongs to, his or her psyche originally contains both the masculine and the feminine. That is, the human being is inherently androgynous on a psychological level, but will, by tradition and therefore most often than not, take on the role that he or she is physically born to. In great consonance with such a Jungian view, androgyny was then adopted by feminists such as Carolyn Heilbrun as part of what they label as the ideal individual. Particularly in her book *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973), she defends that the very salvation of the humankind would be a shift from the polarization of the sexes, under which the masculine and the feminine have been, and still are, set wide apart, to a freedom of choice that allowed people to decide what individual role and mode of behavior best suits them.

Similarly, in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), it is possible to see the narrator's understanding of the coexistence of the sexes in each individual, which is systematically expressed in the passage: "Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above." (WOOLF, 2014, p. 124) In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf presents the idea of androgyny as being the ultimate state that the mind should ideally reach.

Analogously, British Romanticism, as M.H. Abrams indirectly illustrates in his book *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1972) of literary criticism, was permeated by an ideology that claimed for the reunion of the self, which was perceived to be, at the time, fragmented and dissociated. The author speaks in favor of such repair of the mankind by saying that the

man, who was once well, is now ill, and...[T]he core of the modern malaise lies in the fragmentation, dissociation, estrangement, or (in the most highly charged of these parallel terms) “alienation.” The individual (so runs the familiar analysis) has become radically split in three main aspects. He is divided within himself, he is divided from other men, and he is divided from his environment; his only hope for recovery (for those writers who hold out hope) is to find the way to a reintegration which will restore his unity with himself, his community with his fellow men, and his companionability with an alien and hostile outer world. (ABRAMS, 1972, p. 145)

In proposing that “the core of the modern malaise” is the pulverization of the man in every possible sense and, in turn, into every possible direction, Abrams, albeit inadvertently, allows for the diagnosis of the equally ill-advised gender binarism as an infirmity of the soul. Androgyny, when examined under such perspective, can thus be understood as one of the means through which both men and women can accomplish in themselves the ideal reintegration of the self. If so, then the androgyne represents a completion that enables the individual to not only enjoy freedom, but also to retrieve all that has been lost in the process of his or her fragmentation: his or her connection to everything that is both human and non-human, including nature, spirituality and all that is alien.

Noteworthy is that Victorian essayist Walter Pater’s *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* had significant impact on Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on what concerns its—as what the Victorian morality would most likely claim the thing to be—transgressiveness. Wilde would speak of *The Renaissance* as nothing less than “the golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty.” (KIMBALL, 1995) The most famous essay in the book, as claims Michael Kaylor (2003), is *Leonardo da Vinci*, in which Pater praises da Vinci for his “unique temperament”, attributing to it the frequent portrayal that the painter used to do of characters of “beauty” and “doubtful sex”—from which can be inferred that, for Pater, da Vinci’s genius was also related to his predisposition to androgynous portraiture. Needless to say, Wilde was a dandy, and that alone is something that amounts to the idea of the feminine man. When they encountered at Oxford, Wilde found Pater to be a great source for his own inspiration—precisely the man who had been, in Victorian times, so much of a forerunner as to write about the beauty that he found in the ambiguous sex of some of the paintings by Leonardo da Vinci.

The influence of Pater's book on Wilde's only novel was such that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* even forwards some of its passages, albeit in a paraphrase-like fashion. In the most controversial section of *The Renaissance*, "Conclusion", Pater wrote:

Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood or passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us – for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. (PATER, 1912, p. 152)

When turning Dorian Gray's thoughts into the words of the narrator, Wilde wrote: "Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. [...] it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment." (WILDE, 2009, p. 163)

Furthermore, in "Leonardo da Vinci", Pater highlights the "refined and graceful mystery" of da Vinci's art. He also underlines the womanly beauty of the painter's work St. John the Baptist of the Louvre, and does so with a fanciful overtone in his language— all the opulent enthusiasm that could have only been normally attributed to a woman, but not to a norm-fitting Victorian man. Such brief apprehension of Walter's artistic sense and perception clarifies where *The Picture of Dorian Gray* mimics his artistic orientation. Simply put, Walter was a great admirer of da Vinci's flair, which he says himself was based on "curiosity and the desire of beauty—[and] these are [were] the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius; curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace." Curiosity that had possibly gone so far as to lead Leonardo to depict men in a womanly way, as seen in St. John the Baptist of the Louvre. According to Geyer (2012),

[t]he increasing interest of the authors of the Decadence in individuals on the fringes of society together with their zeal of giving an exact insight into their souls resulted in the first psychological insights into stigmatized characters in nineteenth century literature. (GEYER, 2012, p. 14-15)

With particular attention to Oscar Wilde, Geyer suggests that he was rather possibly dominated by the same interest. He also says that other authors whose works portrayed androgynous characters who displayed sexually deviant behavior had heavily influenced Oscar Wilde.

Moreover, the sexual stereotypes of that time, as Bram Dijkstra (1974) reminds, were so inherently an outcome of the rise of bourgeois industrial society that the androgyne began to appear as a complete dissident idea that meant to confront the economic settlement that used to polarize the sexes. In her own words, she says that androgyny presented itself as “the culmination of a slowly developing, ideologically based, counteroffensive among artists against the economic motivations behind the sexual stereotypes which had become established in the social environment with the rise of bourgeois industrial society.” According to Şafak Horzum (2016), until the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, Sentimentalism remained operating in British society as a moral philosophical movement, with its middle-class’s prompt to judge, approve and mainly disapprove the upper classes’ moral and social conduct. Such movement had as its foundation the distinction between two spheres, as Horzum puts: “public sphere for men as the domain of prestige, reputation and importance and private sphere for women as the realm of affability, matrimony, and chastity.” Complementing this, John Ruskin (1865) goes in more detail into the differentiation between these two spheres by averring that

[t]he man’s power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman’s power is for rule, not for battle, — and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. (RUSKIN, 1865, p. 146-147)

At that time, Oscar Wilde’s thinking, mainly conveyed through writing, confronted the nineteenth-century mindset so piercingly that this polarized gender arrangement, too, was unavoidably dragged under his heterodoxy-natured countering. In reality, whatever had been socially constructed until then was so potentially arguable due to its arbitrariness that it could be rejected just as vehemently by the very enthusiasts of subversion: the decadent figures. Wilde, for one, might have felt that the gender restraints of his time were so oppressively reductive for his expansive self that he found a way to work against that by assigning femininity to men as imagined by him, thereby pivoting away from another nearly crystallized social construct, as he would often do. After all,

[i]n a society in which gender identities were discernibly polarised by defining masculinity in relation to its artificially constructed others and ideologically formulated ideals, the concept of decadence emerged and was associated with the avant-garde men like Oscar Wilde who caused a rupture to middle-class value system. (HORZUM, 2016, p. 76)

Therefore, in this monograph specifically, the concept of androgyny will be dealt with as signifying the co-occurrence of the masculine and the feminine in a single individual on the level of the psychological; and, on the level of the physical, in the case of the male, a mitigation of his phenotypical masculinity; which in Dorian Gray, to a certain extent, is enhanced in a virtual fashion by the externalization of his psychological makeup. Finally, let it be clear that I will stand by the distinction between androgyny and hermaphroditism, for though androgyny can be verified in the arrangement of a person's looks as an ambiguity of sex, the term does not refer to the concomitant existence of reproductive organs of both sexes in an individual, as does hermaphroditism.

2. DORIAN GRAY AND ART COME TOGETHER

In this chapter and in the following, “The Aspiring Gentleman: looking through Dorian Gray’s dandiacal pose”, I narrow the scope of the discussion down to an analysis that specifically concentrates on the literary persona of Oscar Wilde’s character Dorian Gray. This discussion takes into account the factors that contribute for the culmination of Dorian into the supernaturally endearing young lad whose allure, as I will also illustratively demonstrate, is capable of overriding heterosexual-restricted dynamics of attraction.

Each of the subsequent sections will cover a specific aspect of Dorian’s persona and his relations to the others around him. The first section, “Not so much a man, but a work of art”, consists of an analytical reading that brings forth the artwork qualities of Dorian Gray and their implications in the relationship between him and the other two main characters, namely Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. The second section, “The search of artificiality begets a beguiling Dorian Gray”, focuses on the outset of an obsession of the character with the artificiality of the artistic realm, which causes his worldliness to morph into otherworldliness as a consequence of his sense of humanity being shut down. This particular section will ground the verification of an ultra-romantic mind that, as such, does not fit in the idiosyncratic masculinity standards of the 19th century, thus establishing a correlation between both his dehumanization and demasculinization and his power of attraction.

Throughout the chapter, and only where it proves to be pertinent, I will be mindful as to bring into the analysis the explicit causal relationship between the topic being discussed and the gender subversion it occasions, as what underlies the whole analysis is, in fact, an attempt at spotting where and how Dorian Gray comes to be gender non-conforming and androgynous.

2.1 Not So Much a Man, But a Work of Art

The depiction of oil-on-canvas Dorian Gray fatally as the only true expression of Basil Hallward's innermost art, the only product of his artistic genius that successfully conveys everything that it is able and supposed to convey—such depiction, right in the first scenes of the novel, rushes to direct the reader's initial idea of Dorian Gray towards an early, intended preconception, even before the character makes his first appearance: far beyond being merely a beautiful boy brimming with youth, Dorian Gray is art himself, and, as such, is above his own human condition:

He is all my art to me now. I sometimes think, Harry, that there are only two eras of any importance in the history of the world. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinoüs was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me. (WILDE, 2009, p. 26)

Antinoüs, the young Greek from Bithynia and to whom his lover, the Roman emperor Hadrian, had been so passionately devoted, was of such an extraordinary beauty that he was posthumously replicated into statues of marble and ordered to be deified under the requirements of Hadrian. It seems not to be incidentally that Basil, most likely aware of that, then equals the face of Antinoüs—who, he also remarks, later became parameter for the making of Greek statues—with the face of Dorian Gray in degree of exquisiteness. If Basil's judgements are of such credibility, then the gracefulness of appearance of Dorian Gray would presumably be, at the time of Antinoüs, just as much representative of a deity. In attempting at making his perception of his sitter even more sensible to Lord Henry Wotton, the painter says:

He has stood as Paris in dainty armor, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms, he has sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, looking into the green, turbid Nile. He has leaned over the still pool of some Greek woodland, and seen in the water's silent silver the wonder of his own beauty. (WILDE, 2009, p. 26-27)

Propelled almost as though by blind adoration of the young lad's countenance—for there seems to be no other word that could better identify his passionate description than

adoration, and no better adjective to accompany such a word than blind—, Basil strips himself of the gender expectations of his time to wholeheartedly praise Dorian Gray by borrowing the consecration of the ancient Greek and lending it to him—him who, by Basil's words, attains the status of a living canon. Here, great relevance has to be given to the fact that, if Basil wants to commit to adoring Gray in all of the boy's delightful looks and personality, he has to drift away from the Victorian expectations of what the commendable male should behave like. Because the epitome of the good Victorian man was one that had a body that signified "society's need for order and progress, as well as middle-class virtues such as self-control and moderation" (MOSSE, 1996, p. 9), and because "[t]he common themes in these corporeal representations, then, stood for sobriety and solidity" (HORZUM, 2016, p. 75), Basil, as a man of that time, was expected to do everything but to stumble upon his own feelings, even less so upon feelings of passionate devotion to another man.

However, the uncanny power that Dorian Gray's beauty exerts over Basil is nowhere that of an ordinary being, for the artist, as he admits, *strangely* loses control over his own words in his presence: "Of course I flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said. I give myself away." (WILDE, 2009, p. 29) This vacillating attitude of his can be interpreted in two possible ways, the first seeming less likely to me than the second, however: he either has great tendencies towards homoaffectivity, though that would be too flimsy a reasoning as it lacks supportive indications that are substantial enough throughout the novel; or he is faced with a creature under whose supernatural beauty's influence he has no self-control. The second possibility sounds much more plausible in that Basil is not the only man who helplessly falls for Dorian Gray's extraordinary grace. That is where and how Dorian Gray's androgynous condition, whose sexless beauty is capable of appealing to both the sexes, makes itself sensible.

When Wotton is finally introduced to Gray, all in spite of Hallward's being against that, the narrator then confirms that he does agree with Hallward on finding him to be of an extraordinary attractiveness. In the excerpt that follows, the description made by the narrator reflects the almost passionate impressiveness with which Lord Henry Wotton becomes appreciative of the boy:

Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was

something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. He was made to be worshipped. (WILDE, 2009, p. 35-36)

Upon stepping up on the dais where he will sit for Basil, Dorian Gray is compared to a “young Greek martyr” by the narrator. Once more, Gray is referred to as more than a young boy of unquestionable beauty—he is compared to a God’s witness, whose duty was, according to Christianity, to bring His Word. (Cf. HASSETT, 2017)

Dorian Gray frowned and turned his head away. He could not help liking the tall, graceful young man who was standing by him. His romantic olive-colored face and worn expression interested him. There was something in his low, languid voice that was absolutely fascinating. His cool, white, flower-like hands, even, had a curious charm. They moved, as he spoke, like music, and seemed to have a language of their own. But he felt afraid of him, and ashamed of being afraid. Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself? He had known Basil Hallward for months, but the friendship between them had never altered him. Suddenly there had come some one across his life who seemed to have disclosed to him life's mystery. And, yet, what was there to be afraid of? He was not a school-boy, or a girl. It was absurd to be frightened. (WILDE, 2009, p. 43)

The passage above gives more away than it actually means to, as the description made of Lord Henry Wotton brings forth the man's traits to which Dorian Gray's perception is firstly drawn to, as well as depicts how Dorian perceives such traits to be. The word choice suggests that Henry pleases Dorian not only intellectually, but now also aesthetically: “romantic olive-colored face,” “absolutely fascinating low, languid voice,” “charming cool, white, flower-like hands” that move “like music” and “have a language of their own;”—everything in his body has an imagistic conveyance, artistic almost, and appeals to Dorian's senses. In fact, the way the young lad sees Henry in this moment suggests that he already has an artistic predisposition of his own, a chord that Henry himself will deliberately touch in order to awaken in Dorian a desire for, as he will call it, a new hedonism. Defeyt's account of Wilde's dandyism speaks of the writer's effeminate self, thus linking his artistic preoccupations with his femininity—similar to what can be seen embryonically in Dorian. After all, “[t]he androgen is the artistic sex par excellence” (DEFEYT, 2014, p. 176)

Interestingly, still in this scene, he inwardly confesses his fear of Henry but deems it shameful and “absurd,” thereby already failing to live up to the 19th century “framework” of manliness, according to which the man “must control his fears and his emotions”

(DEFEYT, 2014, p. 174). What is more: if only school-boys or girls are frightened by a man, then it is presumable that Dorian shares the same lack of virility as a school-boy, or, for that matter, the same absence of masculinity as a girl. This observation, possible to be made so soon in the novel, will serve greatly the analytical thread I will henceforth gradually elaborate on.

2.2 The Search of Artificiality Begets a Beguiling Dorian Gray

Related to the previous topic, which is the artistic as innately expressed in the person of Dorian Gray, this section proposes a brief, yet important, overview of an aspect that, in his character, paves the way for his transmuting into a “non-humane”: his ever-growing sexuality-detached interests that are, in sum, the search for artificialness in life. As I will later show by integrating to it a discussion focused on dandyism, this proves to be a prerequisite for his attaining the enticing status of an autotelic *objet d’art*.

Early in the first half of the novel, Dorian already displays signs of a tendency to hyperbolize ordinary situations of the common life into romantic events. Right before meeting Sibyl Vane, to whose art—and I stress that it is only her art—he is a devotee, Dorian is first drawn to the theater by a Jew and his account of it is as follows:

A hideous Jew, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond blazed in the centre of a soiled shirt. “Ave a box, my lord?” he said, when he saw me, and he took off his hat with an act of gorgeous servility. There was something about him, Harry, that amused me. He was such a monster. (WILDE, 2009, p. 64-65)

The charismatic façade of the Jew, which is typical to anyone who means to sell his or her product by means of amiability, is taken by Dorian as a display of spontaneous endearment. The young boy’s self-indulging nature, which had just received fundamental stimulus from Henry, starts to play out, advancing to condition his interpretation of the attitude of others towards him, so much so that he seems to be unable to distinguish between genuine endearment and feigned liking. Regardless whether in this specific scene the endearment of a strange in relation to Dorian is authentic or not, the amusement caused

by him in the young lad must be so because of the stranger's supposed "servility"; and not an ordinary type of servility, but a gorgeous one, and one that comes from a monster. It is only because of his romantic mind that he is able to paint everything with the due shade of romance—a habit of his that disregards gender, for everything and everyone can be a constituent of his picturesque world.

As the fervor of this increasingly idealizing penchant of his goes, Dorian then starts to project onto every ordinary thing in the real life a tint that augments what are mere anecdotes so greatly that they can be told as truly remarkable events of an extraordinary life. It is a thirst for the ideal that blinds him, but at the same time, this is so latent a desire that it becomes undeniable even to those who do not get to know him more than superficially. Dorian is then externally and visibly bound in his own passions that this, too, contributes for his charms.

In line with that perspective, it can also be conjectured that the fact that Dorian seeks in women the same aesthetical value as he found in Henry, which allows them to be transfigured into art by his eyes and the power of his imagination, is an indicator of a disinterest for anything that is purely fleshly in its foundation. He explains to Henry that

[o]rdinary women never appeal to one's imagination. 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 one of them. They ride in the Park in the morning, and chatter at tea-parties in the afternoon. They have their stereotyped smile, and their fashionable manner. They are quite obvious. But an actress! How different an actress is! Why didn't you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?' (WILDE, 2009, p. 68)

By emphasizing that women who do not overcome their plainness of mind have nothing to offer but the obviousness of their character, Dorian attests to his non-physical intentions towards the opposite sex—much like what also happens between him and his male counterparts—, for everything has to have a major intellectual or artistic end, which, paradoxically, is experience itself. The nature of his affection for Sibyl Vane is best observed when he answers Henry's question:

[...] tell me, what are your relations with Sibyl Vane?' - Dorian Gray leaped to his feet, with flushed cheeks and burning eyes.
'Harry, Sibyl Vane is sacred!'

‘It is only the sacred things that are worth touching, Dorian,’ said Lord Henry, with a strange touch of pathos in his voice. (WILDE, 2009, p. 69)

If his fondness for Henry is due to the mesmerizing mastery with which the young man “discloses life’s mystery” to him, his infatuation for Sibyl is a consequence of this new, fanciful way of ascertaining the flavors of the world; which disregards everything that is pleasant in a common way—under the penalty of falling into vulgarity—and values everything that, supposedly, is only accessible to the uncommonly refined intellect. “Harry, Sibyl Vane is sacred!” thus comes to signify that he does not take her for a woman whose lust and affection are primarily a desired reward given to her conqueror, but rather for a creature sanctified by her art and who is to be *properly* admired and loved artistically and artistically only. That is precisely why Dorian falls for Sibyl, because she has, first, foremost and above all else, her art to offer, and it is through her art that Dorian looks at her; he sees her art before he sees her. Far more assertive of that is how unwaveringly he answers Henry’s second question in the following part:

‘You can dine with me to-night, Dorian, can’t you?’
He shook his head. ‘To night she is Imogen,’ he answered, ‘and tomorrow night she will be Juliet.’
‘When is she Sibyl Vane?’
‘Never.’ (WILDE, 2009, p. 73)

When he goes on to elaborate on his encomium, the reasons he gives for the exhilaration she causes in him actually denounce the true nature of his feelings:

She is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual. You laugh, but I tell you she has genius. I love her, and I must make her love me. You, who know all the secrets of life, tell me how to charm Sibyl Vane to love me! I want to make Romeo jealous. I want the dead lovers of the world to hear our laughter, and grow sad. I want a breath of our passion to stir their dust into consciousness, to wake their ashes into pain. My God, Harry, how I worship her! (WILDE, 2009, p. 73)

“She is all the great heroines of the world in one”; “she is more than an individual”; “she has genius”—all predicates of a muse, or yet, if she can be all that and if “[t]here is nothing that art cannot express,” those can be understood as predicates of art, of which, therefore, Sibyl is potentially an embodiment. When Dorian goes up to Henry and Basil to

tell them about his being engaged to Sibyl, he once more speaks of her not as Sibyl, but as the Shakespearean female characters that so enthrall him:

I have been right, Basil, haven't I, to take my love out of poetry, and to find my wife in Shakespeare's plays? Lips that Shakespeare taught to speak have whispered their secret in my ear. I have had the arms of Rosalind around me, and kissed Juliet on the mouth.' (WILDE, 2009, p. 86)

She is an idol to Dorian Gray, not so much a potential love affair in the way a man typically regards a woman he falls for. An idol, for "how I [he] worship[s] her!" Upon witnessing her bad acting, however, all of his feelings for her die out, as though their living depended entirely on her art's quality, so much so that they would wither as soon as Sibyl failed to keep her characters alive. Following that perspective, it is possible to say that Dorian does not love Sibyl in her artless individuality—for she is just the medium through which the Shakespearean female characters come to life and manifest themselves—; but rather, he loves the *characters*:

Then he leaped up, and went to the door. 'Yes,' he cried, '*you have killed my love*. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were wonderful, because you had genius and intellect, because *you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art*. You have thrown it all away. [...] You are nothing to me now. [...] You don't know what you were to me, once. Why, once Oh, I can't bear to think of it! [...] You have spoiled the romance of my life. [...] What are you without your art? Nothing. [...] What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face.' (WILDE, 2009, p. 99-100, My emphasis)

Dorian's interests are ever purely artistic, so he is always searching for self-fulfillment in the fantasy that only art provides. Once Sibyl puts aside her theatrical self, she is no longer deserving of any type of feeling from him. As says Horzum, "[w]ith the idea that perfect form can only be found in art, but not in nature, a dandy seeks perfection in art and artificiality all the time." At this stage, to think of this behavior as obsession-derived would not be necessarily a hasty judgement, and, throughout the novel, Dorian will continue to live by this monolithic mindset fostered in him by Henry Wotton. Jung (1966) explains this trance of the hypnotized mind, naming it inflation, and says that "[i]t occurs whenever people are overpowered by knowledge or any new realization," (p. 156) and that it

has nothing to do with the kind of knowledge, but simply and solely with the fact that any new knowledge can so seize hold of a weak head that he no longer sees or hears anything else. He is hypnotized by it and instantly believes he has solved the riddle of the universe. (JUNG, 1966, p. 156)

From that, emerges the need for an inquiring and detailed look at the behavioral implications of this monomaniacal psychological makeup of his, according to which such aesthetical ideal summarizes what should be the true purpose of life. This being the case, I will now shift the focus to dandyism, which, at its best, maintained unquestionable relations with aestheticism in the 19th century, and perhaps even in the most unimaginable ways.

3. THE ASPIRING GENTLEMAN: LOOKING THROUGH DORIAN GRAY'S DANDIACAL POSE

As I have shown so far, from the moment he has “some secret chord” touched deep within himself by Henry’s words, Dorian decides to live for that to which he is introduced, and his character thus becomes fated to develop unidirectionally. In this chapter, I explain the congruencies between this new philosophy of life, which he lives out so dutifully, and dandyism, a stylistic conduct of the 19th century that, in the simplest terms, celebrates the autotelism of beauty.

In 1863, Charles Baudelaire, moved by great interest in dandyism, published an essay whose importance emerges so irrefutably even in present days for those who venture on understanding the true essence of what the French poet calls “this unwritten code that has molded so proud a brotherhood.” (p. 7) He further defines dandyism as follows:

It is, above all, the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions. It is a kind of cult of the ego which can still survive the pursuit of that form of happiness to be found in others, in woman for example; which can even survive what are called illusions. It is the pleasure of causing surprise in others, and the proud satisfaction of never showing any oneself. (BAUDELAIRE, 1995, p. 7)

These particular lines hold the very clues that are the core for the successful reading of Dorian Gray’s gender dissidence because they subscribe as a prerequisite for the dandy a deviance from social conventions; social conventions that, in the case in question, would actually hinder the completion of the observed phenomenon by which Dorian attains an iridescent gender identity. Furthermore, when we read the very last paragraph of D’Aurevilly’s famous essay, which celebrates George Bryan Brummell and dandyism alike, in light of the definition given by Baudelaire, which foregrounds provocativeness, the dandy does seem to follow a premise, which is to craft a persona that does not conform to the boundaries of 19th century masculinity:

Twofold and multiple natures, of an undecidedly sex, their Grace is heightened by their Power, their Power by their Grace; they are the hermaphrodites of History, not of Fable, and Alcibiades was their supreme type, among the most beautiful of the nations. (D'AUREVILLY, 1897, p. 141)

Spotting Dorian's dandiacal leanings is therefore of such importance inasmuch as dandyism operates as a platform for him to give in to this laxness of behavior. Only in the name of sheer hedonism, which by nature demands that the range of possibilities of experiences in life be expanded, can he dismiss social normativity; a normativity in whose absence his romantic mind can run as wild and free as it does in chapter IX: "How exquisite life had once been! How gorgeous in its pomp and decoration! Even to read of the luxury of the dead was wonderful." (WILDE, 2009, p. 172)

3.1 Dorian Gray and the Archetypal Dandy

When thinking of dandyism, one has to bear in mind that it was a prism of different manifestations, with the movement varying in its interpretation from partaker to partaker. Geyer (2012) makes a brief overview of the most popular types of dandy and names George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell as the "father of all dandies," an archetype of the movement who is considered a classic of the kind. Brummell, as the one whom writers on dandyism have often referred to as the prototypical dandy, offers just the essential dandiacal predicates necessary to assess Dorian Gray's own take on such lifestyle. He fulfills the "[o]ne important prerequisite for designating an individual a dandy," which is "that a dandy is free from any common ties that would link him to a certain definite background, i.e. family, milieu, social class and even gender." (GEYER, 2012, p. 121) Since Brummell had "neither a profession nor any attachments or obligations such as wife or children, it was hardly possible to place him in any social hierarchy." Max Beerbohm says that "[o]f rank, for its own sake, Mr. Brummell had no love. He patronized all his patrons. Even to the Regent his attitude was always that of a master in an art to one who is sincerely willing and anxious to learn from him." (BEERBOHM, 1922, p. 7)

Although Lord Henry Wotton's remarkable witty aloofness immediately makes him more resourceful a dandiacal study at a first sight, Dorian Gray's character development

observably works in favor of his progression towards a dandiacal pose of his own. Prior to Henry's conditioning of the young lad's conceptions about life, which will lead him to seek in everything *objets d'art* as part of his espousement of Henry's hedonistic philosophy of self-indulgement, Dorian is already an "associate member" of dandyism—that is, a potential dandy in everything that precedes his encounter with Henry. His parentage is mysterious and the only lights shed on it are too small to brighten the reader's idea about the in-family Dorian Gray, and yet it is only by the smallness of these lights that an overarching shadow can be cast on everything that constitutes his past. His orphanage signifies the disruption of the bonds that could tie him to his family lineage and therefore to any pre-birth social milieu, and so he is, in that sense, an outcast by definition.

Furthermore, there is the fact that Dorian shows a disposition to transit between classes, one that seems paradoxical in light of his overstated tendency to replicate in himself the refinement of taste that is so championed by the elites. His curiosity ignores the boundaries settled among the classes, for he goes in search of artistic pleasure in places, both virtual and physical, where members of the upper classes would hardly ever go—places of which the "third-rate theatre" where Sibyl works as an actress is an emblem. That makes it hard to pinpoint where exactly he stands in society, and that uncertainty is the first factor that approximates him with the archetype of dandy set up by Brummell.

In order for him to set himself an intellectual agenda and actually put its activities in practice, Dorian has to have not only time, but also financial backup. By inheriting all of his mother's capital, he does not have to commit to any professional obligation, thus being left with enough money to support all of his time spending. Resembling greatly what Adams (1992) wrote on Pater, Dorian is therefore "the aspiring gentleman" who "thus shades into the dandy."

Ellen Moers (1960) quotes Mrs. Gore, who, in her novel *Cecil, or Adventures of a Coxcomb* (1841) defines Jack Harris, a dandy, in a less charitable mood by saying that the dandy was "a nobody, who made himself somebody, and gave the law to everybody." (GORE, 1841, apud MOERS, 1960, p. 26) It seems that the whole course taken by Dorian throughout the novel is an extensive allegory of a flower that enthralled by the idea of its own organic potential of growth, blooms past its limit, reaching the stage of death by rotting. Operating within such analogy, Dorian aspires to make of himself a token of life's

full livability by spiraling upwards in an ever-blossoming progression of the sensorial experiences:

For, while he was but too ready to accept the position that was almost immediately offered to him on his coming of age, and found, indeed, a subtle pleasure in the thought that he might really become to the London of his own day what to imperial Neronian Rome the author of the 'Satyricon' had once been, yet in his inmost heart he desired to be something more than a mere arbiter elegantiarum, to be consulted on the wearing of a jewel, or the knotting of a necktie, or the conduct of a cane. He sought to elaborate some new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles and find in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization. (WILDE, 2009, p. 161)

It is in the figurative resemblance that exists between the fineness of the flowers and the fineness of taste aimed at by Dorian that his effeminacy becomes more discriminable, hence the pertinence of the analogy I have just used. He looks forward to consummating in him a hedonistic aesthetical ideal, which is attainable only to those who are brave—or unadvised—enough to step out of their assigned gendered lanes in society, according to which such “spiritualizing of the senses” in a man would be certainly deemed an affectation of character in Victorian times—in a very similar tone to that of the judgements that the book itself earned Wilde when it was inquired so as to be used against him in his trials.

3.2 Dorian Gray's Own Dandiacal Expression: The Effete Boy Reveals Himself

If it is possible, as mentioned in the beginning of the previous section, to ascertain discrepancies among the dandies, then it is reasonable to look into what gives Dorian's own rendition of dandyism its particularity. Gilbert Pham-Thanh (2010) sets forth the phallogocentrism with which the discourse of the dandies of the Wildean plays is imbued, and explores the supercilious dialogues, sometimes monologues, of the characters in the comedies. Wilde's only novel, on the other hand, unfolds towards a different direction of mood, drifting away from the droll humor that underwrites the conversations in the plays. As much as wit contiguously presents itself in the novel as Wilde's trademark through Wotton's idiolect, it does not function as the main instrument for Dorian, at least, to attain

his so-sought feeling of authority that is so stereotypically dandiacal; nor is to be conspicuous in the novel the same male-over-female issue found underpinning the plays, though they still occur occasionally. What sets Dorian Gray apart from the other Wildean dandies is precisely his puerility in so far as it marks his underdeveloped masculinity, and in this way, he strongly contrasts with the other dandies of Wilde's plays and their "typical phallocentric will for power." (PHAM-THANH, 2010, p. 4) It is with this distinction that I will hereafter occupy myself, and I will do so by analyzing his psyche regarding the unmanly demeanor that he has, which is occasioned by the consequences of his loss of moral discipline.

On the one side, there is Lord Henry Wotton, a full-fledged incarnation of the archetypal Wildean dandy who possesses the wisdom to know not to take life so seriously, the wisdom that only the coming-of-age can provide one with; and, on the other side, there is Dorian who, in spite of looking forward to building the classical dandiacal impassivity and fearing to be a "school-boy, or a girl," takes on the puerile pride that is characteristic to a boy who thinks himself superior. In fact, he never really shows the down-to-earth attitude of a matured man who has been taught to always try to come to terms with reality. Instead, he insists on never letting go of his dreamy, romantic mind, and that largely adds up to the reasons why he is constantly described as boyish—and never manly, for instance. That is how his youthful appearance proves to mirror what he is like on the inside: there is no trace of the typically male sturdiness on his ever-delicate looks. Later in this section, I will make yet a further reading of Dorian's youth and its implications in the construction of his overall character.

In chapter IX, Dorian loses himself in an extensive reverie, wherein, as it starts, he believes to be "prefigured" by the romantic, yet scientific, hero of the book—a book he holds onto with a fervor notable by how the narrator, on Dorian's behalf, describes him to do. He is carried away in his daydreaming, a habit that tends to grow stronger as he surrenders his solidity of character and fades more and more into a virtual world of his own. There, overhanging all crudeness of the purely physical realm that was the only place where the practical spirits could live due to their philistinism—in such a world of his own, Dorian can picture all of his fantasies, let his ambitions build up and actualize all of his intellectual pleasures intimately, for the intellect, the tool through which one savors art, belongs to the virtual realm, and so it is personal in so far as it is individual, accessible only to its owner.

Dorian's intellect tends to turn to the aesthetic aspects of things long before it deals with their scientific aspects, but if it does turn to science in a first moment, it is because science will have an artistic end after all. This dichotomy between art and science is purely didactic, but works in favor of the better understanding of a mind that occupies itself more with beauty and the joy it causes than with reasoning and its utility. As he says himself, there was to be a new hedonism and "[i]t was to have its service of the intellect, certainly; yet it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience." (WILDE, 2009, p. 162-163)

And if to the Victorian masculinity, as Horzum (2016) says, the woman was supposed to govern the private sphere while the man was supposed to act vigorously in the public sphere, then Dorian inhabits the sphere assigned for women because the world of pleasures is intimate to the extent that it concerns something so subjective and only possibly felt within the self as the sensations. He is, in the words of Henry, "too charming to go in for philanthropy," and so his charms are to be kept private, especially because what Henry and consequently Dorian condemn the most is vulgarity—everything that belongs to everyone or is obtainable by everyone is bound to incur vulgarity by its commonness and lack of exclusiveness. This needed privacy also seems to be there to illusorily veil a preciousness that in reality might not exist within Dorian, and when we consider that people, after actually getting to know him intimately, choose to avoid him so resolutely, such a perspective on the reservation of the self garners considerable plausibility. It is by keeping himself shut from popular touch similarly to what the morally estimable women in those times were expected to do—and the opposite to that would be the advancing male, with which his conduct seems not to be in accordance—that Dorian maintains the false idea of the grandeur of his personality.

Defeyt (2014) explores the picture of the man drawn up by learned naturalists Buffon and Burdach and concludes: "man, like his genital organs, turns towards the outside," and such equivalence between body and psyche establishes that men are predisposed for public activeness—as opposed to women, who are, as Ruskin and Horzum have observed, designed for acting in the private sphere. Dorian Gray is a man who, in spite of such, does not have the outward-facing pragmatism that the collective imaginary of the 19th century attributes more often to the male figure, for he has a mind that pictures scenes, sometimes fantasies, of a private, hedonist world as feasible realities. The concept of

lavishness with which Dorian is so in love strongly hints at the actualization of personal, small extravagances. These extravagances are small in that they might not necessarily mean, at times, sexual practices that are scandalous due to their impurity, but rather that they are literally all-encompassing in the sense that they may simply be the experimentation with anything at all provided that it is fruitful, even if it is not meant for the male role—the “dandy [...] occupies a social space that Victorian discourse typically reserves for the feminine.” (ADAMS, 1992, p. 442)

It is important to reiterate that this “new hedonism” by which Dorian is so endeared, in spite of how its broadness of meaning might also suggest a veiled desire for the voluptuous, might just as much simply mean a freedom to practice absolutely anything, for it is under the absence of constraints that his gender non-conforming traits can and actually manifest themselves. An example of said “innocent” face of this new search for pleasure is found in the beginning of aforementioned chapter IX:

He procured from Paris no less than five large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound in different colors, so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have almost entirely lost control. (WILDE, 2009, p. 157)

Fatuity, one may think. For Dorian, however, it is also part of his new way of life, for he expects to fulfill all of his caprices as ignoring them would mean that he is sacrificing “[a] mode of passionate experience.” That is because, for the good, “new” hedonist, giving in to caprices matters because they are also a form of desire, and desires need to be fulfilled for their resulting pleasure; and for the dandy, caprices such as having various mood-suited book bindings matter because they are the details, the foundation of the dandy’s major image, which is extremely meticulous with regard to appearance. Accordingly, D’Aurevilly says that “[s]atisfied vanity revealed becomes fatuity” only so he can immediately after dismantle such idea by saying that “[t]his is the rather impertinent name which the hypocrites of modesty—that is to say everybody—have invented, because they are afraid of genuine feelings.” (D’AUREVILLY, 1897, p. 5)

3.3 The Dandiacal and the Narcissistic: A Charming Amalgam

As it is, what was once a set of philosophical beliefs start to take full control of Dorian Gray, so much so that he ceases to be a mere beauty enthusiast and crosses a threshold beyond which everything will only matter just as long as it excites his aesthetical senses. Such egocentrism, which is entailed by an extreme individualism that, according to Tavares (2016), is an essential characteristic of the dandy, is also the major parallel between Dorian Gray and Narcissus. Therefore, in this section I will continue to unveil the dandiacal in Dorian Gray as a fundamental platform for gender refraction, only now with the addition of the spectrum of narcissism as yet another component of Dorian Gray's beguiling characterization.

Following Sibyl Vane's death, Dorian's moral conduct changes in that he thereafter starts to outwardly act relentless when having his own values challenged, as it is noticeable for the way he firmly brushes off Basil's attempts at inspiring in him the minimum trace of sympathy for Sibyl's tragic end:

'You went to the Opera?' said Hallward, speaking very slowly, and with a strained touch of pain in his voice. 'You went to the Opera while Sibyl Vane was lying dead in some sordid lodging? You can talk to me of other women being charming, and of Patti singing divinely, before the girl you loved has even the quiet of a grave to sleep in? Why, man, there are horrors in store for that little white body of hers!'

'Stop, Basil! I won't hear it!' cried Dorian, leaping to his feet. 'You must not tell me about things. What is done is done. What is past is past.'

'You call yesterday the past?'

'What has the actual lapse of time got to do with it? It is only shallow people who require years to get rid of an emotion. A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.' (WILDE, 2009, p. 129-130)

Baffling as Dorian's attitude may seem from a moral standpoint, the aim here is nowhere to incur any value judgement, but rather to give palpability to the strings that link him to his own embodiment of dandyism. He cannot stay open for Basil's sentimentalist incursions into him because their compassion-inspiring nature are contrary to the self-centering philosophy cultivated in him by Henry; because sheer condolence for Sibyl's death would imply the asphyxia of the senses responsible for sniffing out and actually inhaling the artistic aspect of things—death included. He manages to savor her death as

though “[i]t seems to me [him] to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a great tragedy, a tragedy in which I [he] took part, but by which I have [he has] not been wounded.” (WILDE, 2009, p. 118) Therefore, if he stands opposed to Basil’s moral discourse of compassion, it is because “the dandy is reluctant to let any exterior force affect his personality due to the Baudelairean cult of the self.” (HORZUM, 2016, p. 85) That is, Dorian finds Basil to be defiant of his ethos, and he is only welcoming of the influences of Henry over him because they are favorable to his self-serving practices and thereby encourage in him such “*culte de soi-même*.”

Worth remarking here is that this egocentrism seems indispensable for the sublimation of the self as it is exactly what occasions in Dorian Gray the callousness that is necessary for the accomplishment of life’s aesthetical quintessence; had he chosen to be altruistic in every possible way, his will to alchemize every bit of life would have to have been ignored. Therefore, his beauty can only come in the expense of his humanity. To the extent, then, that his obsessive, and thus constricted, perspective in relation to the purpose of life causes this, it seems relevant to consider, yet again, what Jung (1966) says about the adoption of a single way of forged self-perception and the consequences of it. According to him, “[t]his is one way of educating oneself, but it is too arbitrary and too much of a violation. Far too much of our common humanity has to be sacrificed in the interests of an ideal image into which one tries to mould oneself.” (p. 157) This comes not only to reinforce the idea that aesthetical sublimation, in the novel, depends on the yielding to corruption and self-dehumanization, but also to explain it.

A less particularized look at Dorian Gray permits that this behavior be associated with the defining traits of the Wildean dandy, who lives for himself, serves only himself and barricades himself against the ideas of those who propose a dissolution of his philosophical constructs only to awaken in him values preached by the collective imaginary of his time. After all, the dandy “is self-sufficient, self-centric, and he regards himself as uncorrupted by this hypocritical society.” (HORZUM, 2016, p. 85) The existence of such self-sufficiency in the dandy is subscribed by Geyer when he observes that “[c]losely connected with the dandy’s ‘vaporization’ of his body is a state of self-sufficiency which serves him as a shield against his aching self-awareness.” (GEYER, 2012, p. 132) He quotes D’Aureville, who, in his essay, says that:

Brummell, for he was vain, an Englishman, and a Dandy! Like all practical people, who are never absent from themselves and possess faith and will only live for immediate pleasures, he never desired others and enjoyed these [...] to their fullest extent. (D'AUREVILLY, 1897, p. 86)

D'Aurevilly's account of who Brummell was much resembles Dorian Gray and his hedonist philosophy of life, as well as his absence of any desire for others—which suggests that he therefore has in himself all that is necessary for self-fulfillment, and that is certainly his beauty, as it is what he gives the most importance to. Describing Narcissus's undisturbed mood in relation to others' want of him, Ovid wrote: “but he had much cold pride within his tender body: no youth, no girl could ever touch his heart.” (OVID, 1993, p. 93) Similarly, the Wildean dandy finds someone to be worth of his time and intellectual investments only if the entertainment they offer him is not ordinary or ugly, and so he never gives more than he expects to gain in the negotiation that is the interpersonal relations. After all, why would such a figure, who stands against society's hypocrisy, be accepting of anything that hurts his philosophy of life, which has that life is to be lived to its fullest, without the interference of morality's constraints?

Dorian is the flower of humankind of his time and he is aware of that. His delusional passion for life grows stronger as he grows conscious of how he has what nobody else has ever dreamt of stepping close to. Of course the idea of never losing beauty to time inebriates him, but would it be worth to be forever young and beautiful if there is no one to celebrate what he has been gifted with besides himself? It leads me to believe that Dorian would not love himself as much as he does if nobody else joined him in his celebration of his self, because the specialness—not the beauty itself, but the aura—in which he is cloaked, aside from being given by the forces of comparison, springs from his lionizing by the public and is encouraged in him by external approval. Otherwise, he alone would be no more than a being, and having no one else to be beautiful for would be just as erasing of character as a work of art that is made insignificant by the absence of onlookers.

That is why the “young Narcissus” needs as much ovation as he can get, so his supremacy becomes legitimate. In the same way as Ovid's Narcissus arouses desire in young boys and young girls, Dorian awakens in others a strange urge to delight themselves in his company, for, as D'Aurevilly wrote about Brummell,

He was a great artist in his way, but his art was not specialized nor manifested within a limited time. It was his life itself, the eternal brilliancy of faculties which are forever active in a man created to live with his fellows. He pleased with his person as others please with their works. (D'AUREVILLY, 1897, p. 75)

It is this paradoxically that Dorian hesitates to make a public object of himself and, nonetheless, strives for a fandom of his own. Rita Felski (1991) additionally observes that these narcissistic fantasies, prompted by this commodification of the self—such as what happens to the dandy—, are aligned with the “dream-world of contemporary advertising” (p. 1096) and thus links them with Dorian’s effeminacy. According to Felski, this is because the objects of identification and desire, culturally speaking, are predominantly women. That this desire for Dorian be caused both in women and in men is necessary for his transfiguring into a somberly all-enchanted creature, such as wrote Ovid on Narcissus: “both youths and girls wanted him.” (OVID, 1993, p. 93) With respect to this very aspect, Geyer intelligently observes the dual movement of the dandy:

Disturbingly revolutionary with regard to the dichotomy as far as gender is concerned is that, on the one hand, the dandy turns himself into a passive object of desire—a role traditionally designated to women. On the other hand as Domna C. Stanton points out, the dandy assigned to himself the role of a Circe who is actively trying to seduce and capture people with his charm. (GEYER, 2012, p. 128)

3.3.1 Youth as a Masculinity-Assuaging Tool

Dorian Gray is continuously portrayed as displaying a youthful behavior that, by matching his appearance, reinforces throughout the novel the lingering of a boyhood that the reader thereby cannot forget. In fact, the conscience of the reader is supposed to never sleep on his never-perishing youth, for the latter is either always afloat as a murmur in the narration or is voiced by the characters: “All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth’s passionate purity” (p. 35); “You, Mr. Gray, you yourself, with your rose-red youth and your rose-white boyhood” (p. 40); “Because you have now the most marvellous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having” (p. 44); “When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it”; “Realize your youth while you have it” (p. 45); “For there is such a little time

that your youth will last,—such a little time [...] But we never get back our youth” (p. 46); “The pulse and passion of youth were in him, but he was becoming self-conscious” (p. 78); “What there was in it of the purely sensuous instinct of boyhood had been transformed by the workings of the imagination, changed into something that seemed to the boy himself to be remote from sense” (p. 79); “he might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of his then just conscious boyhood” (p. 104); “Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret” (p. 125); “he would keep the glamour of boyhood” (p. 126-127); “He felt a wild longing for the unstained purity of his boyhood,—his rose-white boyhood” (p. 235). And these are merely some of the passages in which this topic is present.

To the same extent that the pervasiveness of the theme is there to equal youth with comeliness of appearance, we may well understand this boyhood so insisted on by the voices in the novel as a badge of an identity that remains untampered by the demands of gender roles one is assigned in adulthood. The same freedom from gender expectations one enjoys at one’s youngest ages, Dorian lives eternally in his ever-lingering youth. This joviality is what grants him the whimsicality of spirit that is so enchanting to others, for not only do people feel it in his presence, but they also *see* it mirrored on his appearance.

Dorian’s countenance is so redeeming that it abnormally outweighs any unbecoming rumor about him in the eyes of others, as though the sight of him supernaturally puts a stop to people’s moral consciousness so that their mind is purely appreciative of the artwork it contemplates. He thus stands for—or imposes—the 19th century philosophy of art for art’s sake by turning himself into an autotelic *objet d’art* whose value lies intrinsically in itself, thus ridding itself of the need of an utility, morality or didactic quality. The following excerpt illustrates this:

The boyish beauty that had so fascinated Basil Hallward, and many others besides him, seemed never to leave him. Even those who had heard the most evil things against him (and from time to time strange rumors about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs) could not believe anything to his dishonor when they saw him. (WILDE, 2009, p. 158)

As this specific passage shows, we are once again reminded that his beauty resembles a boy’s, and this one aspect is key for the global apprehension of who Dorian shows himself to be. He, more than any other Wildean character, is not *manfully attractive*, nor is his power of seduction ever attributed to a virile pose to which, women,

as the antithetical settlement to such a pose, would naturally be drawn. Much to the contrary, his looks are constantly referred to as boyish—and it could not be any other way. The homoerotic undertone of the novel exists chiefly as a consequence of the stirring Dorian Gray's beauty causes in the society within the novel, and it does so by affecting not only females, but also males. What, one may ask, makes him an object of admiration (if not desire) for men even? One has to consider that the parallels between him and Narcissus obviously lie not primarily in their supposable physical resemblances, but rather in how they both are so obsessed with their own self that one may think this self-love would get physical if both of them could split into two and touch themselves as two separate bodies. The intended similarities go even further, up to their power of seduction, which is sometimes passive, and, just as Geyer has written regarding the dandy, “a role traditionally designated to women.” Not coincidentally, both the Thespian boy and the Irish lad are as charming as their looks advocate youth.

Not only is youth a central theme in the novel as the one signifier of dignifying bodily aesthetical status, but it also marks the unripeness of the appearance, which is contrary to the natural course of the body, an observation I have made in the previous paragraph. As much as I want to avoid proposing a reading that predominantly resorts to biology in order to partially ground the observation of androgyny in the character of Dorian Gray, I do feel the need to point to the fact that such boyishness of looks, which is a natural quality of a youthful appearance in a male, does converse with the idea of a halt in the development of the physical features that denote one's sex after puberty.

Muñoz-Reyes et al. (2015) found out that facial maturity is a relevant female beauty estimator tool only for men, as, according to their results,

Facial Maturity affects women's attractiveness as rated by men, suggesting that men focus on cues for youth when evaluating female faces. This is in line with previous results showing that for men, the most attractive versions of adult women's faces are those proportioned like young faces. (MUÑOZ-REYES et al., 2015, p. 9)

If his youth is so conspicuous that it even dissolves his masculinity, making his outward constitution quasi-girly, this serves as a reasonable explanation for how the attraction to Dorian by males occurs.

While these findings were reached within a 21st century social and cultural setting, and not considering 19th century-specific understandings of beauty and attractiveness, they nonetheless do not diverge from the beauty paradigms of that time, which, as Wilde promotes through the novel, directly relate aging with uncomeliness. So if female faces that do not display features that denote maturity appeal more to men, it is plausible to understand Dorian Gray's dissolved physical markers of maturity as a digression from adult manliness to young childlikeness, an overall diaphanous physiognomy whose charms override the male-female-restricted dynamics of attraction, as well as excuses the "young Adonis" from all of his faults. Interestingly, in the latter's respect, Perrett et al. (1998) have found out that

For males, however, enhancing masculinity in face shape also predisposes some negative personality attributions. Such attributions, although stereotypic, may predict behaviour; ratings of perceived dishonesty from facial appearance correlate with the face owner's willingness to participate in deceptive behaviour. Indeed, increasing testosterone level in males is associated with more troubled relationships (including increased infidelity, violence and divorce).

Dorian is said to seem as if "he was made of ivory and rose-leaves," (WILDE, 2009, p. 16) and so he is lent the same softness of beauty that is found in nature. Perrett et al. (1998) suggest that "[f]eminization of male face shape may increase attractiveness because it 'softens' particular features that are perceived to be associated with negative personality traits." (PERRET ET AL., 1998, p. 886) In amusing accordance with such a conclusion, Wilde wrote in chapter IX: "There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked them." (WILDE, 2009, p. 158)

The alluring effete, however, is more recurrent an image in the Hellenism-based literary portfolio than one may think, and Narcissus is just one of the figures that have been reimagined so as to possess dually seductive demeanor. In Wilde's novel, the characterization of Dorian Gray cannot do without constant mythographic comparisons between the novel's protagonist and Hellenic youths—of which Adonis and Narcissus are examples—, because they are parameters of beauty, a beauty that has been made unchallengeable by the reverberation of historical canonization. That is how the effeminacy, or the double nature, of these selected Hellenic figures, as revisited, for instance, by Plato Comicus, Ovid and Shakespeare, is retrieved in *The Picture of Dorian*

Gray, for they fundamentally serve as the ideals through which we should think of Dorian Gray. In various tellings, such as *Adonis* by Plato Comicus, Adonis is a youth who fails to make the transition into adulthood because he is “destroyed” by Aphrodite and Dionysus (Cf. GREENE, 1996); analogously, Dorian never really consummates adulthood himself. Greene says that “to mark Adonis as an ‘effete Easterner’ is one more mode of achieving a resolution that preserves (Greek) male sexual control,” (p. 203) referring to the subordination of Adonis, a male, to Dionysus, another male, which sets up a contradiction in the status hierarchy within the myth. In Ptolemy Chennus’s iteration of the myth, as writes Roger Pearse (2002), “Adonis, having become androgynous, behaved as a man for Aphrodite and as a woman for Apollo.” In Shakespeare’s debut in print, *Venus and Adonis*, Adonis never seems interested in responding to the goddess’s attempts at having him, and the latter, in spite of that, still feels very much attracted to him. In that respect, Richard Rambuss says that “[i]nsofar as androgyny is Adonis’ allure in Shakespeare’s poem, that quality may derive from the temporarily liminal gender status of the beardless boy in Elizabethan culture.” (RAMBUSS, 2003, p. 243) In this very assumption resides the plausibly tight correlation between boyishness and absence of masculinity, as Stephen Orgel (1996) adds to it that attractive male youths “were praised in Renaissance England by saying that they looked like women—‘A women’s face, by Nature’s own hand painted / Has thou, the mister-mistress of my passion.’” (p. 51)

This far into the scrutinizing of Dorian Gray, to think that the character is a product of a creative mind that saw in previous consecrated fictional youths a model of flamboyant otherworldliness on which it could base itself and therefore, upon doing so, ascend as a brilliant mixture of those proves not to be much of a mistake in that sense. And if there is more lying underneath the surface-observable influences that permeate *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; if there is more than what is assumable by the fact that “‘Mr. Oscar Wilde’ was a member of the first Council of that journal’s [Journal of Hellenic Studies] parent body, The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies” (CARTLEDGE, 1989, p. 7) and thus was imbued to no end with knowledge on Hellenic studies; then it is acceptable to hypothesize beyond the narrative-obvious comparisons between Dorian Gray and those parametric Greek personalities.

That being said, I return one last time to the specific topicality of the effete in the novel and how the bestowing of eternal youth upon Dorian functions as a masculinity-

assuaging element on him. This time, however, I very briefly look at Honoré de Balzac's serial novel *Lost Illusions* (1837) as yet another literary work of whose celebrated fictional character, Lucien de Rubempré, who was as charming as he was feminine, Wilde's eyes caught sight. In the dialogue *The Decay of Lying* (1913), Vivian, a character of Wilde and "obviously a spokesman for the author" (LUCEY, 2008, p. 202), says: "One of the greatest tragedies of my life is the death of Lucien de Rubempré. It is a grief from which I have never been able to completely rid myself." (WILDE, 1913, p. 16) In Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (1898), Lucien is a young poet whose charms are rather female-like, as describes the narrator: "Lucien, on the other hand, with an enterprising but changeable nature, was gifted with a boldness little to be expected from his feminine, almost effeminate, figure, graceful though it was" (p. 29); "From a glance at his feet he might have been taken for a girl in disguise, and this so much the more easily from the feminine contour of the hips, a characteristic of keen witted, not to say astute, men." (p. 28) Vivian says that Lucien is of a "fiery-colored existence", whereas the narrator in Wilde's novel replicates such voice by saying that Dorian Gray's "[l]ife suddenly became fiery-colored to him." This intertextuality, in tandem with Wilde cherishing Lucien de Rubempré, strongly suggests that the author may have charged his writing imagination with more than what his only novel reveals to allude to—and an evident example of that is what I have already shown as to Walter Pater being furtively paraphrased by Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

In the end, to pinpoint satisfactorily which, exactly, are those precedents in Literature that *unspokenly* influenced Oscar Wilde's own literary mesh, and what in them his works culled as inspirational prototypes, is indeed a task that will often find its closure in the suggestive. Still, it is always worthwhile to pull back from a text in order to look at it from a panoramic distance, for through a peripheral vision we may be able to discover amusing literary connections.

CONCLUSION

When looking retrospectively at the names who influenced Oscar Wilde, at least from the first publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890, we can identify a pattern concerning the depiction of the androgyne. Walter Pater, as the most notable among such names, lauds Leonardo Da Vinci's womanly males; Shakespeare dissolves Adonis's masculinity signifiers into the flamboyant boy; Plato Comicus does not let Adonis reach adulthood, is frail and as subordinate as a woman of his time; Ptolemy Chennus's Adonis, in his turn, displays a double-gendered behavior depending on whether he is with Aphrodite or Apollo. Considering, then, that these portrayals stand against a set of conceptions attributed to the masculine ideal, Wilde, as a dissenter, certainly took forward this counter-discursive fictional stance wherein men are not really men, but either delicate boys or androgynous youths—when, of course, those are not to interchangeable—by in a way resuming the aesthetics of his predecessors. It becomes more plausible to conjecture so when noticing how the images of Hellenic figures such as Adonis, Narcissus and Antinoüs echo through the characterization of the protagonist of his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Dorian Gray epitomizes the mitigation of Victorian masculinity of the narcissist aesthete, who appropriates what has been reserved historically and culturally for women: the fixation on youth as a maintainer of the untampered beauty of the self. As verified in his latent longing for a romantically idealized realm that shelters him from the tawdriness of the real world, Dorian Gray's psyche preempts what in the 19th century was considered the feminine ethos so that he is a living incarnation of the beauty that had been long lost to morality.

It is because of the exaggeration of this mindset of his, moreover, that Sibyl Vane is rejected when she reveals what she really is like apart from her acting. Differently from what most studies on the novel propound, I do not understand this sudden disinterest of him for her, or Dorian's behavior as a whole, as an indicator of veiled homosexuality.

Following the narrative's portrayal, that regards him as boyish, and therefore as a weak-minded or considerably immature and capricious lad, I believe that Dorian Gray's attitude towards women, just like towards men, is not genuinely lustful, but simply boyishly flighty, and thus cannot lead to safe grounds for fathoming his sexual orientation. In fact, this seems too biographical an attempt at reading the novel, considering the tendency that there has been in literary criticism to look at Dorian Gray via Oscar Wilde's homosexuality.

Additionally, to speak of this psychological weakness of boyhood over which a single idea can take control is to speak of Jung's "inflation". By believing to be, to use the words of the narrator, a sort of young Greek Martyr, Dorian fully concentrates on "find[ing] in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization," pushing away every aspect of both people and life that are irrelevant for this accomplishment, thereby surrendering his humane complexity in the name of this monolithic hedonism. This hedonistically aesthetical preoccupation, to which his whole character is reduced, makes him a dandy by nature, who, "like woman and like the work of art, [...] can be perceived in aestheticist doctrine as quite useless; exalting appearance over essence [and] decoration over function." (FELSKI, 1991, p. 1096)

The dandy, as a conveyor of these extreme, ultra-romantic aesthetical aspirations, then comes to be an important historical figure in the advocacy for gender bending, and thus is of great relevance in a gender-oriented analysis of Wilde's character. As far as the Victorian understanding of masculinity is concerned, such a figure is dismissive of the male gender symbolizers inasmuch as they are, more often than not, unrelated to the quintessence of life, which is beauty. In that sense, to say that Dorian Gray is a dandy on what concerns his philosophy of life is to say that he embraces the very condition that Barbey Jules D'Aurevilly attributed to the dandiacal grace that he so joyfully celebrated, which is "[t]wofold and multiple natures" and "of an undecidedly sex."

Interestingly, for the sake of his attractiveness, it seems crucial that Dorian Gray be of the male sex—a feminized one, but still a male, and not a woman in sex and gender. That is, in the Victorian age and throughout history as a whole as well, men occupied and have been occupying the most socially relevant positions, and so historical phallogocentrism legitimates Dorian Gray's sense of superiority, which, per se, turns him into a commodity in potential by socially placing him on elevated grounds. On the other hand, the absence of a virile demeanor and, to a considerable degree, appearance is what wears him away of the

masculine rigidity that can be aesthetically unbecoming and that speaks against the diaphanous ideal that he strives for and that is so opposing to the Victorian masculinity conception. Therefore, I believe that Dorian Gray comes to be the crucible of the male and female elements and that it is from this merging that his allure springs. There seems to be in the feminized male, after all, an etherealness that doubles his beauty by refracting his gender.

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