Fallen Men in Victorian Literature

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Abstract

This thesis explores the counterintuitive concept of the fallen man in literature from the mid- and late-Victorian period. The fallen man is a concept that has gained almost no attention and space in the novels and reception from the nineteenth century as well as in modern critical works. I argue that the fallen man is very much present in Victorian novels. The research shows that the fallen man is a complex concept, and that the fall is not strictly linked to sexuality and loss of purity as it often is with the better known female counterpart, the Victorian fallen woman. The thesis examines how fallen men are depicted in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis*. Earlier critical readings have overlooked the importance of the male characters in these novels in terms of transgression. The thesis argues that fallen men exist across class distinction, that the fallen men have been protected by patriarchal society and the double standard, which are some of the reasons why fallen men have gained so little attention. Further, the thesis shows that in many situations, the fallen man's transgressions undercut his masculinity. The thesis is structured around three main chapters, each exploring different aspects of the fallen man, what leads to the fall and how knowledge about the fall becomes crucial for determining the societal punishment. Chapter one discusses the male fall from a male promiscuous/sexual and a financial view, with an emphasis on the upper- and middle class. Chapter two emphasises how the working class and middle class fallen man, through the lens of aspiration of social mobility and the institution of marriage, and how failing to comply with the traditional male role leads to fallenness. The third chapter explores homosexuality and homosexual desire in the *fin de siècle,* and how what was perceived as deviant sexuality leads to fallenness.

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Introduction

When a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her – as well may one attempt to wash the stain from the sullied snow. Men sin and are forgiven; but the memory of a woman's guilt cannot be removed on earth. Her nature is so exquisitely refined that the slightest flaw becomes a huge defect. Like perfume, it admits of no deterioration, it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sweet. Her soul is an exquisitely precious, a priceless gift, and even more than man's a perilous possession.

- William Gayer Starbuck*, A Woman Against the World* (1864)

Nineteenth-century Britain underwent massive changes throughout all levels of society; from changing legislation, increasing poverty, to scientific and medical progression. In the middle of the century a religious crisis arose in British society, and slowly voices started to challenge the morality that the society was based upon, and further there was a process of changing views on gender and gender roles. One of the most well known archetypes of the Victorian period (1837-1901) both in real life and literature was the "fallen woman"-figure. The "fallen woman" was a problematic character for the Victorians in many ways but most importantly she was threatening Victorian morality and transgressing what was considered proper and acceptable conduct. However, little focus has been raised on men transgressing Victorian morality and values, and in literature and amongst literary critics the "fallen man" is more or less absent from the debate. Men who transgress against Victorian morality and values are present in Victorian literature, obviously as well as in real life, but unlike the better known figure of the "fallen woman", "fallen men" often manage to escape society's condemning gaze to a greater extent than the "fallen women" do. From this it is natural to raise the question whether it makes sense to think of the men transgressing as "fallen men". In this thesis I will suggest that it does make sense to think of them as "fallen men" in the same manner as we do with the contemporary female equivalent, and the fact that "fallen men" manage to escape societal condemnation to a greater extent therefore becomes a very interesting aspect of the concept of the "fallen man". Further it is interesting to observe that the "fallen man" is seen in lots of different ways in the different Victorian texts discussed in this thesis. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth,* the "fallen man" is shown in relation to male promiscuity, forgery, and financial carelessness in the higher and middle class. In *Jude the Obscure* the "fallen man" is depicted in relation both to the lower class, as well as the seemingly "respectable" middle class of the Victorian society. Further, Thomas Hardy, in addition to depicting the "fallen man", shows a change in the contemporary perception of

masculinity, also influencing the view on "the fallen man". While we in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis* see a different figure of the "fallen man" where "deviant" sexuality and "deviant" desire both challenges the view of masculinity, and the male role in literature.

Throughout my research it has become evident that "the fallen man" was not a concept that the Victorians were familiar with, neither did they use the phrase in their daily speech. It seems clear that the way patriarchy and the Victorian society had created and further moulded the Victorian man, masculinity and male role, male misdoing and transgression was not part of that picture and therefore not a subject because a transgression did not define a man the way it defined a woman. Though the concept and phrase of the "fallen man" was not a familiar archetype, until Ibsen's publication of *Ghosts*, a vast amount of evidence show that Victorian men, both in real life and in literature transgressed. However, they were often protected from the consequences.

The concept of the "fallen man" is especially interesting, specifically in relation to the Victorian period, because of the Victorians' preoccupation with morality and values as the foundation of a good and Christian society. In contemporary time as well as in the aftermath, it has become evident that behind the façades of the Victorians many led lives of moral depravity and transgression. Richard D. Altick deals with this in his book *Victorian People and Ideas* where he writes: "there is no question that the taboos and inhibitions often were enforced *pro forma,* and that behind the manifestations of piety and righteousness lurked less attractive qualities" (177). Further, Walter E. Houghton raises a very important issue in terms of the Victorian morality and why there is a discrepancy between the moral pretension and real life, often referred to as Victorian hypocrisy (394-5). Moreover, Houghton points out that the Victorians "lived in a period of much higher standards of conduct – too high for human nature. As men were required to support Christianity by church attendance and active charity, and to accept the moral ideals of earnestness, enthusiasm, and sexual purity, the gap between profession and practice, or between profession and the genuine character, widened to an unusual extent" (404-5). The "fallen man" is especially relevant to the Victorian period because of the "double standard" and the contemporary views and conceptualisation of gender and gender-roles; "fallen women" gained a lot of negative attention from society and became an ostracised group of the British society during the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the man participating in the woman's fall or committing other types of transgressions, generally seems consciously "forgotten" and not punished as severely as the female. Throughout the nineteenth century the concept of masculinity was in a constant state of

change and development. This is clearly visible towards the end of the century and the British *fin de siècle,* where the emergence of the "new man"-figure and the creation of homosexuality as a category and word; two "inventions" which threatened the traditional and religious conceptualisation of masculinity and the male role.

Therefore, in this thesis, I argue that the fallen man is a different and important, though neglected, character in Victorian literature. Neither the contemporary Victorian readership nor modern literary critics have given the fallen man any attention. The concept of the fallen man proves to be complicated as it includes a wide range of transgressions and subsequent condemnation, such as promiscuous and sexual transgression, financial transgression and irresponsibility, breaking with your class and perhaps more importantly transgressing the expectations towards the male role and masculinity. In my opinion, the "fallen man" is a useful and valid concept as it actively explores a group of Victorian men who have previously been taken for granted, and the concept also sheds light on masculinity and the male-role as an issue in Victorian literature.

Background: Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* in English

Paradoxically, I discovered the plays of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) during my period of study in York. On the syllabus for the Victorian literature course were two of Henrik Ibsen's social-problem plays, *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*. Ibsen's controversial play *Ghosts* was published in Norwegian in 1881, later translated into English and serialised in *To-Day* in 1885, before it was performed for the first time in Victorian Britain in 1891 on the London stage (Greenslade, "Socialism" 80). The idea of the Victorian "fallen woman" had intrigued me for a very long time and whilst reading *Ghosts* one aspect of the play fascinated me in particular, specifically the way Ibsen portrayed the deceased husband of Mrs Alving in a most unflattering, immoral and very little masculine way. In the play Ibsen depicts how Captain Alving, late Chamberlain to the King, had been breaking the expected moral conventions of the time. Captain Alving had lived a sexually promiscuous life resulting in at least one illegitimate child, he had serious alcoholic problems, and his behaviour made him a debauched role model for his son and manhood; Captain Alving was *de facto* a "fallen man". Ibsen also illustrates and makes a point of the hypocritical society of the nineteenth century, in this particular play the Norwegian society, but the idea and concept is also applicable and fits with British society at the time as well. This is shown by the fact that Ibsen became so rapidly popular in Britain and also shown in how his work had an appreciable effect on British women's rights activism (Finney 89-91).

A natural question, which arises in this context is why Ibsen in relation to British literature? Despite being a Norwegian playwright, Ibsen had a prominent and important position in British *fin de siècle* literature and culture. In many ways, Ibsen revolutionised British drama in the latter part of the nineteenth century with his realism and social-problem dramas. British drama had per se been "dead" since William Shakespeare in the sixteenth century, and according to John Stokes the plays written in the Victorian period were pervasively modelled after the French model. These "well-made plays" had "fixed structures, predictable climaxes and established themes" (207). In addition, Ibsen caused a theatrical debate around the controversial topics of the time (Stokes 207). It is also interesting to note that Ibsen' plays were more widely read, than viewed in performances, and thereby reached a much wider audience. The Victorians knew Ibsen from having read him, and from the debates and writings in the newspapers (Rem 105-107, Fulsås 38). In *Ghosts,* Ibsen dealt with a range of controversial topics, especially interesting is his subtle treatment of venereal disease in the play. As predicted by William Archer, critic, translator and a key person for Ibsen's status in Britain, *Ghosts* became a "success of scandal" (Fulsås 50, 53). Though Ibsen never mentions the illness by name, "every one who read the play (…) knew that Oswald[1] was afflicted with syphilis" (Sprinchorn 191). Further, Sprinchorn points out how syphilis was never mentioned by name in print, as it was "the sexual disease that dared not speak its name" (191-2). Illness and syphilis in particular will reappear later in this thesis with a prominent position in relation to the British texts.

Henrik Ibsen is the first, and only writer I have seen so far, who has deliberately and very directly used the phrase "fallen man" in this context. This being a translation, I went back to the original text of Ibsen in Norwegian to see what Ibsen used as his phrasing, and it turns out that the translator has done a direct translation of what Ibsen wrote. The phrase "fallen man" only used in act two, in the dialogue between Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders. It is interesting to observe that it is a woman who first utters the phrase, receiving condemnation from a man upon the usage:

> **Manders:** Just imagine! To go and marry a fallen woman for a paltry fifty pounds!
> **Mrs Alving:** What about me? I went and married *a fallen man*.
> **Manders:** Good God Almighty, what are you saying? A fallen man!

[1] "Osvald" is the Norwegian spelling used in the original play. English translations interchangeably use both "Osvald" and "Oswald".

Mrs Alving: Do you think Alving was any purer when I accompanied him to the altar than Johanna was when Engstrand married her?
Manders: *But the two things are utterly different –*
Mrs Alving: *Not so different.*
(Ibsen 29, italics my own)

My first impression of the concept of the "fallen man" originated from reading *Ghosts* and therefore the first "definition" was only related to transgressing moral standards of the nineteenth century in relation to sexual behaviour. From that point onwards the concept of the "fallen man" has developed into a much more extensive and complicated matter, more so than I could have foreseen, also dealing with matters of gender, masculinity, transgression related to other aspects of life, and not just sex, and finally, and perhaps most importantly, transgressing the expectations of the male role. Aspects of punishment and knowledge in relation to "who knows" about the fall have also developed into important factors.

How this thesis works

This thesis focuses on four texts from the Victorian period, three novels and one long letter. The texts are *Ruth* (1853) by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Jude the Obscure* (1895) by Thomas Hardy, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *De Profundis* (1897[2]) by Oscar Wilde. The observant reader will notice that there in theory, and in practice, is a division of genre with three fictional works and one non-fictional work. In chapter three, there will be a discussion regarding the issue of genre relating to *De Profundis.* In addition to the main texts there will also be references to a number of other relevant literary texts from the Victorian period, which in different ways illustrate the concept of the "fallen man". As for the texts I have chosen, all of them come from different time periods within the nineteenth century. Gaskell's *Ruth* represents the Victorian society in the middle of the nineteenth century, whereas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis* all belong to the last decade of the Victorian period, also called the British *fin de siècle.* The Victorian Britain Gaskell writes about is essentially not the same as the Britain of Hardy and Wilde. The Victorian society went through a great deal of change and progress and this becomes evident in the literature they wrote. The aim of having a gap of approximately forty

[2] *De Profundis* was written between January and March 1897 as a personal letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde's lover. The letter was published for the first time after Wilde's death, in 1905 in a bowdlerised, shorter and edited version by Robert Ross (Beckson 28).

years between the authors was to have the chance to look for a possible development in the concept of the "fallen man". The three authors come from different backgrounds and were influenced by different aspirations and inspirations.

Another criterion for the selection process of texts was that each text had to be controversial in one way or another upon its publication and following contemporary reception. The main reason I wanted the texts to be controversial was that these kinds of texts would have been seen as controversial at the time, at least by some readers, because they raised highly immoral and inappropriate topics, normally not suited for books nor the eyes of the main reader audience, the "respectable" middle class. Also, by looking at the controversial texts of the Victorian era, scholars have the opportunity to research which topics were part of a heated debate in the time, and the possibility that because one or two controversial topics gained all attention, other aspects might have slipped away from the debate and public gaze. After reading extensively up on contemporary reception of the four Victorian texts, I am astonished to say that the transgressions of men is one of these topics which have managed to slip away from the critical eyes and they are *never* mentioned in the critical reception. All three texts have several common features when it comes to their contemporary reception, and that is that they were all considered to be highly immoral as well as being considered threats towards the male role. All three books had an unpleasant meeting with fire (Easson, Introduction viii-ix, How 390, Daniel 47), a response from the readers against the abomination these literary texts contained and represented.

In working with the texts, I have specifically been looking for men who in different ways transgress against Victorian morality. In the course of my research it became evident that the focus had to be expanded to also apply how the male-role and masculinity was portrayed in the novels. Close reading, as well as being able to see the long lines of events and development of characters have been crucial during the process to fully understand and grasp the concept of the "fallen man". In addition to the information and tendencies the literary texts give, historical and cultural context has been invaluable in the process. The Victorian period is a huge and complex field of study, and because so many things have changed in the time from then till now, the context has proven to be decisive in many cases to fully understand and not misconstrue the findings from the literary works.

Theorists from different schools, such as masculinity studies, gender studies and queer studies are useful to me when processing the findings in the literary texts. They also help understanding the thoughts and ideas, both contemporary and historically, concerning gender and sexuality, and how to process them in relation to literature. In this thesis emphasises is on

gender theory and theories concerning sexuality, and here in the following passage is a presentation of the theorists this thesis works with. Theories on masculinity are necessary to fully understand the male characters as well as the change in views on the male role, and are represented by theories from men's studies[3] by R. W. Connell and Michael S. Kimmel. Michel Foucault highlights the aspects of sexuality with his ground-breaking work *The History of Sexuality*, whereas Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers a guiding hand in understanding homosexuality, now and then, in her two works *Between Men* and *The Epistemology of the Closet*. A more detailed explanation of my use of these theorists will follow later in this chapter.

Definitions

Unlike for the female counterpart, there is no clearly agreed definition regarding the concept of the "fallen man". Therefore, the definition used in this thesis of the concept is a result of my research into the literary texts as well as cultural and historical context from the Victorian period. The basis of the phrase is the entry "fallen" in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), with reference "to rank, fortune, or dignity: that has come down from high estate" ("Fallen," def. 5b *OED*), in other words a person falling from a high position to a low position. The position of the fall is relative, and does not necessarily mean falling from a high class down to a lower one. It can also suggest a fall from within a class or position to a lower position within that same sphere. In addition an important aspect of the male fall is the transgression he commits, which significantly breaks with the common conceptions of Victorian morality and values.

There are a few aspects that make the "fallen man" a more complex concept and importantly, more difficult to get a handle on than the "fallen woman". Firstly, men were protected in a totally different way than women. The whole Victorian society was built upon patriarchy; men made the rules, men held important positions in the "governing" institutions like the church, and it was therefore men who interpreted the religious scriptures and laid the foundation of what to believe and who was pure or not. Secondly, the double standard, which I will define further below, protected men in a different way, establishing the separate sphere mentality and the very clear binary that existed between men and women. Thirdly, obviously men cannot become pregnant, which was one very revealing sign of a woman's immoral conduct. My research has shown that an equivalent to pregnancy for men might be illness,

[3] Masculinity theory/studies originates from social studies/sociology studies, and has later been applied to literature. Compared to feminism, masculinity applied to literary studies is "fairly" new cf. Alex Hobbs' article.

which in many cases is irreversible in the same manner as losing your virginity or pregnancy. There is no singular illness that strikes out as the only one revealing male fallenness, but venereal disease flourished in the *fin de siècle* and syphilis is a recurrence in a number of literary works. Syphilis, specifically, is very important as a sign of fallenness because it is sexually transmitted, debilitating, sometimes leading to visible disfigurement and neurological symptoms. Like pregnancy, illness is hard to conceal. Lastly, the "fallen man" does not only transgress Victorian morality, but more interestingly he transgresses the expectations of masculinity and the male-role. Both illness and transgressing the expected male-role makes the "fallen man" weaker, and therefore less masculine. The fear of scandal and scandal itself, as well as knowledge of the fall or action leading to the fall, are also important aspects of the male fall.

In her article, Stephanie King defines the fallen man as "typically bourgeois, who gamles with his money. He imperils his social status when a sexual misadventure accompanies his financial reversals" ("Financial"). King states that there, in her opinion, has to be a link between a sexual aspect and the action leading to the fall. This is one way of looking at the fallen man, which I disagree with. My research shows that there does not necessarily have to be a correlation between the sexual and non-sexual fall. This is because my definition of "the fallen man" originates from the fall from a high position to a lower position by transgressing the morals, values as well as the expected male role of the Victorian period. This ultimately results in two different ways of defining the concept of the "fallen man".

To fully understand the "fallen man" it is important to fully understand the critical history of the "fallen woman". This becomes especially relevant in terms of understanding the differences between the two phrases, and as background information for chapter one, which deals with a "fallen woman" in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth.* The "fallen woman"-figure is, according to the OED, in a figuratively and moral sense, a woman who has "lost purity or innocence" and "who has surrendered her chastity" ("Fallen," def. 5a *OED*). The phrase can be traced back to 1821, but the figure was known earlier under other synonyms describing the same concept: ruined, unfortunate, and damaged goods ("Fallen," def. 5a *OED*). In her work *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces* Amanda Anderson explores the rhetoric of fallenness in Victorian culture. She demonstrates that the conception of fallenness "represented predominantly by the figures of the fallen woman and the prostitute, must be reinterpreted as culturally more central and analytically more complex than had previously been recognized" (2). Anderson very importantly points out the "fluidity" of the term "fallen woman". The

term is applied to a wide group of "feminine identities," such as prostitutes, adulteresses, unmarried women engaging in intimate relations with men, delinquent lower-class women, as well as victims of seduction (2). The word "seduction" is very slippery in terms of meaning, and as I see it and interpret Anderson, rape is also part of "seduction". It is worth noticing that not all "fallen women" deliberately caused their own fall, or possibly more importantly, that a woman did not have to have chosen to do anything in order to be perceived societally as fallen.

A few years later Deborah Anna Logan published her book *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing* where she is concerned with the term "fallen woman". Logan believes the term is much more extensive than just dealing with women and sexuality. Logan says that the "fallen woman" also includes "any woman not manifesting the marriage- and-motherhood domestic ideal" (16). In addition to the traditional view on the "fallen woman", Logan also includes the following female figures: "slave women, alcoholic and mad women, childless women and mothers of bastards, celibate and sexually responsive women, widows and spinsters, and women forced to work for a living" (16). What they all have in common according to Logan is that they are all deviant from what was perceived as the female role (16). Interestingly, Logan raises awareness of the Victorian maxim of "once fallen, always fallen", or irreversibility, which meant that a woman only needed to make one mistake related to intimacy or sexual conduct before she was permanently stigmatised as fallen, and Logan emphasises the fact that this aspect should never be underestimated[4].

Nina Auerbach agrees with Logan regarding irreversibility of lost virginity and purity. Further, Auerbach observes that there is a difference in the way the "fallen woman" is portrayed in the Victorian period than in Milton's *Paradise Lost* where "the fallen woman" is given an argumentative voice and utters the wish to reign, rather than being mute, an enigmatic icon, and only willing to serve, which is the traditional Victorian stereotype (29). In *Paradise Lost,* Eve survives, whereas Victorian conventions demanded that; "a woman's fall ends with death" (30).

"The double standard" as a phrase was first recorded by the *OED* in 1951, but the idea of the double standard as a "rule, principle, judgement, viewed as applying more strictly to one group of people, set of circumstances, than to another; applied specifically to a code of sexual behaviour that is more rigid for women than for men" ("Double standard," *OED*) is older than the phrase itself. During the Victorian period there was a widespread belief in the

[4] For a longer account of this concept with literary examples from Victorian literature, please see Logan's *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing,* p. 17-19.

"classic moralism", which supposed the double standard to be a realisation of completely "natural" laws and the fact that there were differences between man and woman, which could not be altered (Mason 49-63). Keith Thomas's article from 1959 covers the historical overview and context of the double standard, showing that there were different sets of rules and expectations, as well as rights for the two sexes in the everyday life. In particular, Thomas focuses on the women who were suffering from this injustice. Laws enforced the double standard when it came to prostitution, divorce and women's rights to owning property (202). Thomas writes that the double standard was "deeply rooted in England for many centuries" (195). He defines the double standard as "the view that unchastity, in the sense of sexual relations before marriage or outside marriage, is for a man, if an offence, none the less a mild and pardonable one, but for a woman a matter of the utmost gravity" (195). The Victorians themselves did not use the phrase per se, but the thought/idea was ingrained/internalised by them. This is illustrated in textual evidence from literature from the Victorian period, e.g. the epigraph in the beginning of this introduction by William Gayer Starbuck, where once again men's sins and transgressions are pardoned and forgiven, and it is said explicitly that women's are not.

One aspect of the double standard in the Victorian period was what is associated with the phrase "to sow one's wild oats", meaning that men were given some "privileges" women could only dream of. According to the *OED* the phrase "to sow one's wild oats" can be traced back to 1576, and signifying "to commit youthful excesses or follies; to spend early life in dissipation or dissolute courses, usually implying subsequent reform" ("Wild oat," *OED*). The origin of the phrase is "in reference to the folly and mischief of sowing wild oats instead of good grain" ("Wild oat," *OED*). In 1849 the phrase was included in Frederick William Robertson's sermon at Trinity Chapel Brighton 4th November, where he said: "Men must be men - a young man must sow his wild oats and reform", quite clearly establishing some kind of religious approval of this male peccadillo, and also reaffirming the sexual double standard inherent in Victorian society (Robertson). This sermon suggests that wild oat-sowing, far from leading to an irreversible fall, is a prelude to reforming. The phrase was used to denote a young man's "needs" to gain sexual experience prior to committing to marriage. According to David H. Lawrence, the phrase was used in late-Victorian society drama, and Sir Arthur Pinero uses it in his early play *The Profligate* (1889), where he uses the metaphor to "imply the consequences of immorality, as well as to make a social and sexual problem palatable to a conservative audience" (892). Sue Morgan introduces a different view on sowing wild oats when she writes, "adolescence was regarded as a perilous time in the formation of male

sexuality, presenting a threshold of choices which once made would determine a boy's course as "true man" or "maddened beast" (164-5). Further, she quotes Ellice Hopkins, a leading figure in the purity movement, in her essay *True Manliness* (1883) saying that "the dangerous bit in a man's life comes from 14 or 16 to 28 … the bit which forms his character for life" (164). Morgan introduces a second view to this concept, where she suggests that errors could be fatal to a man's character. In spite of this phrase, Victorian society did not always accept men's sexual pasts, as will be seen in my discussion of Mr Bellingham in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth.*

Critical context and theorists

In his article "Masculinity Studies and Literature", Alex Hobbs writes, "in contrast to feminist theory or women's studies, masculinity is a relatively new approach to analysing literature" (383). Unlike the more general gender studies and specifically feminist theories, masculinity studies do not yet have a singular critical framework. Therefore, inspiration and the critical framework are borrowed from sociology and men's studies (Hobbs 383).

R. W. Connell's article "The History of Masculinity" offers a very useful overview of the development in the perception and societal construction of masculinity. Not only does Connell focus on the historical aspects, but she also highlights many important aspects and ideas of masculinity itself and also ideas on the emergence of homosexuality. Connell very importantly points out that "masculinities come into existence at particular times and places, and are always subject to change" (245). Connell states that "masculinity exists only in the context of a whole structure of gender relations, we need to locate it in the formation of the modern gender order as a whole – a process that has taken about four centuries" (245). Historically, we see a development towards a modern gender order from the time of the Renaissance secular culture and the Reformation, disrupting the established ideals for men. Marital heterosexuality became the most honoured form of sexuality. Further, the imperial expansion establishes the link between patriarchy and empire, as well as shaping the first masculine cultural type; the "conquistadors" (246). With the industrial revolution masculinity is linked to capitalism, new forms of gendered work and power. In the same period also denotes the emergence of "sexual subcultures" such as "Molly houses", where effeminate men met to cross-dress and have sexual intercourse with each other (Connell 247). The main point in this short summary of the development of masculinity is to show that it is a concept, which is in state of constant changes, as my thesis will show that the perception of masculinity changes over the course of the Victorian period.

Further, Connell also makes a point, relevant to the chapter on Wilde, on the fact that "the late nineteenth century was the time when "the homosexual" as a social type became clearly defined" (Connell 252). Unlike the earlier view of sodomy being an act undertaken by a man "who gave way to evil", now homosexual desire defined a particular type of man called the "invert" (Connell 252). As a consequence homosexuals were "expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group, symbolically assimilated to women or to beasts" and as a continuation "heterosexuality became a required part of manliness" (253).

Michael S. Kimmel says that "we equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control" (272). This creates a fixed framework for masculinity and a norm form men to live up to. Failing to comply with this can result in breaking with the expected male-role and thereby leading to fallenness. Kimmel also raises an interesting point in writing that "masculinity is the flight from the feminine" (274), elaborating on this with the example of how a "mother can so easily emasculate the young boy by her power to render him dependent, or at least to remind him of dependency. It is relentless; manhood becomes a lifelong quest to demonstrate its achievements, as if to prove the unprovable to others, because we feel so unsure of it ourselves" (274). With slight alterations this becomes relevant to Bradshaw in *Ruth*, always trying to achieve. Finally, Kimmel's ideas of masculinity as homophobia are central to this thesis concerning Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure*. As Kimmel writes in his article "homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, and reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men (277). Kimmel is not specifically talking about the nineteenth-century man, but it is clear that if anything this norm only applied more strongly then, than it does now. This is something I think is true.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality,* Michel Foucault conducts a thorough investigation of Victorian sexuality. Foucault's ideas concerning Victorian attitudes towards sexuality in general and specifically his attention to homosexuality are important to this thesis. Foucault writes, "if it was necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere […] The brothel and mental hospital would be those places of tolerance (4). I argue that the places of tolerance mentioned by Foucault can be replaced by remote landscapes such as Wales and Switzerland in *Ruth.*

On the subject of the "birth" of homosexuality Foucault writes, "homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a king of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had

been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43). Further Foucault argues that the homosexuality was "everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away" (43). This last idea of Foucault becomes relevant in discussing the visibility and secrecy of homosexual desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

In her book *Between Men* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about "blackmailability" in relation to homosexuality and homophobia. She defines "blackmailability" as being "a space or mechanism of potential power" in terms of revealing homosexuality as leverage, as well as being "a structural residue of terrorist potential, of *blackmailability,* of Western maleness through the leverage of homophobia" (89). The secret relating to a "deviant" sexuality is precious, and if anyone discovers it, one is in danger of being blackmailed. I agree with what Sedgwick writes about "blackmailability", though it obviously mainly relates to the blackmail of homosexuals, the term becomes relevant in my research in a slightly different way where I see clear parallels to the blackmailability of heterosexual fallen men as well based on the transgression of morality. In this thesis Sedgwick's ideas of blackmailability becomes important to understand how it is to live a life founded upon secrets of transgressions and always living under constant threat of those secrets to be revealed and consequently being at risk of "blackmailability", as Jude does in chapter 2. Whereas blackmailability plays a different and special role in chapter 3, dealing with homosexual desire and homosexuality in Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, where we see the roles being reversed, the one with the secret, here being deviant sexuality, blackmails a heterosexual.

In *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1991), Sedgwick writes about "closetedness" and how any secret ultimately became seen as "*the* secret", meaning "deviant" sexuality (73). Sedgwick defines "closetedness" as:

> a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence – not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it. The speech acts that coming out, in turn, can comprise are as strangely specific. And they may have nothing to do with the acquisition of new information (3).

Sedgwick's ideas of "closetedness" are relevant to this thesis dealing with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and how the text in its narrative suggests that Dorian Gray's secret is that of a "deviant" sexuality and homosexual desire, and the importance of Dorian Gray's silence throughout the novel in relation to his personal life and secrets.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis explores the complexity of the concept of the "fallen man" in three chapters, each with a different angle showing the diversity of "fallen men" in Victorian literature from the middle to the last decade of the nineteenth century. The way the three novels are presented deliberately breaks with chronology in terms of time of publication. The chapters are structured according to theme and thereby creating a natural flow in the presentation of the different aspect of the "fallen man".

In the first chapter dealing with the novel *Ruth*, Elizabeth Gaskell deliberately surrounds her female protagonist with fallen men, using the idea of the fallen man for very specific purposes. By doing this, Gaskell is making both a social and a political point on fallenness, showing that fallenness is a societal construction, pointing out that if a woman can fall, then a man can fall as well. Further, the novel *Ruth* shows a number of men who do fall, with a particular focus on the different ways men can fall opposed to women. This chapter particularly emphasises the "fallen man" in terms of class. In *Ruth* the discussion is centred around the upper- and middle class of Victorian Britain and how men of these particular classes transgress, how and if they are subject to societal condemnation, and finally if the societal punishment is as severe for these "fallen men" as for their more well known counterparts, the "fallen women". In this chapter the thesis focuses on three male characters with different positions in the class hierarchy: Mr Henry Bellingham, Sir Thomas Campbell and Mr Richard Bradshaw. Each of these characters transgresses morality in different ways by living in sin and "sowing wild oats", gambling away the fortune, and committing forgery. These three male characters are very absent in the critical discussion of the novel and subsequently reveal a new layer/aspect of the novel. From the very first chapter it becomes apparent that knowledge about the fall is going to be a very important factor in the understanding of male fall.

The second chapter, breaking with the linear chronology, is a continuation of the investigation of class commenced in the first chapter. In contrast to the previous chapter the focus in this chapter is on the lower and middle class of the Victorian society, where the main question raised in the discussion is whether a working-class man can fall as men of higher

social standing do? In this novel the main emphasis is on two male characters: Jude Fawley who represents the working-class point of view and Richard Phillotson representing the middle class. The chapter discusses how the Victorian society was built "forces" men to fall, if choosing to pursue their dreams and yearning for love. This is portrayed through two current aspects in the novel, namely Jude's aspirations of climbing the social hierarchy and the institution of (heterosexual) marriage. Finally, the chapter looks at how Hardy's portrayal of masculinity has developed from Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* approximately forty years earlier, and how masculinity is undercut in *Jude the Obscure.* This raises the interesting view that the male fall in this novel is more than just the actual actions. In *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy is actively exploring the slowly changing conceptions of gender in the fin de siècle, and challenging the reader on how gender roles should work. Hardy depicts Jude as passively and unwillingly transgressing to social norms that apply to men, the idea of social mobility and the convention of marriage. In this way Hardy links the idea of the fallen man to being seen as feminised and passive. Therefore the fall in *Jude the Obscure* is a fall from masculinity to something other than masculinity, as the expected gender roles are being challenged and reversed. The fallen men are seen as deviants of the expected male role in the eyes of society.

The third chapter detaches itself from the discussion of class and continues on the foundation of sexuality laid in the second chapter. Instead of dealing with heterosexuality the chapter investigates homosexuality/homosexual desire, one of the "new inventions" of the *fin de siècle*, in two of Oscar Wilde's works. This also illustrates part of the development of masculinity throughout the nineteenth century as well as the male anxiety of the last decade of the Victorian period. In the third chapter we see that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis* are different kinds of fallen man stories. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* Wilde deliberately uses the framework of a Gothic story as a disguise for a fallen man story founded on deviant sexuality in the form of homosexual desire, whereas *De Profundis*, believed to be Wilde's confession and proof of repentance, rather is the narrative of Wilde's own fallen man story, where he takes charge of his own fallenness and presents himself as a Christ-like figure, the ultimate fallen man for Christians.

In this way this thesis hopes to shine a light on a part of literary history that has often been forgotten, and to show that the fallen man is a present character in Victorian literature, and that this thesis can contribute to a new understanding of the presence of men in Victorian novels, as well as the changing perception of the Victorian male role and masculinity.

1 The Fallen Man in the Shadow of the Fallen Woman: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*

A poor creature may fall, - as we call it – and yet be worth redeeming.
Fathers and mothers will forgive anything in a son, debauchery, gambling,
lying – even the worst dishonesty and fraud – but the "fallen" daughter is too
often regarded as an outcast whom no hope can be entertained.

- Anthony Trollope, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870)

Despite being one of the less known, less successful, and less read works of Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth* (1853), her second novel is one of the most fascinating fallen woman novels of the Victorian period. According to Maria Granic-White, Gaskell is the first author in the nineteenth century to place a fallen woman as the protagonist of a novel and keep her story the centre of attention throughout the narrative (147). Further, the novel depicts a different figure of the fallen woman than previously seen in literature when the novel opens up for redemption and a second chance for fallen women. The issue of the fallen woman was a recurring theme in novels of the nineteenth century, where Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens were two prominent novelists in the early and mid-Victorian period, enlightening their readers about a stigmatised and ostracised group in society, which they both had sympathy with. Elizabeth Gaskell started a new way of looking at the fallen woman, which would develop throughout the century as other novelists, such as George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and Thomas Hardy, wrote about the changing views of the fallen woman. Novels about the fallen woman were widely read by people from the middle and upper classes of British society, evoking strong emotions among the readership upon publication. Gaskell's view of the fallen woman differed from the majority of the Victorian population on the fact that she believed in a second chance and redemption for the fallen women, as depicted in *Ruth.* The moral depravity and the fates of the fallen woman depicted shocked its readership, which in many cases led people to burn their copies of *Ruth* (Easson, Introduction viii-ix).

In Victorian society female sexual transgression was not accepted according to the moral standards and Christian values, which society was built upon. The *OED* is used as a historical resource to prove the meaning of the concept in the nineteenth century. According to the *OED* the adjective "fallen" figuratively and in a moral sense refers to a person,

generally a woman, who has "lost purity or innocence", and historically it can be traced back to the first use of forlain (c1290) and fallen (1712) ("Fallen," *OED*). Whereas the phrase "fallen woman", first recorded in 1821, directly refers to a woman "who has surrendered her chastity". It has to be noted that the idea of the fallen woman is slightly older, then known under other synonyms such as unfortunate (1803) and damaged goods (1809) ("Fallen woman," *OED*). The ideal of the Victorian woman was the "angel in the house" (Langland 290). Female virginity was extremely important and the only sexual partner a woman was supposed to have was her husband (Michie 420). In the perception of sexual morality, there was an unwritten discrepancy in terms of gender, called the double standard. Men's sexual escapades or premarital experience were excused, and sometimes accepted, on grounds of the virility and lust of the male gender. On the other hand, women were believed to have a weak or non-existent sexual desire, if she transgressed it had to be deliberate and a choice of evil, therefore "a much greater crime" than male sexual transgression (Mitchell, *Fallen* xi-xii). It was partly because of this view women in both Victorian society and the novel were given all the blame and responsibility for the sexual transgression leading to the fall. Whether the woman was active in the events leading to the fall, being seduced by a man of higher social stature, or simply being the victim of rape, did not matter in terms of how society judged a fallen woman. Women living in nineteenth-century Britain lived under a tremendous pressure in complying with the social and moral expectations set for them by the Victorian society of being chaste, pure and modest. Fallen women, being deviants not being able to comply with the moral standards and values of society were harshly punished and often ostracised (Watt 9).

In contrast, Victorian men did not attract the same attention as women upon sexual transgression, and subsequently, they were not punished as harshly as women, if punished at all. When dealing with the theme of "fallenness" in Victorian literature, a striking tendency is that there is very little attention both from the author and the text, as well as from critics, on the responsibility and the blame of men who are also responsible for the sexual transgression.[5] Throughout the narrative in *Ruth* the reader is presented with a handful of men who all play important roles in Ruth's life, both in negative and positive ways. Because Ruth is the protagonist of the novel, and the main project of the novel is to follow her in her struggle for redemption, very little critical attention has been devoted to the male characters in *Ruth*. Similarly to the stories of the female characters, the male characters in *Ruth* have

[5] For further details see: Easson, *Elizabeth Gaskell*; Shelston, "*Ruth:* Mrs Gaskell's Neglected Novel; Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*.

stories to tell, and all have a role to play in the fallen woman's life. The emphasis in this chapter will be on how in her novel, Elizabeth Gaskell deliberately surrounds her female protagonist with fallen men, using the idea of the fallen man for very specific purposes. By doing this, Gaskell is making both a social and a political point on fallenness, showing that fallenness is a societal construction, pointing out that if a woman can fall, then a man can fall as well. Further, the novel *Ruth* shows a number of men who do fall, with a particular focus on the different ways men can fall opposed to women. This chapter will take a closer look at three of the male characters in *Ruth*: Mr Bellingham, Sir Thomas Campbell, and Richard Bradshaw. All three come from different places within the class spectre, and they transgress according to Victorian morals, values and rules in slightly different ways. The focus on these three characters will be on class, masculinity, their fall, and how and if their transgressions have any consequences.

Gaskell's Social and Political Agenda

According to Alan Shelston, *Ruth* "was explicitly conceived as a social-problem novel" and further "it drew upon its author's direct experience of the issues it sought to bring to public attention" (Introduction, vii). According to British society, fallen women were a major problem, especially in the larger cities of Britain in the nineteenth century. Generally, women who disobeyed the moral standards and values of the Victorian society and became fallen women were left to take care of themselves. The social stigma would make it impossible to carry on the same life as previously, and many fallen women were essentially forced to prostitution as a last option of survival. The problematic aspect of prostitution in the nineteenth century is that some women had no other choice but to do it, either as a consequence of fallenness or poverty. In the larger cities of Britain there were huge markets for prostitutes and Henry Mayhew estimated that there were close to 80 000 prostitutes only in London alone in the 1850s (Thompson 257).

Prior to writing her first novel *Mary Barton* (1848) and later *Ruth* (1853), Elizabeth Gaskell was engaged in charitable work in Manchester. Here she met unmarried mothers, fallen women in the eyes of society, and learned about the sufferings they experienced (Shelston, *Introduction* viii). According to Alan Shelston, Gaskell knew that she was challenging her contemporary readership in "a distinctly provocative way" when she devoted her novel "explicitly and exclusively" to the controversial issue of the "fallen woman" (*Introduction* x). This also becomes very evident in a letter Gaskell wrote to Anne Robsen in January 1853, after the publication of *Ruth.*

> ‘An unfit subject for fiction’ is *the* thing to say about it; I knew all\this/before; but I determined notwithstanding to speak my mind out about it; only how I shrink with more pain than I can tell you from what people are saying, though I wd do every jot of it over again to-morrow [*sic*] (Chapple and Pollard 220).

The letter shows that Gaskell bid defiance to what is considered “proper” and morally right issues for novels, which was the main reason for negative reactions by her contemporary readership. In her writing she also conveys a passion for her “cause”, the fallen women, stating that she does not regret it and would do it all over again, despite the pain the reviews and comments afflicts on her. Furthermore, she writes that her friends express “deep regret” over *Ruth* and its content (Chapple and Pollard 220). In the letter she writes that the novel was prohibited in her own household, as in many others, most likely to protect her children from the content of *Ruth* (221). These two sentences give support to what Alan Shelston says about the reception of *Ruth.* According to Shelston, reception has to be divided into two views: reception from friends and people who knew Gaskell, who were the most critical voices against her work, and the more experienced reviewers who were generally generous and sympathetic. This aspect of the reception of *Ruth* is very interesting, because one might expect the divided reception to be the other way around. By some of them, *Ruth* was received as “a proper and valuable commentary on a subject of public concern” (*Introduction* ix).

Elizabeth Gaskell had a close encounter with a fallen woman in her own household in the mid-1840s, with “the unwonted pregnancy of Annie, her cook” (Chapple and Shelston xiii). As a consequence of her premarital pregnancy she was deserted both by her mother and her seducer (Chapple and Shelston xiii). In January 1850, Gaskell sent a letter to Charles Dickens asking for help in the matters of “saving” a fallen woman, as Dickens knew Miss Coutts, who had a “scheme of emigration” (Chapple and Pollard 98-99). In many ways, the life and circumstances of this “fallen woman”, whom Gaskell met in New Bayley prison in Manchester, inspired Gaskell when she wrote *Ruth*. In her letter, Gaskell writes about a young girl who lost her father when she was two years old and was neglected by her mother and sent away for schooling. At age 14 she was apprenticed by a reputed dressmaker and later replaced with another dressmaker who let the local surgeon seduce her, and now lives a miserable life in a prison. Gaskell is approaching Dickens on how she can help this young girl emigrate from Britain to Australia and have the chance to start a new life there. Australia is the land of new beginnings, as portrayed in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations,* where

Magwitch immigrates to Australia and "re-invents" himself as an honest man because nobody knows him or his crimes "down-under". Gaskell wants to make sure that the young girl travels with a "*creditable"* ship, which will spare her of the corruption on common emigrant ships. "I want her to go out with as free and unbranded a character as she can; if possible, the very fact of having been in prison &c to be unknown on her landing [*sic*]." She ends her letter to Dickens with a feeling of hope: "I am sure she will do well if we can but get her out in a *good* ship" (Chapple and Pollard 98-100).

From these textual sources, it is possible to conclude that Gaskell did have a special interest and care for fallen women, and by writing *Ruth*, Gaskell makes a social and political point when she also includes several fallen men as well in her narrative. In a letter to Anne Robson from January 1853, she writes: "but I have spoken out my mind in the best way I can, and I have no doubt that what was meant so earnestly *must* do some good, though perhaps not all the good, or not the *very good* I meant" (Chapple and Pollard 221). This expresses Gaskell's intentions of wanting to influence the contemporary views, which the Victorian society had towards fallen women through the medium of the novel, a voice she felt comfortable with. It seems likely based on this evidence that Gaskell believed that sexual transgression was not right, but she wanted to achieve a second chance for those who had fallen. Her text, by including fallen men, also has the more radical effect of problematizing the societal construction of fallenness in the way that the novels about fallen women only concern and punish women, and not men.

The Male Aspect of the Fall

Naturally, the main focus in a fallen woman novel is on the fallen woman, her struggle through life from her fall to the final redemption of her sins, which she achieves in the end of the novel. However, throughout the narrative the reader is presented with a handful of men who all play important roles in Ruth's life and in the structure of the novel. A common denominator for the men is that they are all placed in the shadow of the female protagonist, whom the narrative centres around. The novel creates no space neither for a prominent male figure nor male figures. In *Ruth,* Gaskell describes a very patriarchal society on the level of rule-, moral-, and law making, where the women are expected to comply and live by the given rules, whereas the men are in a much more free position in terms of abiding by the rules and morals. This is an interesting point because most women in the text, except for Ruth, are *de facto* the gatekeepers of morality. It seems that these gatekeeping women have internalised the rules of a patriarchal society, which is both destructive and self-destructive at

the same time. Despite the presence of several men in the novel, the text does not spend a great deal of time describing or dwelling on any of the male characters, and as a consequence the reader only gets a very limited perception and understanding of the male characters. It is as if Gaskell or the novel itself does not want to give the men a prominent position in the novel. Another aspect of casting the male characters into the shadow is that their crimes are given less attention and consequences. The lack of critics' attention on male characters were possibly part of the process of redressing the balance of criticism and focal point in literature, as well as feminist literary theory giving critics a new way of understanding and analysing female characters. I believe that it is therefore important to look at the male characters in *Ruth* with new glasses, and reveal aspects of men, fallenness and masculinity, which have not gained the attention they deserve.

In relation to the fallenness of the men there is an interesting ambivalence in the novel in terms of the reader's awareness, limited but still existing, of the men's presence as fallen as opposed to the novel's society's unawareness of the men's presence as fallen. This might be more applicable to the modern reader, but it seems that it is easier for the reader to see the transgressions and crimes of the male characters in the novel and how that fits with the aspects of the fallen man. Whereas there are no indications, whatsoever, in the novel suggesting that female characters, or male characters for that sake, see men as fallen. I think this supports the notion of women internalising the patriarchal rules and morals, accepting the double standard and not questioning male transgressions. In the eyes of patriarchal society, the notion of a fallen man does not fit with the world picture that had been created, where the woman was to be held scapegoat for transgressions.

The epigraph in the beginning of this chapter is essentially the basis for the further discussion in this chapter. The quotation is from the novel *The Vicar of Bullhampton* by Anthony Trollope, published in 1870. Though there are two decades separating *Ruth* and *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, the epigraph illustrates, in a very direct way, the attitudes of Victorian society towards fallenness as well as the existing double standard which lead to two sets of rules and practices; one for men and one for women. Secondly, this is essentially what Gaskell refutes in *Ruth* and what the novel reverses. The fallen woman is redeemed and forgiven, whereas the fallen man is far from forgiven.

1.1 Mr Bellingham/Mr Donne: Male Sexual Promiscuity and Sowing Wild Oats

My dear, remember the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; remember that, Ruth.

- Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth* (1853)

Mr Henry Bellingham is the first male character introduced to the narrative (16-17), apart from the unidentified guardian, who is undoubtedly male. What seems to be Gaskell's agenda in the early chapters prior to Ruth and Mr Bellingham's fall is to characterise Mr Bellingham in as many flattering ways as possible. There are at least two reasons why the text paints this overly positive picture of Mr Bellingham as a dashing, young, gentleman in the first volume of the novel. Firstly, this makes it easier for Ruth to fall for him, persuading her about his good nature. Secondly, by characterizing Bellingham in such a positive light, the text caters to the expectations the readers have to a Victorian gentleman. The result of the positive characterisation and the "coincidental" heroic effort of Mr Bellingham is that the reader also likes him, and this positive relationship makes it more difficult to see Mr Bellingham as fallen in the same way as Ruth is more easily seen.

Despite the fall never being described in detail or explicitly said aloud in the novel, the scene of the fall would probably be even more obvious to the contemporary readers than to the modern reader, because the contemporary readers were more used to reading nineteenth century social codes. Therefore, they would more easily understand the activities constituting and leading to Ruth's and Mr Bellingham's fall. Gaskell does not at any point of the novel give any detailed description of sexual contact between any characters, which would lead to a fall; this is only implied between the lines. Instead, Gaskell creates a vacuum, from the point where Ruth agrees to accompany Mr Bellingham to London and their "outrages" travel to Wales reaffirming any suspicion the reader might have had about illicit affairs between the two. Later, when Leonard is born the text reveals for certain that Ruth is a fallen woman with all the implications that entails. Gaskell's narrative choices in not describing or directly telling the reader about the sexual transgressions that Ruth and Mr Bellingham participate in, is later found in Thomas Hardy's fallen-woman novel *Tess of D'Urbervilles* published in 1891, where Hardy wanted to change the Victorian society's assumptions and views on the fallen woman. In *Tess,* as in *Ruth,* there is a vacuum from chapter eleven through fourteen: from Tess being "rescued" from drunk people, Tess is

accompanying on her way home by Alec, getting lost in the mist, Tess falling asleep waiting for Alec to come back, and to subtly being informed that Tess has a child (57-58, 70). As in *Ruth* where the old farm-hand who used to work for Ruth's father suspects trouble when seeing Mr Bellingham (45), people other than Tess understand her fate before Tess does herself. The quotation "out of the frying-pan into the fire" (*Tess* 53) denotes that the unpleasantness Tess has had with Queen of Spades is nothing compared to what Alec will do to her.

What reinforces the fall of Mr Bellingham, is the fact he keeps Ruth as his mistress. Their affair is not a one-time thing, which could be explained as Mr Bellingham "sowing his wild oats". Mr Bellingham knows that he breaks all of the moral codes, Christian values and Victorian rules of propriety when he elopes with Ruth to Wales. Further, Foucault writes "if it was necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere […] The brothel and mental hospital would be those places of tolerance (4). I argue that it is possible to replace the places of tolerance that Foucault suggests, with the rural and remote landscape of Wales. This is also what Dickens does in his novels where he has a tendency to send deviants, such as fallen women and criminals to Australia. It seems that their illicit relationship is more or less accepted in Wales, at least on the surface, and more so than it would have been in the city, because the chance of a scandal is smaller in Wales.

When Mrs Bellingham is introduced to the narrative, the seriousness of Mr Bellingham's affair is evident. Mrs Bellingham's biggest fear is that this scandal, which she calls the situation where his son lives at an inn in Wales with his lower-class mistress, and that this will be publically known. Mrs Morgan, the innkeeper, who is afraid of scandal on behalf of Mrs Bellingham, asks Ruth to stay away and use the back door "it will, maybe, save scandal" (74). By agreeing to his mother's plan of leaving Wales and also leaving Ruth behind (77), meaning termination of their sinful relationship, he leads Ruth into desperation and her attempting to commit suicide (93). More blame is assigned to Mr Bellingham as the seducer due to age. According to the novel, Mr Bellingham is approximately 23 years old, while Ruth is only 16 years old and practically still a child.

The transgressions of the fallen woman are often revealed biologically by pregnancy, but in terms of the fallen man this becomes a difficult way of revealing fallenness. Therefore I argue that illness, both ordinary illness and venereal disease, functions as signs of fallenness and in their respective ways as punishments for the sexual transgression. In *Ruth*, living in sin with his mistress leads to consequences for Mr Bellingham. When in Wales Mr Bellingham

gets seriously ill, and it is very clear that Mrs Bellingham believes that Ruth, and the fall, are the causes of his illness (73). It is worth noticing that it is Mrs Bellingham, a person who Mr Bellingham has a strained relationship to, who is responsible for nursing him back to life from his illness, and manages to get him out of Wales. His mother brings him abroad to Paris, to minimise the scandal which might come in the aftermath. The irony of that particular destination is that Paris in the nineteenth century was in addition to being the cultural capital of Europe, was also seen as the "city of sin".

In his article "Sowing Wild Oats: The Fallen Man in Late-Victorian Society Melodrama", David Lawrence has seen a tendency where the fallen man is reclaimed by female purity (888). This means that the fallen man does not have to die in the same manner as what is expected of the fallen woman (Auerbach 30). Though *Ruth* is a much earlier piece, this might be an explanation to why Mr Bellingham recovers from illness. In the first period of illness, his mother saves him. Towards the end of the novel Mr Bellingham, then Mr Donne[6], falls ill a second time, and of the two this is the most powerful one in terms of fallenness. Mr Donne is affected with typhus, which Sara Malton points out is a symbol of Mr Bellingham's corruption and in most cases typhus was a death sentence (*Forgery* 64). Despite risking her life, Ruth decides to nurse Mr Donne back to health. Ruth sacrifices her own life to attain redemption for her sins by saving Mr Donne's life, just as the examples Lawrence provides in his article (889).

According to Auerbach the fallen woman in literature has to die because of her transgressions, as a punishment or a way to repentance (becoming a repentant sinner). In general there is not the same requirement of men having to die, as is present for the fallen woman. In *Ruth,* due to the minor role of the male characters the reader does not know the result in terms of life and death, possibly because that is not important to the text, predominantly focusing on the fallen woman. It is interesting to note that Ruth choses to nurse Mr Bellingham (and others) back from typhus, and in the end sacrificing her life for the better of others. Ruth's actions are given an ambivalent role in the novel. The actions can be analysed in two different ways; one where Ruth is nursing the ill, purely to sacrifice her life to be a repentant sinner, and in this version critics have compared Ruth to Mary Magdalene. A second view is that Ruth is sacrificing her life for Bellingham, saving a fallen man and as a

[6] It is intersting to note Gaskell's choice of surname for Mr Bellingham. Donne gives me a direct connotation to John Donne (1572-1631), the Renaissance writer who had two "faces": Jack Donne in his early years when he wrote extremely erotic pieces of literature, not appealing to the Victorian readership. John Donne in his later pahse in life, when he became a minister and wrote sermons that appealed to the Victorians. This also gives the impression of Mr Belligham having a "good" and "naughty" side to his identity.

bonus she becomes a repentant sinner. In the novel Bellingham is saved twice from death by women; the first time by his mother and the second by Ruth. When Mr Donne re-enters the narrative towards the end of the novel he finds out that he has a son named Leonard. This has been unknown to him because he escaped the country with his mother. Ruth and Mr Benson forbid him to have any contact and paternal responsibility for Leonard. This can this be seen as part of Mr Donne's punishment, where he is denied contact with his only son and heir. Aristocrats and the royals were known for having illegitimate children; despite it was against Victorian morality, again showing that the double standard worked across class spectres as well as gender roles. At this point Mr Bellingham is alone, unmarried in his thirties.

Further, Mr Bellingham does not achieve redemption for his fall and sins in the same way as Ruth does. Gaskell opens up for forgiving fallen women but fails to offer the same for the fallen men. This might be because men are not punished as severely and harshly as their female counterparts, and therefor they do not need the same redemption. Another explanation to this is that the novel represents men largely as seducers and women largely as victims in need for redemption.

There is an inconsistency in the way Victorian society accepted male promiscuity and sowing wild oats, as the double standard makes it seem. Why does Mrs Bellingham do everything in her power to save her son from Ruth? And why does she do such an extensive job of hiding it? She threatens Ruth as well as pays her off. In this there is a double standard in itself. The most obvious explanation is the fear of scandal, which would have devastating consequences for reputation and respect of the Bellingham name. I believe that this show that the male promiscuity and sowing wild oats were allowed as long as it was hidden, but seized being accepted if it was revealed and scandal hit the transgressors because that would lead to loss of status and social death.

In the first chapters leading to the fall, Gaskell describes Mr Bellingham as a gentleman, and attributes him with a heroic deed when saving a child from drowning. Up to the point of the fall, unknown what kind of business took place in London, Gaskell holds back on Mr Bellingham's background information. When the narrative finally gives small glimpses of his past, Gaskell shows that Mr Bellingham is not as honourable and gentleman-like as he appeared to be during the first chapters of the novel. It also shows that being an aristocrat is not a guarantee of clean and pure intentions. From the point of Ruth and Mr Bellingham's fall, the narrative changes its approach to describing Mr Bellingham. Instead of being a masculine gentleman, Gaskell introduces more and more details that attribute to depicting Mr Bellingham as a weak man. Clearly, Mrs Bellingham is a strong woman who

knows what she wants. In addition she has the power, both social and financial (30), over Mr Bellingham. It is she who comes to clean up the sinful mess he has entangled himself into. Both of the periods of illness weaken Mr Bellingham, which leads him in the hands of women. He will not survive without the help of the female sex.

Mr Bellingham is the only one of the three male characters from *Ruth* discussed in this chapter who belongs to the aristocratic, upper class. Nevertheless, being aristocratic is a factor that provokes the need to end this scandal and Mr Bellingham's behavioural pattern. Taking him abroad is one way of solving the problem: nobody knows them as they do in England. In doing this, Mrs Bellingham also assigns blame for the fall on a male character in the novel, and if you look at it in a broader context, Gaskell first of all opens up for society (people and the church) to allow fallen women a second chance for them to redeem themselves for a mistake they have committed. Secondly, Gaskell challenges society to open their eyes for the fact that men are as responsible for sexual transgression as women are, and should no longer have the luxury of not being stigmatised.

The impropriety of Ruth and Mr Bellingham's relationship is quickly noticed by the people at the inn in Wales, and is illustrated in the thoughts of Jenny:

> Indeed! And she's not his wife … that's clear as day. His wife would have brought her maid, and given herself twice as many airs about the sitting-rooms; while this poor miss never spoke, but kept as still as a mouse. Indeed, and young men will be young men; and as long as their fathers and mothers shut their eyes, it's none of my business to go about asking questions (56).

Jenny's thoughts reveal both Mr Bellingham's class, being an aristocrat/upper-class, and the façade that was expected of certain people. Clearly, Ruth does not comply with these expectations age wise or in her manners. Further, what is interesting in this quote is to note that it is Ruth's silence and not her ostentation that signifies her fall. A tendency in the novel is that whilst in Wales, male characters living at the inn do not react to the improper relationship of Ruth and Mr Bellingham, whereas it is the female characters who reject and denounce the improper conduct. This is illustrated when a man in conversation with his wife speaks of Ruth's beautiful appearance and state of innocence. Whereas the wife corrects her husband for giving her flattering attention, and utters, "Well! I do think it is a shame such people should be allowed to come here. To think of such wickedness under the same roof" (61). It is only natural that such remarks and attitudes are present in the novel as they shed

light to the moral attitudes which governed Victorian people. However, what is striking is that Ruth, and not Mr Bellingham, is subjected to the moral repulsion of the Victorian society. Another aspect worth noticing is that the adults have very strong opinions on the matter of moral appropriateness, but they never dare to confront Ruth with it. Instead, the narrative lets a young boy be the voice of condemnation when Ruth tries to cuddle a baby: "She's not a lady! … She's a bad, naughty girl – mamma said so, she did; and she sha'n't kiss our baby." (62) When the nanny tries to apologize and explain away what the little boy just said, the boy sharply replies: "It's no notion; it's true nurse; and I heard you say it yourself" (62).

A central question in terms of the fallen man is who needs to know about the transgression, sexual in the case of Mr Bellingham, for it being known as a fall? In *Ruth* there are only a handful of people who know about the fall of Ruth, and fewer who know about Mr Bellingham's fall. The novel was written in a time where Christianity was widespread in the British population, and before the religious crisis in the mid-nineteenth century. The novel itself is strongly religious, both in its references and allusions to the Bible and in the way that characters, such as Ruth, in desperation turns to God for help. In light of this religious dimension, I argue that even when nobody knows about the fall within the Christian context of Victorian society, it seems reasonable to believe that God is seen as knowing about everything that happens. And therefore even a completely hidden scandal will always have some kind of spectator, in novels of course the reader knows about it, as does the author. One of the most powerful ideas of the Christian God is that he is somebody who sees everything about a person and therefore it seems to be enough that God knows that Mr Bellingham has transgressed and is a fallen man, because despite if a man manages to hide his fallenness to others, God still sees and knows of the man's fallenness.

George Watt's book *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (1984) investigates fallen women in seven Victorian novels. As one of very few critics, he mentions and devotes several pages to Mr Bellingham in the discussion of the novel. When dealing with Mr Bellingham, Watt looks at his role within the novel *Ruth.* Watt is ruthless when discussing Mr Bellingham, and assigns him the role of a beast in the novel (24). He is not at all sympathetic towards Mr Bellingham's character, a character with no respect for Ruth, the representation of young, innocent Victorian women, and with a sinister agenda of exploiting Ruth to get what he wants (24-25). Moreover, Watt points out that Jemima also describes Mr Bellingham as looking like a horse in the novel. According to Watt, the horse is used as a

symbol “for the uncontrollable instinctive drives which form part of the animal nature of man” (26).

It seems to me that Watt is doing in his discussion and examples of Mr Bellingham is to de-humanise him and not giving him any responsibility for his sexual promiscuity in the novel. In addition, it seems as if Watt is using a line of argument about men’s sexual responsibility, linking it to the idea that men are animals and therefore not responsible for their actions. Based on my reading and research on the fallen man this seems like a misreading of Mr Bellingham and I think it is wrong. I rather believe that Gaskell is making Mr Bellingham responsible for his actions throughout the novel. Gaskell does this by treating Mr Bellingham in a way similar to how a fallen woman would have been treated. Though it is much more subtle, it is still there.

Both societally speaking and in most literature, it is the case that men can get away with sexual promiscuity if it is not widely known. In *Ruth,* Gaskell does something different when she writes about a man who is sexually promiscuous, who causes another woman’s fall, keeps the fall hidden from most people apart from Ruth and Mrs Bellingham, but his fall is known to the reader and God. It is almost as if Gaskell is choosing to use her authorial power to punish somebody who otherwise would go unpunished by society. One of the things the text does is to try to even things out between men and women, and that is why Gaskell gives Mr Bellingham a fate that in some ways mirrors Ruth’s.

1.2 Sir Thomas Campbell: The Overlooked and Forgotten Male Character in *Ruth*

I am a very passive recipient of all such intelligence, and might very probably have forgotten all about it, if the Times of this morning had not been so full of the disgrace of the young lady's father.

- Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth* (1853)

In the third volume of *Ruth,* Gaskell introduces a new male character, Sir Thomas Campbell. His presence in the novel turns out to be extremely short, and in the larger context of the novel where the main focus is on the protagonist Ruth, her fall, and her way to redemption, Sir Thomas Campbell is, quite understandably, easily forgotten. In the course of approximately 30 pages Sir Thomas Campbell's name is mentioned in total three times on two separate occasions. Together with a handful of other characters in the novel (Mrs Mason, the old employee of Ruth's family, Thomas, and Mrs Pearson) Sir Thomas Campbell's role has to be characterised as minor. Nevertheless, all of these minor characters are important in the development of the plot and events of the novel. Despite Sir Thomas Campbell's minor role, the few details and pieces of information conveyed to the reader do establish the foundation of a second "fallen man" in *Ruth.* I believe that Sir Thomas Campbell's apparent unnecessariness as a character means that his presence is all the more telling.

Sir Thomas Campbell is one of a few passive characters in *Ruth* whom the reader never meets in person in the novel. Whenever Sir Thomas Campbell is part of the narrative, he is mentioned in a conversation, where he is either referred to or talked about. Unlike many of the other characters in the novel, he does not take an active part in the narrative. Further, he has no connection to the people living in Eccleston, nor does he have any contact with the main characters of the novel. The only exception might be Mr Bellingham/Mr Donne, who we learn was engaged to his daughter not long ago. One can only presume that they have met, though Gaskell never gives any information of this ever happening, presumably because it has no great importance to the plot.

In my research there are no traces of Sir Thomas Campbell being discussed or mentioned in the critical works dealing with *Ruth.* The main attention of the critics has been on Ruth's fall and redemption, with a particular focus on feminist readings. Male characters in general in the novel, and Sir Thomas Campbell in particular, have been forgotten or simply

overlooked in the process. In spite of Sir Thomas Campbell's minor role in the novel, he turns out to be very important to my reading. In the setting of the fallen man Sir Thomas Campbell introduces us to several new ways of looking at the fallen man. He is the first character in the novel that introduces the reader to a financial fall. By reading the passages concerning him closely, we get examples of the importance of social position, publicity and finally statelessness.

The reader's first meeting with Sir Thomas Campbell is in a conversation between Jemima and Richard Bradshaw. Richard is questioning Jemima about her chances of getting married to the wealthy Mr Farquhar, and he utters a wish of having Mr Farquhar as his brother-in-law (272). The following paragraph depicts how Sir Thomas Campbell is introduced to the narrative. The information Richard tells his sister is obtained from gossip he hears whilst in London.

> By the way, have you heard down here that Donne is going to be married? I heard of it in town, just before I left, from a man that was good authority. Some Sir Thomas Campbell's seventh daughter: a girl without a penny; father ruined himself by gambling, and obliged to live abroad. But Donne is not a man to care for any obstacle, from all accounts, when once he has taken a fancy. It was love at first sight, they say. I believe he did not know of her existence a month ago (Gaskell 272-273).

Sir Thomas Campbell's "fall" differs from the previously discussed "fall" of Mr Bellingham, which is more related to sexual transgression and that he defies the rules, values, and morals which is expected of the male role. The paragraph clearly states that Sir Thomas Campbell's fall is related to financial recklessness. It seems that Sir Thomas Campbell has been weak when it comes to the frivolous activity of gambling.

To describe Sir Thomas Campbell's situation Gaskell chooses to use the verb "ruined". In addition, Gaskell uses the reflexive personal pronoun "himself" in combination with "ruined", which clearly places the blame and responsibility on Sir Thomas Campbell himself. Despite being used as a verb in this context "ruined" is ambiguous and operates with different meanings. In this context it is worth noticing that the word "ruined" gains different meanings when applied to the two genders. Primarily in combination with men, "ruined" is referred to as a financial term, and can be linked to the financial fall of men. The same word also holds the function as a sexual term, and then mainly referring back to the woman, ruined by her fall. Gambling is more abstract than sex resulting in ruination. Unlike sexual ruination,

which can be carried out without any consent, for example through rape, there is to a much larger degree the need of consent in the ruination by gambling, as well as an active and voluntarily participation. Also with gambling there is an implicit understanding of winning or losing as part of the game, whereas this notion of winning or losing is not as easily applicable to having sex.

It is possible that Gaskell means something beyond the written phrase "father ruined himself by gambling (…)" (273). It seems like she by purposely using the phrase "ruined himself" both meaning the financial fall he has committed, but it seems that Gaskell juxtaposes Sir Thomas Campbell's situation with that of a stereotypical fallen woman (which would also apply for Ruth). The placement of guilt is clear and it is placed on the person "committing" the fall. Did Gaskell do this to provoke reactions in her readership or challenge the current unequal practice of punishing and stigmatising fallen women?

With a "fall" there almost automatically follows some kind of consequence or punishment. In the "fall" of Sir Thomas Campbell the consequence and punishment more or less intertwine depending how you define the two terms. What is also interesting with this "fall" in the narrative, is that the ramifications affect an innocent second party, namely his family and more specifically his daughter. This introduces the aspect of transferability of ruin onto others, a point Gaskell would use again in *North and South*, the novel succeeding *Ruth*. Here, the late Mr Thornton ruins his family through speculation, in other words financial recklessness.

> His father speculated wildly, failed, and then killed himself, because he could not bear the disgrace. All his former friends shrunk from the disclosures that had to be made of his dishonest gambling—wild, hopeless struggles, made with other people's money, to regain his own moderate portion of wealth. No one came forwards to help the mother and this boy. There was another child, I believe, a girl; too young to earn money, but of course she had to be kept (Gaskell, *North and South* 80).

Despite of the ruination being transferred onto others, it seems that his son manages to work his way back into wealth and managing his own mill. This is also the case for Sir Thomas Campbell's daughter, though in a slightly different way. The fall of a parent would more or less always affect the family in one way or the other. Though we know from the text that Sir Thomas Campbell has seven daughters, we know nothing about his spouse. The focus of the narrative is on the seventh daughter who was engaged to marry Mr Donne. It

would be possible to presume that the other daughters are either already married or dead since there is no explicit mention of them. From the text, it seems that the engagement was made public before the scandal broke out (273). However, of reasons unknown we learn two chapters later that Sir Thomas Campbell's daughter jilted Mr Donne soon after the scandal was made public. It would be difficult for her to marry in Britain after the scandal. In addition, due to her father's lack of financial means there would be no dowry when she married. From Farquhar's conversation with Mr Benson we learn that "she broke off the engagement to marry some Russian prince or other—a better match" (305). Just like her father, she has been more or less driven out of Great Britain to marry a Russian prince which has its advantages: firstly her father's scandal would most likely be unknown to somebody that far away. Secondly, the message Gaskell creates by introducing a prince is wealth, which is confirmed with the three last words "a better match".

Once again, Gaskell's social and political thoughts become apparent in the brief mentioning of Sir Thomas Campbell's daughter. The novel truly depicts a society (mainly the middle class and the aristocracy) of subjugated women, who are all reliant on the protection and financial support of the man. Gaskell shows the readers one example of the outcome when a father falls, he puts his daughters' future at risk – not being able to live financially independently without the help of men. Changes came in 1882 with the "Married Women's Property Act" (Mitchell, *Daily Life* 104).

The consequences directed towards Sir Thomas himself concerns the loss of his fortune and land, something which is not specifically stated in the novel. What is said is that his seventh daughter is "a girl without a penny" (273), which refers back to Sir Thomas Campbell being her sole provider as she is unmarried. Without money his hereditary, titled order *baronet* is worthless ("Baronet," *OED*). Sir Thomas Campbell has more or less been forced to leave Great Britain to live aboard in Baden, Switzerland (272, 304). His connections in the "high society" in London would most likely turn their backs to him after the scandal and it would be very difficult for Sir Thomas Campbell to continue life in Great Britain, where his name would be forever linked to the scandal. It is worth noticing that Sir Thomas Campbell does not commit suicide as Mr Thornton does in *North and South* as a means of escaping his ruination. This also shows that the fallen man does not necessarily have to die, as Nina Auerbach points out as being the rule for fallen women (30).

In terms of masculinity, Sir Thomas Campbell's thoughtless actions and moments of fun, do not give him any sympathy, and works against the ideal he as a Victorian man was supposed to live by. A second aspect of the lack of sympathy is of course linked to the way

Gaskell chooses to introduce and form the character of Sir Thomas Campbell. Because he is such a minor character, it is more or less impossible for the character to enlist reader sympathy, unlike other characters in the novel. In a very careless way he jeopardizes his own and his family's wealth. How much there was is never mentioned and the amount is irrelevant in this case. The relevant focus is his fall from a "high" position to living a life penniless and ostracized from the world he once knew. In the end Sir Thomas Campbell comes off as irresponsible and arrogant in the way he squanders his money. More importantly, he, as a Victorian man fails his mission in life to support and keep his family safe.

The second time the fate of Sir Thomas Campbell is brought up is two chapters later when Mr Farquhar visits Mr Benson after Mr Bradshaw revealed the truth about Ruth's identity and cuts all contact with Mr Benson. Mr Farquhar brings the news of the current situation of Sir Thomas Campbell, a person unknown to Mr Benson, as the scandal has gained space in the *Times*. Few women read newspapers early in the Victorian era, but there is always an exception to the tendency: "The novelist Elizabeth Gaskell shared a subscription with several neighbours; they bought one copy between them and passed it around." (Mitchell, *Daily Life* 237). At the beginning of the Victorian period few people read newspapers daily, as they were expensive. In the early period only men read newspapers either at the club or at the office. The *Times* reported important information that was essential for "influential men". As times past production costs dropped and the stamp duty was repealed in 1855, which led to more people reading newspapers (Mitchell, *Daily Life* 237). In *Ruth* Mr Farquhar subscribes the *Times,* a luxury the Bensons cannot afford. The fact that Sir Thomas Campbell's fate is broadcasted through the *Times* is the last "nail in the coffin". His conduct and ruin is now broadcasted to the people of the "high society", who have not already heard of the scandal, and other "important men".

An important factor in the fall in the nineteenth century is the role of publicity. Publicity functions like the term *scandal* itself: it constitutes both the transgression and the punishment (Cohen 94). In the Victorian period, scandals of all sorts proliferated in the popular press. The newspaper generated stories for popular consumption in a scale that had not been possible before. The papers' greater availability, in addition to increasing literacy, made scandals publicly accessible in new ways (Cohen 6). As Cohen writes, financial scandals in the nineteenth century "rely on the public exposure of private information that damages the subject's reputation" (9). In the fall and ruination of Sir Thomas Campbell, publicity seems to be the one factor, which really seals his destiny. Sir Thomas Campbell's

breach with Victorian moral standards towards gambling and the male responsibility of providing for his family, is publically broadcasted in the *Times*, where it damages his reputation as Cohen claims. Further, he is stripped of all dignity and made a subject of public ridicule/mockery for the whole of Britain. As soon as the private secret reaches the *Times*, Sir Thomas Campbell is no longer in charge of controlling the knowledge of who knows and who does not. If you compare the cases of Bellingham and Campbell, you clearly see the ramifications that the publicity has for Campbell. Bellingham's private secrets are never revealed in a national newspaper, and so the punishment of publicity and amount of people knowing about his transgressions are very limited, and they continue to stay that way. One thing that is identical for the male and female fall is when a scandal is known; there is absolutely no privacy. In his book, Cohen says that the Victorian novel has a double duty. It serves to tell stories from private lives as entertainment, and at the same time using them to teach "widely applicable public lessons", in other words literature functioning generally deterrent. Further, Cohen believes that scandal depends on the notion of privacy and newspapers, which "make a show of exhibiting this privacy for public consumption" (76).

When close reading the few pieces of information we as readers are given by Gaskell about the character of Sir Thomas, one of the things which strikes out is the small phrase "obliged to live abroad" (273). From the text we learn that Sir Thomas is a baronet caught in the middle between the wealthy aristocracy and the growing Victorian middle class, in terms of power, wealth and status. Despite his unclear and undetermined place in the social hierarchy of Victorian Britain, we learn that he is included in the "high society" of London, meaning that he socialises amongst the wealthy and powerful people in London. Sir Thomas' fall, which is a purely financial fall/ruination, results in a drastic change of life. Money and property have most likely been the main reasons why Sir Thomas has been included and most likely appreciated and liked by the people of "high society". Eventually when this wealth is suddenly lost, so is Sir Thomas' social position and "membership" in "high society". Sir Thomas Campbell is forced by "society" to live abroad, because life in Britain would be difficult being ostracised from his social circles and due to the massive publicity he has been exposed to. Being driven from his own country in the manner which Sir Thomas Campbell has been, might be a new aspect and a different kind of punishment related to the male fall. This can be linked to Mr Bellingham and Ruth going to Wales, and also suggests that abroad becomes what Foucault talks about "places of tolerance" (4). He is being stripped of his masculinity, his pride and reputation.

So why did Gaskell create the character Sir Thomas Campbell and why did she let him fall and ruin himself in such a volatile manner? After reading through an extensive amount of Gaskell's letters, I have not found any trace of her explaining or mentioning Campbell. However, I do think Gaskell had an agenda when she let the reader notice Campbell, even though the meeting is very brief. By introducing Sir Thomas Campbell so late in the novel, I would argue that she reinforces her political and social aim with the novel. By the few lines mentioning Campbell, Gaskell paints a picture of a wealthy man and a member of high society who falls. Thus, she shows that men of wealthy and aristocratic background also can fall, that they too can make the same mistakes as men and women of lower classes. The tragedy of his fall is the exposure of his secret in the media, and the publicity makes sure that his fall is broadcasted to all the readers of the *Times*. In addition, Sir Thomas Campbell works as a counterpart to Bellingham in the novel. They both come from wealthy backgrounds, and both transgress the rules, values and morals of Victorian society. The most significant differences between the two characters are of course the difference in how they fall, but also the consequences in the aftermath of their fall. Sir Thomas Campbell's fall is not rooted in sexuality, and turns out to only entail the financial aspect, which is different from Bellingham's case. Bellingham's private life is not shared with the whole of Britain through newspapers, and so he is, unlike Sir Thomas Campbell, spared the public humiliation, ending up suffering independently because of his choices in life.

After dealing with the character of Sir Thomas Campbell, his role and purpose in the novel comes to mind. The text shows signs of three different roles of this male character. First of all Gaskell shows the readers that men can fall as well, and not only a fall related to sexual conduct, but due to breaking the rules, values, expectations, and morals that the Victorian society demanded. In the case of Sir Thomas Campbell, gender is not the only aspect, which makes his fall interesting. He belongs to a social class that is higher than the other characters in the novel, who mainly belong to different levels of the middle class. Sir Thomas Campbell's fall from his position in "high society" makes his fall even more interesting. Sir Thomas Campbell's fall is the only male fall in the novel which is widely broadcasted through the medium of newspaper. Secondly, the ramifications of the male fall not only have consequences for the "fallen man" himself but also affects his daughter greatly. This is a point where the female fall of Ruth in many ways resembles the male fall of Sir Thomas Campbell. In the same way as Sir Thomas Campbell's daughter, Leonard is punished by "society" when Ruth's dark secret and "real" life is revealed. The negative ramification the fall of the parent surpasses the fallen person and is projected at the innocent offspring.

Thirdly, I believe that the fall of Sir Thomas Campbell foreshadows the third fall this chapter will deal with, namely Richard Bradshaw's fall.

The effect of Gaskell using Campbell as a fallen man is in essence making the idea of fallenness less harmful to the woman it was created to stigmatise, basically because it becomes gender neutral and no longer only associated with women. Gaskell juxtaposes the fall of a woman with the fall of a man, trying to balance the transgression, and further implying that fallenness is a patriarchal construction created to subdue women.

1.3 Richard Bradshaw: Forgery Leading to Fallenness

People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and forge.

- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861)

The third fallen man I want to draw attention to in *Ruth* is Richard Bradshaw. Again, this is a character with a very minor role in the narrative and he is absent from the narrative for the most part. During most of the years the narrative of *Ruth* spans over, Richard is residing in London and is only home in Eccleston to visit his family. As the case of Sir Thomas Campbell, Richard Bradshaw has been absent from the gaze of the critics and thereby gaining little critical attention. This was until Sara Malton published her article (2005) and book (2009) on forgery in nineteenth-century literature. The character Richard Bradshaw is the only son of Mr Bradshaw, perhaps the most respected man in Eccleston, living a truly Christian, middle-class life. It is Mr Bradshaw who takes Ruth into employment as a governess for his two youngest daughters, unknowingly inviting a fallen woman into his home. Compared to Sir Thomas Campbell, Richard is more present in the narrative. Richard is important to my reading because his transgression shows yet again that also Victorian men can fall. It is interesting to note that Gaskell chose Richard, a fallen man who is not yet exposed, to expose another fallen man, possibly to lead attention away from himself. At this point in the narrative, Gaskell gives the reader subtle hints of what will happen to Richard later in the narrative. Richard's financial fall also affects his father, Mr Bradshaw. He has from the first moment the reader is introduced to him played the role of the ideal and stereotypical Victorian male. He has harshly condemned those who sin and does not live

according to his example. The irony then becomes evident when his own son, whom he has been so proud of and raised by his strict standards, is exposed as a mere criminal defying those morals and values he has lived by. In continuation of this, it is possible to argue that it is as much Mr Bradshaw's fall as Richard's. Richard efficiently breaks down the façade, showing that men are no better or no more holy than women.

Richard's fall is, as in the case of Sir Thomas Campbell, connected to the financial aspect of fallenness. Richard is exposed as a forger and he has exploited his father's unconditional trust in his son, and his position in his father's business. The crime he is guilty of is to have forged Mr Benson's signature and sold off all of his shares in the "Star Life Assurance Company" (330) without Mr Benson or anybody else knowing of it. Mr Bradshaw, understandably has a very hard time believing his son could commit such dishonesty and crime, coming from a respectable, well off, middle-class family. As the only son of the Bradshaw's, Mr Bradshaw is naturally quite proud of his son, which is to return to Eccleston to work in his father's business. Mr Bradshaw's response even when Mr Dennison, the representative of the "Star Life Assurance Company" provides them with the deed of transfer (327) and one of Mr Bradshaw's clerks say that this is not Mr Benson's signature, is: "I don't believe it—I don't believe it. I'm convinced it's a blunder of that old fool Benson." (328). The truth is often hard to deal with.

These two cases differ in one important aspect. Richard knowingly commits a crime when forging Mr Benson's signature and insurance shares for his own financial gain (Malton, "Illicit" 187). Sir Thomas Campbell on the other hand falls and ruins himself and his family through gambling – most likely as a recreational activity among people of the "high society". What makes Richard's financial fall so feared in the Victorian society is because forgery was seen as a threat the two most important pillars of the Victorian society, except from Christianity, namely patriarchy and capitalism (Malton, "Illicit" 187). Unlike many other crimes which flourished in the nineteenth-century Britain, forgery was not merely confined to the working-class criminals, but the forger could very likely be of respectable descent.

What distinguishes Richard's fall from the others discussed in this chapter is the motivation behind it: which is partly to finance his expensive life style in London, but more importantly a need prove to his father that he can be successful in a male capitalist sphere and comply with the expected male role. "If another's son turned out wild or bad, Mr Bradshaw had little sympathy; it might have been prevented by a stricter rule, or more religious life at home; young Richard Bradshaw was quiet and steady, and other fathers might have had sons like him if they had taken the same pains to enforce obedience" (175).

In 1840, probably around the time of the setting in *Ruth,* C. H. Wall describes the men committing forgery in *Frazer's Magazine*: "the persons prosecuted for this offence [forgery] were, for the most part, young men of extravagant habits, belonging to the middle classes of society". This description fits with the character of Richard Bradshaw: the only son of Eccleston's most pious and ideal Victorian male, who is living in London and having been accustomed to expensive habits in conversation with his father he is in want of a higher allowance because it is "needed" (271). Forgery was a capital crime until the laws underwent reforms during the nineteenth century, and the Forgery Acts of 1832 and 1837 consequently abolished forgery as crime leading to a death sentence (Malton, Illicit Inscriptions 188). In her article, Sara Malton presents a historical quote about the views on the severity of forgery as a crime from Luke Owen Pike's publication *History of Crime in England* from 1876.

> Forgery is now considered an offence of the greatest magnitude;… In proportion, therefore, as a nation increases in wealth by buying and selling, it will magnify the criminality of a fraud by which buying and selling may be checked. The change of opinion will show itself in the penal laws, and in the not less deterrent force of social reprobation. Luke Owen Pike, *History of Crime in England* (1876) (qtd. in Malton, "Illicit" 187)

Malton uses the quote to compare nineteenth-century attitudes towards forgery and how Richard is punished in the end. According to Malton, Richard's new business position in Glasgow is the only punishment Richard is assigned. Further she says "the penalty … hardly accords with "an offence of the greatest magnitude" that Pike identifies" (187). She has a point in the fact that Richard is not harshly punished in the manner one would expect from the crime he has committed to which I agree. However, I disagree in how fast Malton lets go of the topic of Richard's punishment. I argue that mitigating circumstances concerning gender, the double standard, and the religious topic of the novel do influence the punishment Richard is assigned. Further, I believe that Richard's punishment consists of three parts. The first, and perhaps the one which is most hurtful to him, is that when Mr Bradshaw realises what Richard has done, he disowns him and proclaims that he is no longer a son of his. Richard is no longer welcome in the Bradshaw residence in Eccleston subsequently stripping him of belonging to the important Victorian institution of the family (Thompson 85). The second punishment is his near death experience when the Dover coach is overturned, where two people were killed and Richard got "badly hurt" (337). In the same way as Ruth is given

a second chance to be a repentant sinner, this opportunity is given to Richard as well. Richard is both saved in the coach accident and by Mr Benson who out of Christian charity decides not to prosecute him. This is closely connected to the third punishment, where Richard is sent to "labouring away in Glasgow for a petty salary of nobody knows how little" (344). The most important aspect of Richard's fall is that he is ultimately exiled from Eccleston, in a similar way to the exile of Sir Thomas Campbell. This is where I believe Malton has overlooked the importance of Richard being sent away to Glasgow as a punishment (*Forgery* 55). In the nineteenth century there was a geographical division in Britain of the north and south, a subject which Gaskell deals with extensively in *North and South*. The south was not industrialised, and therefore the air was cleaner and the areas were less populated. The rich population of Britain spent as much time as they could in the south. The north was heavily industrialized, polluted, overpopulated, and not the place to live for respectable middle-class Victorians. The north was not seen as a place any people from the south would stay voluntarily. Glasgow was also a town where the majority of the population belong to the working class, so in essence the fall of Richard is an enforced class fall as well.

Michael S. Kimmel talks about masculinity as being "the flight from the feminine" (274), meaning that a "mother can so easily emasculate the young boy by her power to render him dependent, or at least to remind him of dependency. It is relentless; manhood becomes a lifelong quest to demonstrate its achievements, as if to prove the unprovable to others, because we feel so unsure of it ourselves" (274). Upon two occasions, the novel points to the fact that Richard has been feminised. The first being Richard's first mentioning in the novel, which is through an anecdote from Jemima's and his childhood, where Jemima was forced to take blame for breaking a window, whereas Richard had tried to avoid being caught (153). Mr Benson points out that Mr Bradshaw had been so strict with his children, and "it is no wonder if poor Richard was a coward in those days" (153). Faith Benson replies: "he is now, or I'm much mistaken. And Mr Bradshaw was just as strict with Jemima, and she's no coward. I've no faith in Richard. He had a look about him that I don't like" (153-4). First of all the text does not at all describe Richard as a masculine man, rather the opposite marking him as a coward, both in his childhood, but even worse the comment of him still being a coward. This comment from Faith Benson makes Richard seem weak and less masculine.

I believe that Mr Bradshaw has tried to raise his son according to the set expectations of the male role. He has restricted his son's development in life, and unaware of this he is responsible for leading his son into the crime of forgery, and pushes his son to fallenness. In volume III the reader finally hears Richard's point of view of the upbringing. "If my father

had given me what I ought to have had at first, I should not have been driven to the speculations and messes I've got into" (271). Richard has suffered under a strict regime, and feels the need to show his father that he has talents and that he can accomplish riches on the stock market, which is what Kimmel says that "manhood becomes a lifelong quest to demonstrate its achievements, as if to prove the unprovable to others, because we feel so unsure of it ourselves" (274). However, though both Richard and I see Mr Bradshaw as partly responsible for Richard's insecurity and fall, Mrs Bradshaw blames herself for Richard's fall: "If I had not spoilt Dick this never would have happened" (334). This supports Kimmel's theory of a woman emasculating her son, feminising him, and therefore the fall is set off by his attempt to prove his masculinity.

In *Ruth,* Gaskell never mentions to which extent Richard's fall is publically known. The situation might have been carefully settled by Mr Bradshaw and Mr Benson, who offered to save Richard. An alternative way of looking at it is that the local community eventually knows about the forgery, and this is one of the reasons why Richard is "exiled" to Scotland. The novel does not give a final answer to this question, and therefore it is only speculation as to how widely known the scandal is. What is special and unique with the case of Richard's forgery is that for one thing he is saved, just as Mr Bellingham and Ruth are. This artistic choice made by Gaskell has to be taken into consideration the general topic of the novel: the redemption of a fallen woman. To make her arguments clear and perceivable to the readership, Gaskell mirrors male and female characters' actions. Richard commits a crime, which would most likely end with a trial and subsequent punishment. However, Mr Benson saves him. Ruth commits a "crime" in the eyes of society. If it was publically known, there wouldn't be a trial of courts, but her fellow citizens would put her though a public trial of their own. Condemning her for being immoral, and exercise punishment of their own. Ruth's redemption in the novel is done publically for all to see, whereas for Richard he is sent away possibly to avoid more scandal than necessary and to stop him from threatening the male role.

This chapter shows that the fallen man is present in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth.* The chapter deals with three different ways of male fallenness: sexual promiscuity, ruination through gambling and committing forgery. These three men transgress the morality, values and social codes of the nineteenth century society. Also, the chapter focuses on the importance of hiddenness and illness for the male fall. Mr Bellingham takes Ruth to Wales to hide his sexual promiscuous behaviour as well as his fall. Richard Bradshaw hides the fact that he has forged Mr Benson's bonds. Further, illness plays an important role in the novel

acting as a punishment for Mr Bellingham's sexual transgression. In the end of the novel, his illness is what saves him and leads to Ruth's redemption.

A central question throughout the chapter is who needs to know about the fallenness? *Ruth* provides the readers with three different examples on how widespread the knowledge of transgression needs to be, to be marked as a fallen man. In the case of Mr Bellingham it is a very small group of people who know about his fall. I argue, that even though the knowledge is not widespread, such as it often is in the case of the fallen woman, in the Christian context of the Victorian period and the novel itself, God knows about his fall and that is enough. In addition, both the author and the readers know about Mr Bellingham's fallenness. Unlike Mr Bellingham, Sir Thomas Campbell's financial fall is publically spread through the newspapers, which ultimately leads to his social death and need to leave Britain and live in exile. Finally, Richard Bradshaw is saved by Mr Benson and is therefore not prosecuted for his crimes, thereby avoiding a public scandal. As with Sir Thomas Campbell, Richard Bradshaw is sent off, against his will, and experiences an enforced class fall.

2 The Fall From Masculinity in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

The time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!
- Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

Give us quickly another and cleaner book to take the bad taste out of our mouths.
- *Pall Mall Gazette* (1895)

The most indecent book ever written.
- Edmund Gosse

This chapter is a continuation of the first chapter in the way it further investigates the fallen man in terms of class. The Victorian novel went through constant changes, and developed accordingly with the many small and greater "revolutions" throughout the century. The Victorian society went through many upheavals which shook the very foundations of Victorian Britain. After Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) where he challenged the established "truth" of evolution, earlier founded upon religion, the Victorian society went through a religious crisis (Ellis 246). A process of secularisation started and slowly the conception of traditional institutions, such as marriage, were challenged. Further, John Stuart Mill published his essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869) where he defended and championed for equality between the sexes and women's rights (Hughes 37-8). In their time all of these aspects were highly controversial and created massive debates and conflicts, but more importantly they contributed to a slow change of views, values, and moral in the British society in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries.

The new and radical ideas of Darwin and Mill, inspired and influenced Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) last phase as a novelist. His two last novels *Tess of D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) were heavily inspired by modern strains of thoughts concerning religion, heredity, and the rise of feminism as seen in the depiction of the New Woman. Both novels were marked as radical in their time (Shires 147). In his novel *Jude the Obscure* Hardy deals with the aspects of marriage, education, class, social mobility, and religion, issues highly relevant in its time, focusing on how they affected and shaped people at the end of the Victorian period. All of these mentioned aspects play important roles in male

fallenness in the novel due to the different ways these aspects end up driving men to fall. In *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy is actively exploring the slowly changing conceptions of gender in the *fin de siècle*, and challenging the reader on how gender roles should work. Hardy depicts Jude as passively and unwillingly transgressing to social norms that apply to men, the idea of social mobility and the convention of marriage. In this way, Hardy links the idea of the fallen man to being seen as feminised and passive. Therefore, the fall in *Jude the Obscure* is a fall from masculinity to something other than masculinity, as the expected gender roles are being challenged and reversed. The fallen men are seen as deviants from the expected male role in the eyes of society.

This chapter will mainly focus on the fallen man in relation to the working class, represented by Jude Fawley, and the middle class represented by Mr Phillotson. The novel's protagonist, Jude Fawley, yearns for a better life, and from the start of the novel to his death on the last page, he yearns for social mobility. He never forgets about his dreams of university, Christminster and socialising with educated, bourgeois men. In his novel Thomas Hardy clearly shows that Victorian society is going through a great deal of change. From the Victorian England of Elizabeth Gaskell, to the Victorian England of Thomas Hardy a lot has changed, and the Victorian society's many stands, morals and values have been challenged from many holds. In *Jude the Obscure* many of these "problematic" aspects of the *fin de siècle* Britain are dealt with by Hardy and upon its un-bowdlerised publication resulted in harsh criticism. In the novel Hardy describes a society in transition, a society which has tasted the sweet fruits of the modern ages, but at the same time, this society and its people are not ready to move on to the new age. The focus in this this chapter will therefore be on the changes in Victorian society and Hardy's representation of the fallen man.

Thomas Hardy and the *fin de siècle*

By reading literature from the 1890s, it is possible to see the ongoing "process of literary and cultural change" in the late Victorian period (Marshall i). Gail Marshall describes the last decade of the nineteenth century as a time where authors of literature were an active and often controversial participant in debates, more than in any previous decade in the Victorian period. These debates often concerned the Victorian "certainties" of morality, science, politics and aesthetics, which gradually began to break down. Thomas Hardy is considered one of the most prominent writers of the British *fin de siècle*, belonging to a group of writers who challenged the "establishment values", which eventually resulted in the production of a distinctive literature (Marshall, i). There is no doubt that Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* was a

deeply radical novel. Hardy touches upon some of the most controversial and difficult topics of the *fin de siècle*, and challenges the established conceptions of class, social mobility, marriage and religion. Hardy's two last novels clearly show the ongoing transition away from the "old" Victorian novel.

Perhaps the most noticeable presence of *fin de siècle* in *Jude the Obscure* is the presence of the "New Woman". Although the "woman question" had generated a multitude of articles and debate in the 1880s and early 1890s, the phrase "New Woman" was not coined before 1894 by the British novelist "Ouida" (Maria Louise Ramé) who extrapolated it from Sarah Grand's essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (Ledger 154). The New Woman novel hit its peak in 1894-1895, precisely the time of *Jude the Obscure*. The New Woman figure represented the desire for more equality for women, free love in the 1890s sense, and an alternate view on marriage, as well as more political rights for women (Ledger 154, Ingham "Introduction" xvii).

These critical changes to society focusing on the women and their rights had implications for Victorian men, both in terms of challenging the impression of masculinity, but also in terms of depicting men, fallen men and masculinity in literature. The "New Woman"-figure in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* plays an important role in the way masculinity is portrayed and how the reader perceives masculinity and manliness in the novel. Hardy's novel does not just use the binary of man and woman throughout the plot, but Hardy also deals with the changing perceptions of gender and gender roles at the end of the Victorian period. The "New Woman"-figure is deliberately used to juxtapose the new ideas towards women and the changing views on Victorian masculinity. However, as Gail Marshall points out, there is some debate to what extent the New Woman existed beyond the written pages (Introduction 4-5). Nevertheless, the impact of the New Woman in the written format was tremendous, and generated a vast amount of novels, essays, short stories and debate in the 1890s.

In the 1890s, masculinity was an obsession in the Victorian society and the theme was explored in the press, in art and most notably in literature, where authors and the Victorian society "imagined new styles of masculinity and refuted the outmoded forms of male behaviour" (MacDonald "How Did" 11). Earlier in the century, novelists had experimented with new "masculine identities", but the it was not until 1894, and as a direct response to the emergence and coining of the "New Woman" that the "New Man" was born when Reynell Upham declared: "The world is growing old, they say; but if it can produce the new woman it can, and will, bring the New Man upon the scene" (MacDonald *New Man* 14). The New Man

was a man supposed to support the New Woman's views on equality, and who together with the New Woman would create new ideals of marriage.

Contemporary Reception and Reactions to *Jude the Obscure*

There is no doubt that Thomas Hardy's novel, *Tess of D'Urbervilles* (1891), contributed more than any other of his earlier novels to expand Hardy's reputation as a novelist. Between 1900 and 1930 the novel was reprinted over forty times in England. *Tess* was Hardy's first novel to invoke massive critical response and reception upon its publication, and it was the perceived moral depravity and Hardy's new and compassionate view for fallen women which upset both the critics and the readership the most (Cox xxxii, Watt 3).

Thomas Hardy's next novel, *Jude the Obscure,* was initially published as a series, as most of Victorian novels, in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, both the English and European editions, from December 1894 to November 1895 (Ingham, "Evolution" 27). The story first appeared with the title *The Simpletons,* though the title was changed to *Hearts Insurgent* after the first instalment (Cox xxxii). Though Hardy wanted even more changes to the title (Ingham, "Evolution" 29), he waited until he published the full novel in late November 1895, and gave the novel its final title *Jude the Obscure.* This last choice of title was influenced by a critics comment in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in November 1895 after the serialization of the story had come to an end. This was the first time somebody referred to the novel as "Jude the Obscene", (Cox xxxiii), which encapsulated the bleakness and pessimism of the novel. So, what Hardy did was to use the negative comment he got on his novel, altered it and turned it into something positive when making it to the title of his novel.

It has to be noted, that the serialised version of *Jude the Obscure* was heavily bowdlerised. When Thomas Hardy started writing the story he did not plan for it to be as bleak as it became in the end. The agreement with the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* was of a story "in every respect suitable for a family magazine" (Ingham, "Evolution" 27), however as the writing process developed, Hardy discovered that "the development of the story was carrying me into unexpected fields" (Cox xxxii). The result became a bowdlerised version for serial publication, where both Hardy and J Henry Harper himself omitted scenes concerning violence to animals, scenes of sexual content, Arabella's seductiveness, Sue's return to the marital bed, Sue's pregnancy, and any words or phrases of sexual content, or any which could be read as having sexual content was censored, and consequently replaced (Ingham, "Evolution" 28-9, 31-5).

When the novel was published in November 1895, it was received with much controversy, and it generated a range of opinions, both negative and positive, as one would expect taken into consideration all the morally challenging and taboo themes Thomas Hardy dealt with in his novel. The novel provoked "a storm of critical argument involving prejudices and passions well outside the purely literary sphere", according to Reginald Cox (xxvii). An unsigned review from the *Athenaeum* (1895) illustrates some of the contemporary views on Hardy's latest novel: "Now, here we have a titanically bad book by Mr Hardy. We have had bad books from him before; but so far his bad books have been feeble rather than anything else. In *Jude the Obscure* he is running mad in right royal fashion" (Cox 249). This reviewer also raises a point which is recurrent in the reception and debate of the last phase of Hardy's authorship; his portrayal of "destiny" and "fate" and especially how these aspects relate to men and the perception of masculinity in the novel. This might be a gender neutral man, but I suggest that what is intended is a weak man, a male person.

> Mr Hardy's idea of Destiny is by no means stationary, and in its latest development in this book it becomes almost grotesque. (…) the notion seems shaping itself in Mr Hardy's mind that fate is not a mere blind force that happens at times to upset men's calculations and to turn their strength into weakness, but a rather spiteful Providence, whose special delight is to score off men, and whose proceedings make anything but absolute quietism an absurdity. (…) The way it is done is extremely simple: you take a man with good aspirations – a weak man he must be, of course – and put down to his credit all his aspirations and the feeble attempts he makes to realize them, while all the mistakes he makes, which render his life a failure, you put down the savage deity who lies in wait to trip him up (Cox 250).

One of the most hurtful critical comments for Thomas Hardy was written by William Walsham Wakefield, Bishop of Wakefield, in a letter to the *Yorkshire Post* and was published 9 June 1896. The Bishop gives thanks for the leader "denouncing the intolerable grossness and hateful sneering at all that one most reveres in such writers as Thomas Hardy" (390). Further, he writes that he bought a copy of the novel, but he was "so disgusted with its insolence and indecency that I threw it into the fire" (390). He concludes his letter by saying that it is a disgrace for public libraries to admit "such garbage" (390). Throwing a book into the fire is a critical response, which happened to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* about forty years earlier (Easson, Introduction viii-ix). It is, however, interesting to note that in both cases

religion, as well as very controversial novels, have contributed to the destruction of the novels. From a religious point of view, the highly religions contemporary readership of Gaskell and Hardy, it is possible to read both of these book-burning actions as an attempt of religious purification, where the idea is that the fire will purify and destroy the moral depravity in the novels' content.

A repetitive element in the contemporary criticism of *Jude the Obscure* is that the critics acknowledge Jude's presence in the novel, his struggles and eventual tragic end, but the main focus is centred round the many other atrocities in the novel. William Dean Howells (1895) points out that "the grotesque is there abundantly", and despite the weakness and debasement of Jude's character, he still inhabits an "inviolable dignity" (Cox 254). Howells lists the most revolting incidents as being the pig-killing, Father Time's suicide and murder of his (half)-siblings, Jude's drunken second marriage and Sue's self-surrender to Phillotson (Cox 255). As a commentary to this list Howells writes: "They make us shiver with horror and growl with shame, but we know that they are deeply founded in the condition, if not in the nature of humanity" (Cox 255). In this thesis, I argue that the fallen man is a useable concept in this period, not necessarily a concept that people used in that phrase itself, but still a concept that affected people's lives. From the reception of *Jude the Obscure* it seems that there is no clear way of conceptualising the man's specific fallenness. Instead, the critics talk about the sin, but they do not accurately pin this to the male figure. It is evident that the critics are worried about what is happening in this novel, that they find it transgressive, but they do not have a good model of describing how that transgressivness relates to the male figure.

Margaret Oliphant's critical comment (1896) on *Jude the Obscure* was perhaps, as R. Cox writes, "the most thorough-going condemnation that *Jude* received" (xxxiv). Oliphant uses words as "grossness, indecency and horror" to describe the novel. It is interesting to notice that Oliphant's main focal points in the critical comment are on women's part and role in the novel, in addition to the "marriage question". Oliphant calls Arabella a "human pig (…) quite without shame or consciousness of any occasion of shame" (Cox 258). Further, she marks Sue as unclean due to her actions of marriage, divorce and then returning to her husband (Cox 258). More importantly, Oliphant brings up the matter of gender and describes the reality of how men and women in the novel act and the responsibility of all the terrible things happening in the novel: "The women are the active agents in all this unsavoury imbroglio (…). The men are passive, suffering, rather good than otherwise, victims of these and of fate" (Cox 260). This distinction is worth noticing and it might also explain one of the

causes of male fallenness in *Jude the Obscure*. From this it seems that Oliphant sees the novel as reversing the usual representations of men and women, where traditionally, men are seen as active and women as passive and suffering. Further, Oliphant saw Hardy as a propagandist for "free love" (Cox 256), and she was determined that the novel was intended as an assault "on the stronghold of marriage, now beleaguered on every side" (Cox 260). Oliphant represents the many people who did not support the many changes towards the established traditions, morals and values that were changing in the end of the Victorian period. Also, what seems to be a common aspect in the reception of *Jude the Obscure* is the level of disgust and the basic revulsion. There is nothing analytical in these reactions, it is just purely disgusted, and this is something that people seem to get when something offends their norms, and it seems to be a visceral reaction that some of the critics seem to have.

In Edmund Gosse's commentary he highlights many of the highly controversial elements of the novel. He points out the complicated sexual relations of the four major characters in the novel, calling it a puzzle. He dwells on the lamentable consequences of intermarriage and poverty, and he calls the Fawleys a "decayed and wasted race", of whom Jude is the last, attempting to climb the social ladder, only resulting to sink into a "resigned inferiority" as Gosse writes (Cox 266). "It is a ghastly story, especially when reduced to this naked skeleton" (Cox 268).

Through the character of Jude, Thomas Hardy shows that he is well aware of the current expectations towards the male gender. Through the novel, Hardy shifts back and forth in terms of traditional views on masculinity, and to a more modern view. By doing this, Hardy depicts a man who clearly knows the expectations put on him by others, and the limitations to his behaviour denoted by gender-roles. This is depicted in his misery of "conscious failure both in ambition and in love" (118). "If he had been a woman he must have screamed under the nervous tension which he was now undergoing. But that relief being denied to his virility, he clenched his teeth in misery, bringing lines about his mouth like those in the Laocoon, and corrugations between his brows" (118). At the same time he finds it very difficult to figure out what kind of man he wants to be. Jude's "dissatisfaction as a man", in addition to utter "confusion as to what sort of man he wants to be", remains throughout the novel (Mallett, "Masculinity" 397). This depicts the fall from masculinity that this chapter will discuss.

2.1 Failed Aspirations of Social Mobility and The Fallen Man

Well, I do, I can't help it. I love the place—although I know how it hates all men like me—the so-called self-taught—how it scorns our laboured acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend!

- Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* differs from Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* in the way it introduces the readers to the working class of nineteenth-century society. Education and class were two aspects which were highly controversial in the Victorian period, and especially when there were inappropriate crossings of the two. In the novel class comes in conflict with the university system, and efficiently ends Jude's aspirations.

The text introduces the reader to an orphan, poor working-class Jude, whose first homosocial relationship is to the schoolteacher Mr Phillotson who is moving to attend university. From this point, Jude's dream is to follow his only male role model and join university, and Jude then starts reading the classics on his own to enable his dream. This idea of self-culture is what Samuel Smiles writes about in his *Self-Help* (1859), and this is primarily how Jude starts his journey for aspiration. Smiles saw formal education as the beginning of an education, but his ideal was that of self-culture, where you educate yourself and where the education could only be completed though experiencing "actual life" (Bossche 85). Further, Smiles was suspicious of the curriculum at universities. The class aspect comes in as a central term in education, because it seems that Mr Phillotson is never replaced with a new teacher at the working-class school. Therefore, Jude's education is centred round commencing private study whilst working delivering bread for his aunt (26). He later states that his dream is to become a bishop, but then thinking twice, "a bishop was absurd. He would draw the line at an archdeacon" (32). As a process towards being admitted to university, Jude enters an apprenticeship as a stonemason, an occupation that will lead him to Christminster (29). Over and over again throughout the narrative obstacles makes it difficult for Jude to achieve his dream. After Arabella leaves him and immigrates to Australia he decides to move to Christminster. One of the most interesting aspects in the novel is the paradox of the rejection of the university in Christminster, which is hinted to prior to Jude sending the letter by a man from Jude's village: "Just what we thought! Such places

[university] be not for such as you – only for them with plenty o' money" (106). Jude's best chance of social mobility is through education which he is denied because of his social class.

> Sir: I have read your letter with interest; and, judging from your description of yourself as a working-man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course. That, therefore, is what I advise you to do. Yours T. Tetuphenay (Biblioll College, Christminster) (110)

The rejection of Jude at Biblioll College, is essentially what keeps Jude from climbing the social ladder, though Jude understands the meaning of the rejection and also the fact that he will always be stuck in the working class, he continues to dream of Christminster and university till the day he dies. Phillip Mallett points out that "class and region too played their part, particularly in the repeated attempts to define the difference between the 'man' and the 'gentleman'" (Mallett "Masculinity" 388). It seems that the rejection "also challenges the established order that gives advantages and privileges to those already at the higher end of the class system" (Buzwell, "Introduction"), and that the university becomes a gate keeper of not only knowledge but also the maintaining of a segregated class system. The university not only denies Jude his upward social mobility, but they as well as his class "excludes Jude from the citadels of patriarchal society" (Mallett, "Masculinity" 399). In essence, what the university tells Jude to do is to remain in the working class, and stop his aspirations for something better. In his article, Tim Dolin writes about the rejection at Christminster and points out that being rejected, "suggests Jude might as well be a woman" (218). Here Dolin links the existing double construction of society in terms of gender and the ideology of the separate spheres, making a point that there are several places in society women are denied access purely on the basis of their gender, in the same was as for Jude, inhabiting their way of life and pursuing their dreams. The comment suggests that working class masculinity is juxtaposed with the femininity of a woman, placed below that of a middle- or upper class man.

Despite the rejection by the university in Christminster and the many obstacles and difficulties in his life, Jude seems to never being able to let go of the dream and aspiration for upward social mobility. Jude never seems to be comfortable in the working-class, illustrated in the lack of a working-class social network in the novel. The stonemasons, who Jude spends most of his time working with are rarely mentioned, as if the narrator intentionally avoids

giving them too much attention due to Jude's dream of social mobility. What seems to be the reality is that Jude's relations to people of the working class are destructive (Dellamora, "Male Relations" 459). A reason for the text omitting working-class men is possibly because of Jude deliberately distancing himself from them in the pursuit of social mobility, though this does not help him achieve his goals. Further, Jude never manages to find a male mentor who can help him achieving his dream of getting a degree at Christminster. In the nineteenth century it was more the rule, rather than the exception, that men who wanted to "get on", in the latter part of the nineteenth century needed mentors and friends in all-male institutions (Dellamora, "Male Relations" 454). Sadly, in Jude's case he never comes near a mentor relationship with Mr Phillotson nor the composer of the hymn he sings in the church, as his many attempts of creating a mentor-protégé relationship always fails. Despite never achieving his goal the dream of it all still lives on till his death.

From the point of rejection of the university at Christminster Jude's life starts to crumble in terms of aspirations, and then Jude's failure in itself becomes a fall. It becomes evident that Jude's fall is related to losing an ability that is connected to his gender such as social status, money and to a certain degree sexual continence, meaning the ability to pass on ones property through a direct line of descent, which in *Jude* is made difficult because of the presence of illegitimate children. It seems that the refusal from the university effects Jude's masculinity, making him weaker. From that point he falls ill several times, as if mental resignation and depression triggers illness. Illness takes a different role in the male fall than in the other chapters, not revealing the fall in a physical manner, but enabling the man to be the breadwinner of the family, complying with the expected role of the man to support his family. When Jude is ill it is Sue and Father Time who have to earn money for their survival (299-300).

> Well, I do, I can't help it. I love the place—although I know how it hates all men like me—the so-called self-taught—how it scorns our laboured acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend! … Nevertheless, it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it. Perhaps it will soon wake up, and be generous. I pray so! … I should like to go back to live there—perhaps to die there! In two or three weeks I might, I think. It will then be June, and I should like to be there by a particular day (308).

It seems that Jude's aspiration for social mobility, his failure and subsequent consequences are a kind of social criticism from Hardy's side. As shown in the preceding discussion, there is a double standard prevalent in the novel especially related to class matters, which reflects that of the contemporary society. It is as if Hardy makes a point of Jude not being born to be a working-class man subject to hard labour. He aspires and shows interest in working hard to fulfil the class journey, but forces greater than him, in this case society, deprive him of his dream and the chance for a better future.

Michael S. Kimmel raises the idea of masculinity as homophobia and this is central concerning Jude. In his article Kimmel writes that: "homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, and reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men (277). This seems to sum up the conflicts that Jude constantly faces throughout the novel. From the very early point where he does not want to grow up to be a man, and up to his failure of attending university and not being able to support his family, and is almost forced to live a life in sin not being married and having several illegitimate children. Jude's failure of upwards social mobility, subsequent fall, feminisation, and passivity reveal to the world that he in fact is not what is considered "a real man" (Kimmel 277).

Jude's fallenness linked to his aspirations has a duality to it, where Jude first and foremost falls because he fails to complete his aspirations of social mobility. This failure to complete his yearning of belonging to the middle class, and moving away from the distinctive distance Jude has to the working class, undercuts his masculinity and the perceived working class masculinity. Jude's attempt of social mobility is an attempt of getting higher in the class hierarchy that ultimately does not succeed. Further, his failed aspiration has consequences beyond that of humiliation and ruination of his life when his fall has a financial aspect. As a consequence of the failed aspirations he fails to fulfil the expected male obligation of supporting his family.

2.2 Love, Marriage, and Divorce: Defying Society's Expectations and the Male Role

Still, Sue, it is no worse for the woman than for the man. That's what some women fail to see, and instead of protesting against the conditions they protest against the man, the other victim; just as a woman in a crowd will abuse the man who crushes against her, when he is only the helpless transmitter of the pressure put upon him.

- Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

Michael Thompson writes that many early Victorians believed there would be a "crisis of the family" and that there would be a disintegration of the family "eating away like a worm at the very foundations of all social order" (85). They feared this more than any other social problem because it was so insidious, caused "by irreligion, and by the weakening and destruction of traditional moral and social bonds and restraints on the unbridled and irresponsible indulgence of individual lusts and selfish appetites" (85). Further, Thompson points out that this crisis did not occur, the family and marriage continued to be an accepted institution by "the vast majority in all classes of society (85-6). However, this view presented by Thompson is challenged in Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure,* as Greg Buzwell points out "everywhere in the novel marriage is seen as an artificial construct propped up by the Church and leading to misery and deceit, while living together outside of marriage invariably leads to ostracism from respectable society" ("Introduction to Jude"). In addition we see that the expected gender roles are reversed when in matters of marriage and divorce men are utterly passive and women takes the active role.

In *Jude the Obscure,* the main emphasis is on the marriages of the two most prominent male characters, each marrying twice and also divorcing in a relatively short time span. There are two aspects that seems unusually untraditional and modern relating to the marriages, and that is who initiates the process of getting married and the reason for wanting to marry. The first aspect is similar in both marriages where it is the woman who initiates the marriage. Arabella is the one playing the active part in both courting, initiating physical and sexual relationship, and marriage, which becomes the consequence of intimacy. In all this Jude appears to be innocent and weak, and he feels the pressure of following social conduct and morality when he discovers that Arabella is apparently pregnant (51). According to Michael Thompson, "it has been thought that premarital intercourse and premarital pregnancy were common among the working classes and provided the foundation of many marriages" (112). Jude is doing what is expected of an honourable man, and he marries the

woman he seduced and impregnated, this is something that Hardy exposes as rather absurd (Mallett "Masculinity" 397). This moral ideology enables Arabella to ensnare Jude twice; the first marriage due to a fake pregnancy (50-1), and secondly she gets him drunk to make him sign the marriage documents for the second marriage (370-1). Jude's vulnerability and grief over Sue's abandoning him and the death of his four children is used and taken advantage of by Arabella. The interesting aspect of this is how clearly Hardy gender flips the plot of *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, and further applies the same ideas from two different perspectives, the male in *Jude the Obscure* and the female in *Tess of D'Urbervilles.* Under "normal" circumstances taking advantage of someone's vulnerability would be the characteristics of a male character, rather than a female, normally seen as pure and innocent. Jude's male chivalry is his doom in both cases, and after discovering Arabella's deception he realises that his future is lost because of a moment of weakness.

In the marriage of Sue and Mr Phillotson, it is Sue who initiates the marriage. Mr Phillotson has uttered his interest for her, but it is Sue who makes it happen, not out of her own free will in terms of love or really wanting it. After being with Jude, Sue is kicked out of school and advised to marry Mr Phillotson for "the sake of her own reputation", something she also admits to Mr Phillotson (150, 213). Her motivation for marriage is purely to avoid scandal and avoiding trouble. There is no love involved in the marriage between Mr Phillotson and her, and Sue develops revulsion for her husband and soon regretting her actions which later results in Sue wanting to divorce Mr Phillotson, something he passively agrees to (224).

In her romantic relationship with Jude, Sue has changed her mind concerning marriage, and despite Jude wanting to marry she denies it. Sue is against the institution of marriage because she is afraid that getting married will ruin the natural love Jude and she feel for each other. At the registrar's office Sue exclaims: "It seems so unnatural as the climax of our love!" (274), and they do not marry. In the novel marriage becomes a conflict between the church as the guardian of morals and the legislative powers, governing the legal aspect of marriage and divorce, a conflict between the religious and the secular. Because Sue and Jude are not married and refuse to comply with the traditional way of looking at a marriage, they are forced by society to live in sin.

The second time Sue marries Mr Phillotson, she also has a personal agenda in marrying him. She has rejected her life in sin with Jude and re-marries Mr Phillotson as a purification and redemption for her sin. Marriage is then a deliberate action of punishment and not conforming to the traditional causes of entering marriage. In the novel the church,

and society in general, are not interested in "free love" and the happiness of the individual. What is important is the keeping of moral conduct and appropriateness, even if the individual is sacrificed and punished when it breaks these conducts. Hardy was critical to the church, and as a response to Darwin's theories of evolution, Hardy gave up church going in 1860 (Wheeler 189). Throughout the novel, there is an underlying critical voice towards the church, and this is exemplified in the second marriage of Mr Phillotson and Sue where Hardy exposes the hypocrisy of the church. The priest and church "forgives" them for their misdoings as long as they return to the holy union of marriage, but at the same time a divorce is an irreversible action, according to the church you can only marry once (372).

What these two cases of marriage or romantic relationships have in common is that the traditional power dynamic we see in many Victorian novels is reversed, creating passive and suffering male characters and active and strong female characters. It is evident that both men suffer as a consequence of living with Arabella and Sue. Thompson observes, that unlike the higher classes, for the working class "marriages across the boundaries were more often made by *free individual choices uninhibited by social or group conventions and restrictions*" (109, emphasis my own). This was mainly because the working class were "the most individualistic and least hidebound members of society" (Thompson 109).

Even though sex outside marriage for men is less frowned-upon than for women, it was still stigmatized, and in Jude we see that it is, in fact, seen as undercutting, tainting or weakening men's masculinity in the same way that it weakens women's femininity. However, what is valued is having a marriage and a family that functions properly. Marriage and family in a way functions as a way of transmitting one's name, values, money, and property, and this is basically why not having any children, who are your heirs, becomes a problem. Further, this is also why having children outside of marriage was a problem. This is what Oliphant is saying when she says that what she finds troubling with the novel is that it is attacking marriage as an institution and promoting "free love". There is something socially destructive about Jude living with somebody he is not married to, and this is what Oliphant, other critics and the readership protested against. Thomas Hardy denied the accusations that *Jude the Obscure* was meant as an attack on marriage laws (Ingham, "Introduction" xvii). Despite Hardy denying any agenda towards marriage laws, the focalisation of the novel makes it evident that there is resistance to the institution of marriage.

In *Jude the Obscure,* deviants and deviant behaviour are punished severely according to contemporary Victorian morality and values. In the novel the keeper of morality is the Church. During the forty years since the publication of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth,* there are

clear signs of development in how the fallen man is depicted and how the fall, in this case fall from masculinity and the male role, has consequences for the man as well. In *Jude the Obscure*, the male protagonist experiences the condemnation of his fellow citizens to a much larger extent than Mr Bellingham and Richard Bradshaw do in *Ruth.* In *Ruth* the writer projects all the negative comments and reactions from common people towards Ruth alone, whereas Mr Bellingham is never present to receive this kind of public scorn.

The relationship of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead was morally wrong in many ways as depicted in the novel and by critics of the novel. In the novel, both Jude and Sue are very well aware of that fact, and they both receive reactions from the Victorian society. Despite of what "the Victorian society" feels, thinks, and reacts, Jude and Sue carries on living in "sin" because of their love for each other, until an utterly tragic event changes it all. On his deathbed, Jude concludes that: "(…) the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!" (388).

It is at Aldbrickham that Jude, Sue, and Father Time firstly experience the sanctions of the Victorian society, mainly in being socially ostracised. Father Time's role in the novel seems to be that of partially bearing the blame and sanctions for his parents' sin. Children at Father Times' school repeat and project the local gossip concerning Jude and Sue onto him (287). As Ruth in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, the fallen woman is the first to feel the wrath of society. In *Jude the Obscure,* Sue experiences that the baker's lad and grocer's boy stops lifting their hats to pay her homage (287). Further, the "the neighbouring artizan's [sic] wives looked straight along the pavement when they encountered her" (287). For Jude's part the society's reactions are aimed at his livelihood and his work: "the headstone and epitaph orders fell off: (…) Jude perceived that he would have to return to journey-work again" (288). The novel shows that for a man losing his work is the worst thinkable sanction, as it affects both his pride and status in society, and as I see it Jude's ability to comply with the Victorian expectations of men being able to supporting their family is clearly compromised.

In the time of hardships, Jude is offered a job re-lettering the Ten Commandments in a little church outside Aldbrickham. Whilst working there Father Times comes crying, after being bullied because of Jude and Sue's incestuous way of life, as a culmination of all of the village gossip. At the same time a group of women enters the church to clean it, and one of them recognises Sue, making her and Jude the topic of a loud conversation, resulting in Sue crying silently. "I can't *bear* that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best

intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral!" (292). As a consequence of people's reactions to Jude and Sue, the contractor fires Jude from the restoration-project, yet another sanction due to their chosen sinful way of living. Before leaving Aldbrickham Jude experiences the views of society in a similar way as Sue did. Jude had joined an "Artizan's Mutual Improvement Society [sic]", founded around the time he moved to Aldbrickham, where he was placed in the committee. After the incident in the church, the members "looked dubiously at him, and hardly uttered a word of greeting" (293). The number of subscriptions had decreased and the members implied that Jude was the cause. These indirect sanctions are very powerful in themselves.

One of the most challenging consequences of Jude and Sue when deliberately and continuously living in sin, is to hide the "truth" of their relationship. Jude and Sue constantly live under the threat of discovery by neighbours or other people in the villages they settle in. In her book, *Between Men,* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick introduces the idea of *blackmailability,* being "a space or mechanism of potential power" in relation to revealing the secret of homosexuality. Further she writes that men experience their vulnerability through the social pressure of homophobic blackmail (Sedgwick 89). Once the "secret" is exposed, sanctions from the greater society will apply and change the lives of the affected. Though Sedgwick uses the term only in relation to homosexuality, there are clear similarities between keeping a secret related to sexuality/sexual orientation and keeping a secret related to Jude and Sue's sins and fallenness, though the visibility of the deviant behaviour is a bit different in the two cases. Revealing your deviant sexuality in the Victorian period would certainly create harsh sanctions from the society, depending on when in the Victorian period such "secrets" were revealed. Early in the period British legislation sentenced homosexuals to the death penalty, whereas later in the century imprisonment and hard labour was considered the appropriate punishment, cf. Oscar Wilde.[7] In both cases the risk of *blackmailability* and revealing the "secret" is enormous and potentially fatal. In *Jude the Obscure* Jude and Sue are living under the constant threat of discovery. They have chosen to be deviants, according to Victorian morality, resisting the traditional expectations of marriage between man and woman. Jude and Sue live a seemingly "normal" life, but they carry many secrets, all of them considered very sinful. They are both divorced, Jude and Sue adopts Father Time, Jude's unknown son from his first marriage to Arabella, they never marry, but still they live as a married couple and keeps the façade of a "normal" working-class family, and lastly they have three children

[7] More on homosexuality in relation to falleness in chapter 3. The discussion will deal with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *DeProfundis* by Oscar Wilde.

out of wedlock. Because of Jude and Sue's decision of continuously living in sin they are forced to live a nomadic lifestyle.

> Whither they had gone nobody knew, chiefly because nobody cared to know. Any one sufficiently curious to trace the steps of such an obscure pair might have discovered without great trouble that they had taken advantage of his adaptive craftsmanship to enter on a shifting, almost nomadic life, which was not without its pleasantness for a time (298).

The family is forced to seek small communities where people do not know them, or their story as a security measure. The goal is to live anonymous lives pretending to be a normal working class family. Always in a new town speculation and gossip break down their lives, eventually ostracising them. When Father Time asks why they cannot go back to the places they once lived, Jude answers: "because of a cloud that has gathered over us; though 'we have wronged no man, corrupted no man, defrauded no man!' Though perhaps we have 'done that which was right in our own eyes' (297).

The suicide of Father Time is the nodal point in the relationship of Jude and Sue in the novel. Sally Shuttleworth remarks that the scene where the dead bodies of Father Time and his siblings are discovered, "still has the power to shock" ("Done because" 133). The suicide of Father Time, and him killing his two siblings, and then soon after losing the unborn child, is undoubtedly the worst sanction to their sinful way of life. This "punishment" can be interpreted in two main ideas. Firstly, the death of the four children can be read as a religious punishment and judgement for living a sinful and immoral life. This is the interpretation Sue choses to assign as an explanation to the horrid event (332-333, 338). Secondly, this can be read as Father Time acting as the voice of Victorian society in getting rid of immorality when he says: "I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly" (323). This distinction is important because I believe that Hardy deliberately writes this ambiguously. I believe that Father Time's killing seen as the fate of God is purely a literary aspect to go with Sue's re-invention of Christianity, and possibly also as a critical undertone from Hardy's side against the church's monopoly on assigning sin and judgment. I rather believe that Father Time's killing is an extreme example of the intolerance and narrow-mindedness of the late Victorian society, and that the death of the children is in a way the reaction of society for not complying with the norm. Hardy does not approve of this kind of punishment. Further, this horrific event changes the lives of both Jude and Sue dramatically.

For Jude this only reaffirms his wish to marry Sue (332), whereas Sue has left her intellect and reason, and turned her life to religion, yearning for purification and redemption for her sins.

Jude is not the only fallen man in the novel. Mr Phillotson represents the fallen man in relation to the middle class, and in the same way as Jude, he is feminised and is assigned a passive male role in the novel. Mr Phillotson's seemingly human and compassionate thoughts and actions in letting Sue go, and following divorce, evoke massive consequences for him. Mr Phillotson has surprisingly modern views, though founded on false assumptions in Sue's case, on what he believes to be right and wrong in matters concerning adulterous wives. Mr Phillotson "frees" Sue because of three aspects: her significant aversion for him as husband, and because he believes that she has committed adultery and because "she's another man's except in name and law" (243). From Mr Phillotson's thoughts and utterances in the text it is clear that he represents a new generation of men, the New Man, and as a "modern" man, he does not want to do as many Victorian men before him, living in an unhappy marriage and keeping the wife under "lock and key".

> I know I may be wrong—I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers, or harmonize it with the *doctrines I was brought up in*. Only I know one thing: something within me tells me I am *doing wrong in refusing her* (222, italics my own).

Ultimately, Mr Phillotson's actions break firstly with the ideals of masculinity, and secondly his actions break with traditional patriarchy of the Victorian period. In doing so Mr Phillotson jeopardises and challenges the idea of male control and male hegemony in Victorian marriage, and making it look like the subdued women have a say or a choice. It is the representatives of Victorian patriarchy who sanctions Mr Phillotson for his actions, trying to carry out "damage control" and stating an example. In society questions of Mr Phillotson's masculinity and manliness are raised as a consequence of Sue leaving.

The absence of Mrs Sue Phillotson generates gossip and rumours in Shaston, which results in the society sanctioning Mr Phillotson in the form of the school committee's decision to fire him. "They have requested me to send in my resignation on account of my scandalous conduct in giving my tortured wife her liberty – or, as they call it, condoning her adultery. But I shan't resign" (238). The quote shows that the patriarchy tries to protect Mr Phillotson, by giving him the chance to resign voluntarily and quietly, something he does not

accept, standing by his principles. Further, Mr Phillotson claims: "it is no business of theirs. It doesn't affect me in my public capacity at all" (238). Unfortunately, Mr Phillotson is wrong. As a schoolmaster he is first and foremost a role model and example for his pupils, and any scandalous events, deviancy of masculinity and expected manliness may be a menace to the future generations. Also, Mr Gillingham points out that his conduct may have an effect on the "morals of the town" (238), illustrating the fear of the slowly changing gender roles. Mr Gillingham represents the more traditional and sensible Victorian values, as opposed to Mr Phillotson's modern views. It is Mr Gillingham who reminds Mr Phillotson "if you make a fuss it will get into the papers, and you'll never get appointed to another school" (238). The threat of scandal and publicity hangs over Mr Phillotson, for an action he believes to be fair, as opposed to the Victorian society which condemns it. Despite the possibility of publicity, Mr Phillotson does not accept the dismissal, and called for a public meeting. The "respectable inhabitants and well-to-do fellow-natives" (239) were against Mr Phillotson teaching, in fear of corrupting the morals. To them, Mr Phillotson is a fallen man. Surprisingly, a group of "some dozen or more" defended Mr Phillotson. Though these people were not regarded as respectable, belonging to the lower classes, the defence shows that not all men agreed to the patriarchal tradition, and it also shows a beginning change in the perception in what is morally right and wrong.

Mr Phillotson loses his job, which meant the absence of a man's livelihood. Because the public meeting ended in a public scuffle between the two opposite sides, the scandal was complete. Rumours of Mr Phillotson would flourish, and Mr Gillingham's fear of Mr Phillotson having difficulties in getting new employment came true. Along with the loss of his livelihood, Mr Phillotson loses his acquired respect and status in Shaston, both important virtues for Victorian men.

Standing up for the "New Woman", and acting according to "modern" thoughts, in Mr Phillotson's case, appears to only result in public humiliation and male fall. "I have hopelessly ruined my prospects because of my decision as to what was best for us, though she does not know it; I see only dire poverty ahead from my feet to the grave; for I can be accepted as a teacher no more" (244). There is also a clear distinction in how Mr Phillotson phrases himself; "what was best for *us*" (244) clearly signals that he is aware of that he is defying society and society's expectations, rather to please the individual.

As the divorce between Mr Phillotson and Sue is finalised, so is Mr Phillotson's prominent position in the plot. Hardy introduces Mr Phillotson to the plot only a handful of times after this, one of them the meeting between Arabella and Mr Phillotson a few years

after the scandalous events in Shaston. Mr Phillotson is described as “an elderly man of spare stature” and “a touch of slovenliness in his attire” (304). The consequences of his actions a few years earlier have made their marks on him, both physically and mentally. In Mr Phillotson’s own words he said that poverty would be his life till he died, and that he would never be allowed to teach again. In theory all of this is true, but because he is a man, he can take advantage of a patriarchal benefit. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about men who wanted to “get on” in the Victorian period, and how they needed a mentor or friends in all-male institutions (“Beast” 152). In Mr Phillotson’s case, we no longer speak about “getting on” and moving up, rather surviving with as much dignity and manliness as possible. The new position at Marygreen is the result of a friendship with the vicar, who as Mr Phillotson phrases it “having known me before my so-called eccentric conduct towards my wife had ruined my reputation as a schoolmaster, he accepted my services when all other schools were closed against me” (306). The fall of Mr Phillotson is illustrated very clearly as he is back to “square one” as a teacher in Marygreen where his career started. Just as a fallen woman, Mr Phillotson is now “damaged goods”, and this has consequences for his salary. At Marygreen he charges fifty pounds, when he formerly charged above two hundred. The low charge is a combination of his actions and subsequent fall, and the fear that someone will rake up his past, eventually using it against him (306). Central in the fall of Mr Phillotson is humiliation, loss of reputation, damaging of his masculinity, all having direct implications to execution of his occupation. Despite of his hardships Mr Phillotson shows his New Man qualities when he says: “I am convinced I did only what was right, and just, and moral. I have suffered for my act and opinions, but I hold to them; though her loss was a loss to me in more ways than one” (305).

2.3 The Changing Victorian Masculinity: Jude Fawley and Richard Phillotson

Mr Hardy's women are moulded of the same flesh as his men; they are liable to flutterings and tremblings; they are not always constant even when they are "quite nice", and some of them are actually "of a coming-on disposition".

- Edmund Gosse (1890)

On ne naît pas homme, on le devient: One is not born a man, one becomes one.

- Phillip Mallett, "Hardy and Masculinity"

Judith Mitchell claims that gender criticism is one of the most daunting bodies in Hardy's *oeuvre,* because of "the multiplicity of gender issues and ideologies inherent" (301). Feminist critics have noted, according to Mitchell, that Hardy's gender politics shifted significantly over the course of his productive years as a novelist (301). This is something which is very visible towards the end of his career as a novelist, and particularly in *Tess of D'Urbervilles* where Hardy presents an alternative and empathetic view on fallen women, as well as in *Jude the Obscure*, where Hardy experiments with modern thoughts on masculinity and the New Woman. Phillip Mallett claims the construction of masculinity in Hardy's works have gained "relatively little attention" ("Masculinity" 388), though this tendency seems to slowly be shifting as recent critical works on Hardy focuses on masculinity and the male role in Hardy's novels. Mallett also remarks that the feminist critics only have commented upon "presumptively male attributes", but not on how these are "learned and communicated, or on their connection to work, class, family, or social mobility" ("Masculinity" 388). Also Mitchell states that it was clear to Hardy that gender was "always performative", and that:

> He constantly sought to expose the assumptions underlying cultural constructs; and that he was always already engaged in a form of cultural studies, in that he attempted to stand aside from his own culture and to interpret it from an unbounded perspective in the awareness that it too, would wax and wane like the many others that have left their layered traces on the material present (308-9).

From the quotation above it seems that Hardy was aware of the cultural constructions of gender, and thus it seems that one of his aims with the novel was to raise awareness to and challenge the contemporary perception of gender roles, and masculinity in particular. The last decades of the nineteenth century experienced a slowly change in terms of the established gender roles, and masculinity went into a crisis due to the awakening feminist voices and powers in society. According to Judith Mitchell, the contemporaries of Hardy were fascinated, perplexed and not surprisingly outraged by his "unconventional approach to gender and sexuality" in his works, something that has persisted in the criticism (302).

Jude the Obscure is a *Bildungsroman* following the protagonist Jude Fawley's process of becoming a man. Jude belongs to the lower working class of the Victorian society, and as many other working class children he is an orphan when the reader is first introduced to him (7). From an early point the reader is introduced to Jude's obscurity and witnesses his highest wish: "if he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man" (12). From this point on the thought of masculinity and "being a man" has a negative connotation. Despite the childhood wish of not growing up, both manhood and fatherhood are quickly introduced in his life and changes Jude's existence dramatically (Mallett, "Masculinity" 390).

One aspect that raised my attention reading *Jude the Obscure* was the feminisation of Jude by female characters from the very beginning of the novel. From that point and to the end of the novel, Jude does not follow the perceived traditional gender roles associated with a man. In this novel, the gendered power structure is reversed and particularly three authoritative and strong-minded women gradually gain more and more control and power over the male protagonist. This is also evident in the complex relations between the novels four main characters Jude, Mr Phillotson, Arabella and Sue. This gender power structure is the opposite of what traditional Victorian society expected, both in real life and in literature. For some this was considered a threat to the Victorian male-role, and a sign of "degeneration", the established gender expectations/boundaries were gradually crumbling in the 1890s. In her work, Patricia Ingham have analysed the relationship of class and gender in Hardy's novels. There she has noticed an overlap between "women" and "oppressed men", and links these to "conventional signs that inhibit the characters' sense of self" (Mitchell, *Gender* 305). The contrast of "women" and "oppressed men" is particularly interesting, as it points out the inequality of gender-roles in *Jude the Obscure,* as well as the emasculation of male characters in the novel.

The first woman who initiates the process of feminisation and emasculation is Jude's grandaunt Drusilla Fawley, who takes him into her care when his family dissolves; his father dies and his mother committed suicide years ago. At this point Jude is only eleven years old, and he has been living with Drusilla for the past year. Drusilla does not hide the fact that she does not care for Jude, nor that she thinks of him as a nuisance. "It would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too wi' thy mother and father, poor useless boy!" (7). This is what Drusilla utters in conversation with a fellow woman, whilst Jude is standing beside her and listening. From this point on Drusilla's cruelty and lack of empathy shapes and affects Jude's masculinity and the formation of his self. Drusilla repeats her attitude towards Jude when he marries Arabella: "saying bitterly that it was the last thing she could do for him, poor silly fellow; and that it would have been far better if, instead of his living to trouble her, he had gone underground years before with his father and mother" (52). Early in the novel Jude escapes the bondage and oppression of one cruel/strong woman, and into the oppression of an even more cunning woman. This transition that Jude makes is illustrated by the phrase: "out of the frying-pan into the fire!" (53). The narrator makes a very hard effort to present Arabella, Jude's first wife, as a person the reader is supposed to if not hate, then dislike intensely. Arabella instantly takes charge, and Jude follows as he has been taught and experienced through his life by his grandaunt.

There is no doubt that Jude is a naïve and inexperienced young man when he meets Arabella for the first time. Jude is not experienced in the ways of the world, nor when it comes to love and sexual contact with women. Desire is central in Hardy's works, and specifically in *Jude the Obscure* where Hardy deals with male sexual desire. A widely held position among the social purity feminists in the 1880s and 1890s was the perception that sexual desire was a male burden (Mallett, "Masculinity" 397). Jude, however, has not been exercising his sexual desire until he meets Arabella, and she cunningly ignites the desire in him, a sexual desire that follows him the rest of the novel and leads him into "temptation". Prior to Arabella, Jude's desire was concentrated on intellectual exploration of the classics, and pursuing his dream of being accepted at Christminster. Hardy opposed to the contemporary view of male sexual desire as something wicked and animalistic, his view on the other hand was that male sexual desire was "natural, right and joyful" (Mallett, "Masculinity" 397).

The introduction of the New Woman in literature in the 1890s was considered a threat to the established masculinity. However, in my reading Arabella is not a New Woman, but she is still very dangerous and a threat to Jude. Arabella is more what Judith Mitchell calls

"masculine women" in Hardy's cast of characters (307). The fact that she is not a New Woman becomes evident in her reasoning for entering marriage: "she had gained a husband; that was the thing—a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats when he should begin to get frightened a bit, and stick to his trade, and throw aside those stupid books for practical undertakings" (52-3), where freedom and equality is not mentioned at all. Arabella is a strong, individualistic, working/lower-class woman who is extremely selfish, manipulative, and with a very authoritative personality. Jude abandons his dreams of a life as a scholar for Arabella, as he is doing the "honourable" thing caring for his wife, and as it turns out, the fictitious child, simultaneously as he abandons his principles and male authority.

The slaughter scene, where Jude and Arabella are to slaughter their pig, illustrates the reversal of the gender-roles of the two. Jude does not want to kill the pig, as he has gained a personal relationship to it, as in the beginning of the novel where he cares and "befriends" the birds (9), rather than humans. He shows emotions and is hesitant in meeting with the job. "Don't be such a tender-hearted fool" (58), is what Arabella tells him, in her condescending way. As opposed to Jude, she is emotionless and cold in meeting with the pig when she acts like a bully, and wants Jude to kill it in the most inhumane way there is (58-60). When the pig killing is over, Jude admits to feeling dissatisfied with himself as a man for what he had done, and "no doubt he was, as his wife had called him, a tender-hearted fool" (60). Arabella admits in a letter that she had "grown tired of him" (66), and unconventionally for a woman in the nineteenth century she leaves him without a valid or good reason.

The opposite point of view is Sue's, and in that same setting it becomes clear to the reader what Sue sees and wants their relationship to be. In conversation she mentions the nameless "graduate" she knew before he died. It becomes very clear that Sue is interested in or yearns for a relationship of comradeship between two men, totally sexless, as she describes activities with the graduate "like two men almost" (142). Phillip Mallett suggests that what Sue really wants is for "gender boundaries to be dissolved and reconfigured" (400), so in fact this might be the New Woman influence on Sue speaking out.

The New Man was a character discussed in the 1890s, and originated as the companion of the New Woman as mentioned above. Jude touches upon some of the characteristics whilst living in sin with Sue and breaking society's norms, but he never becomes a true New Man. The male character that becomes a New Man is Mr Phillotson. Sue is *the* New Woman in the novel, and Mr Phillotson adjusts his life and expectations of marriage according to Sue's wishes and demands. In many ways Mr Phillotson is a brave

character, standing beside his wife when realising he repulses her, finally letting her divorce him, and not taking an extreme patriarchal standing and forcing Sue to live caged in the loveless and non-functioning marriage. Supporting the New Woman-ideas obviously has its consequences for Mr Phillotson as he abandons the patriarchal expectations. First he experiences the reaction to his friend Mr Gillingham, first and foremost warning him of letting Sue go, and foreshadowing the consequences. When he at last lets her go, the Victorian society reprimands him severely, stripping him of his work and dignity, as they question his manhood. Another interesting aspect of the character of Mr Phillotson is that from the very beginning he is Jude's ideal male, role model. He aspires to be a university scholar, but fails to achieve it, just as Jude does. He also divorces and then lives in a loveless and cold marriage just to comply with the contemporary expectations, morals and keeping the façade. The question is whether this really is the ideal Victorian male, seen from Hardy's point of view? I believe that this is a commentary on gender expectations and the already started and forthcoming changing masculine identity.

Jude and Mr Phillotson are not at ease with conventional models of masculine identity in Victorian society. Phillip Mallett says that both male characters, to different degrees, seek to "disown the authority over women that society gives them. Neither, finally, is able to find an alternative" ("Masculinity" 397). Mallett's observation concerning masculine identity in the novel is interesting, as it does not conform to the expected masculinity and male role set in the Victorian period. However, it is important to make a clear division between the two characters. From the point when Mr Phillotson marries Sue, he indirectly disowns his authority over women, as Mallett phrases it. What the reader knows, and Mr Phillotson does not, is that Sue is not in love with him and this will later develop into revulsion. Mr Phillotson repeats this action a second time when he divorces Sue and lets her go free. Of the two, the last disowning of authority is the most devastating to his masculine identity, not only for himself but also in terms of how people around him perceives Mr Phillotson afterwards. The disowning of authority that Mr Phillotson is subjected to is his own fault, not forced upon him and he shows clear signs of passivity when he does not actively try to challenge the feminisation of his character.

Jude, on the other hand, has another position and starting point in life. We know nothing about Mr Phillotson's childhood and his way of becoming a schoolmaster, but it is possible to draw the conclusion that he grew up under better conditions than Jude. I believe that Jude's family situation is one, if not the most important, factor to his "deviant masculine behaviour". The reader is informed about the not-functioning marriage of Jude's parents, his

mother's suicide, living with his father, his father's death, and lastly being taken care of his grandaunt Drusilla. Jude's father died when he was about 10-11 years old, a consequence being that Jude grows up without any stable male role model to learn and implement the expected masculine identity and male role of the time. The fact that he ends up with his grandaunt Drusilla, a bitter old woman who openly hates Jude, and is not afraid to tell him. The problem in this situation is that Drusilla is a female character who mistreats Jude, specifically by undercutting his masculinity, which does not contribute to form him into a strong, Victorian, masculine man.

Judith Mitchell observes, that many of Hardy's male characters are described in "overtly feminine terms", but she very interestingly points out that Hardy's male characters very often spend the a lot of their time on waiting mostly on women, but also for recognition and success. Mitchell notes that this waiting is a passive state, a role normally assigned to femininity and women (311). In *Jude the Obscure* Jude and Mr Phillotson are the two most passive men, doing most of the waiting. A common denominator for the two male characters is that they both wait for a female character, Sue. The two male characters are both interested in the same woman who they both fight for her. This in itself is an oftentimes used plotline in Victorian literature. However, what follows of divorces, remarriages, endless sorrow, and unhappiness, is what seemingly strikes out and makes *Jude the Obscure* a different novel. Jude happily waits for Sue both before and after she marries Mr Phillotson, hoping she will come to her senses and marry him. Likewise, Mr Phillotson waits for Sue both before and after the marriage and divorce. The fascinating thing about Mr Phillotson's passivity is his continued waiting after Sue divorces him and his willingness to take her back despite of what she has done to him emotionally, in ruining his reputation in society and making others questioning his manhood. In addition, Jude spends most of the novel waiting for his acceptance at the university in Christminster, and additionally he is waiting for prosperity and social mobility. On the surface the innocent passivity of the male characters challenges and disturbs the expected masculine stereotypes of the Victorian society (Mitchell, *Gender* 311). Indirectly, this male passivity enables female vigour, and makes female characters active and the centre of attention and focal point.

As Phillip Mallett writes in his essay, "masculine identity is never a given but the outcome of shifting culture negotiations and contestation. Masculine identity is a relational construct, inseparable from the totality of gender relations, as these change, so does the notion of what constitutes the manly" ("Masculinity" 387). This is evident in *Jude the Obscure,* where the two prominent male characters fall between two worlds: the traditional

Victorian era and the forthcoming modern age. Throughout the novel we are presented with many examples and influences of the old perception of masculinity, but Hardy's main focus is in trying to deal with the new influences. Throughout the novel, the readers witness the trials and tribulations of mainly Jude, but also Mr Phillotson, and their hardships in finding their place in a changing world, and how to cope with New Women. In his conclusion Phillip Mallett sums up Jude's existence and hardships, showing Hardy's craftsmanship in creating his protagonist. "The novel strips him [Jude] of the familiar props of masculine identity: class solidarity, and self-realization though work; class mobility, and fulfilment through education and vocation; heterosexual marriage and paternity ("Masculinity" 402)." Hardy deals with the many troubles of gender issues in the *fin de siècle*, the most prominent is the role of masculinity. Hardy problematizes the current issues of Victorian masculinity, the expectations and he foreshadows the forthcoming societal change in the perception of both men and women.

In this chapter, the focus has been on how Hardy depicts the fallen man in the *fin de siècle* forty years after Elizabeth Gaskell published *Ruth.* The chapter shows that there has been a transition in the view of gender from Gaskell's time and this is depicted in Hardy's treatment of masculinity and femininity in the novel. In *Jude the Obscure* we see that masculinity is challenged by new ideas about women and the emergence of the New Woman-figure. This chapter discusses the male fall as a fall from masculinity, where women are undercutting the traditional masculinity. Further, the male fall is discussed from two views: failed aspiration of upwards social mobility and not conforming to the expected conventions of marriage. Both of the fallen men who are discussed in this chapter, Jude Fawley and Mr Phillotson, are feminised and passive. In the eyes of society, these men are deviants according to the expected male role. It also becomes evident that the working-class man can fall as well.

In Jude's case his failure of not fulfilling his yearning for social mobility becomes a fall in itself. As a consequence of this, Jude becomes depressed and often suffers from illness, which enables him to act as the breadwinner of the family. Jude's fall also has a financial component because he cannot support his family according to the expectations of the time, forcing Jude to become passive. Sue becomes the active party in the relationship and is given the responsibility to feed the family. Because Jude and Sue never marry, they choose to live together in sin and are forced by society to live a nomadic lifestyle to avoid scandal and critical attention to their way of life. Mr Phillotson is described as a New Man, allowing his

wife to divorce him. His fall is closely related to loss of social status and money, as he is fired from his position as a schoolteacher and his actions become a public scandal.

3 "The Love That Dare Not Speak its Name": The Fallen Man and Victorian Homosexual Desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis*

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.
- Oscar Wilde, preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

To Oscar Wilde, posing somdomite [*sic*]
- The Marquess of Queensberry, note to Oscar Wilde

The British *fin de siècle* was a time of great change and upheaval both in society and art and literature. Many Victorians feared the direction that the world they knew took, and many thought that there was an ongoing moral decline in the last decade of the nineteenth century (Cohen 9-11). During the fin de siècle the Austrian author and social critic, Max Nordau, published his book *Degeneration* (1892) where he foreshadows a decline of society, as people knew it. In *Degeneration*, Nordau writes "in our days there have arisen in more highly developed minds vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations perishing in the midst of a dying world (Nordau, 1). The book was translated and published into English in 1895, only two months prior to Oscar Wilde's trial. In the book Nordau "attacked Wilde at length as an example of the neurotic artist, responsible for the spread of decadent disease though modern Europe" (Sloan 150, Greenslade, *Degeneration* 123)[8]. Jenny Taylor points out that the book sparked debate and was soon condemned (14). Furthermore, Nordau's theories often were "laughingly" and ironically dismissed by critics, the book became a literary success the year of publication (Greenslade, *Degeneration* 120, Legder & Luckhurst 2). Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst write that, "degeneration theory was very much a product of the social and cultural climate of the late nineteenth century" (1). The fin de siècle experienced a sexual revolution, and according Elaine Showalter, the 1880s and 1890s were decades of "sexual anarchy". Showalter points out that laws that governed both "sexual identity and behaviour

[8] To see Nordau's treatment of Wilde see *Degeneration* pp. 317-320

seemed to be breaking down" and it is in this period that the word "homosexuality", along with "feminism", was first used, as well as the redefinition of the meaning of feminism and masculinity ("SA" 3). In the earlier chapters the main emphasis has been on the fallen man in relation to class, crime and the male role, while in relation to Oscar Wilde's works the focus is slightly shifted towards the fallen man in relation to "deviant" sexuality, something which gained more attention in the *fin de siècle,* where a man falls as he transgresses the expected behaviour of his gender. The debates about degeneracy are clearly linked to the emergence of homosexuality and homosexual desire, which this chapter aims to investigate.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) has become one of the literary icons of the last decade of the Victorian period. He is known for his excellent writing, of varies genres, but he is perhaps more known to the modern audience and readership due to his fatal personal tragedy, being a party in one of the many sexual scandals of the British fin de siècle. In 1895, Wilde was sentenced to two years of imprisonment and hard labour for "gross indecency", which in the end of the Victorian period became synonymous with homosexual acts (Kaye 60). Naturally, Wilde's authorship was to a very large extent influenced by his personal life, where his meeting with Lord Alfred Douglas would have the greatest impact and ultimately ruin his career and personal life. This chapter will look at two of Wilde's literary works, one written prior to the 1895 trials, and one written during his imprisonment in Reading Gaol. The two works, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *De Profundis* (1897/1905), will be used to examine how men with homosexual desire in the *fin de siècle* becomes "fallen men". *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis* are different kinds of fallen man stories. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* Wilde deliberately uses the framework of a Gothic story as a disguise for a fallen man story founded on deviant sexuality in the form of homosexual desire, whereas *De Profundis*, believed to be Wilde's confession and proof of repentance, rather is the narrative of Wilde's own fallen man story, where he takes charge of his own fallenness and presents himself as a Christ-like figure, the ultimate fallen man for Christians.

This chapter will focus on the fallen man and how what was considered "deviant" sexuality leads a man to fallenness. When Wide's literary works were published during the Victorian period, "homosexual acts between men" were prohibited by law in Britain under the 1885 Criminal Law Act (Bristow xxxii, Sloan 19). Homosexuality or homosexual desire was a theme present in both art and literature in the latter part of the Victorian period, though hidden and in most cases never mentioned directly. Because of the illegality and need for keeping homosexuality and homosexual desire secret and in a state of hiddenness, it is especially interesting to look at homosexuality and homosexual desire as a subtext in the

Gothic narrative *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* and as a subtext and more interestingly a homosexual confession in *De Profundis,* seeing the trials and life from Wilde's perspective. Central to the discussion will be the relationship of the two most important male characters, Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray. *De Profundis* was written as a long letter from January to March 1897 from Oscar Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) (Wilde, "De Profundis" 45).

The Picture of Dorian Gray was Oscar Wilde's only novel during his career as an Aesthetic author. The story first appeared in the July 1890 issue of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine,* which was a popular American literary periodical (Bristow ix). The story was revised, and Wilde added six new chapters before it was published as a novel in 1891 by Ward, Lock, and Co. (Bristow x). Due to contemporary reviews and reception, Wilde chose to bowdlerise parts of the story relating to the homoerotic passages before it was published in novel form (Cohen 217-18). This chapter will mainly deal with the 1891 novel, but to illustrate some of the revisions Wilde made, in relation to homosexuality/homosexual desire, examples will be provided from the 1890 serialised version. Furthermore, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* becomes central as a piece of evidence for the opposing counsel in the 1895 Wilde trials. The opposing counsel was most interested in the particular passages, which Wilde had "purged" from the text (Cohen 218).

De Profundis is first and foremost a non-fiction text, something I am taking into account whilst dealing with it. However, *De Profundis* does seem to have the qualities of both a personal and private letter, as well as a public performance. *De Profundis* is, like most of Wilde's literary works, carefully written and considered over a long period of time, and therefore it might be looked upon as a piece of literature. *De Profundis* is Wilde's confrontation with Bosie, an insight into the life and trials from Wilde's point of view. When *De Profundis* was published it had been extensively edited and shortened by Robert Ross, further viewing it as a piece of literature (Beckson 28). Whilst dealing with the text of *De Profundis* the aspect of interest is not mainly in Wilde as a person, but rather his self-presentation, Wilde as a character in his own fallen man story. Further it is interesting looking at his treatment of confession, homosexuality, and homosexual desire in the first part of the letter, and secondly, looking at how Wilde presents himself as a Christ-like figure.

Understanding Oscar Wilde: Life, Authorship, and the Creation of Homosexuality

This following section will demonstrate why the Wilde scandal happened and what it meant for the idea of the fallen man, by looking briefly on Oscar Wilde's biography. I believe all literary scholars should be careful being too conclusive in terms of digging in the author's

personal life and background, and linking this to the written literature produced by the author. However, in the case of Oscar Wilde, his biography, with emphasis on his sexuality and the following trials are important both in understanding his literary works *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *De Profundis*, as well as understanding the Victorian society's attitudes and opinions to homosexual desire, homosexuality, and same-sex relationships in general. I also think it is important to be aware of the fact that the Oscar Wilde who wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not the same person or author as the Oscar Wilde who wrote *De Profundis.* Events in his personal life shaped and changed Wilde dramatically, and as a consequence his authorship changed as well. This is most evident in *De Profundis*, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. To fully understand the transition Oscar Wilde went through and how it influenced his production of his works, it is helpful to take a quick glance on his life prior to writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the trials in 1895, imprisonment and the consequences of the scandal.

Aestheticism was something Wilde lived for and it was the foundation of both his life and authorship. Ruth Livesey defines aestheticism as "a belief that taste and the pursuit of beauty should be chief in principles in not only art, but also life" (262). The aesthetic movement can be traced back to Théophile Gautier, and his claim "art for art's sake" (Livesey 261-62). Oscar Wilde was one of the most prominent, perhaps *the* most prominent, figure of the aesthetic movement, which is illustrated in Walter Hamilton's publication *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (1882), where he devoted a whole chapter to Wilde, though very early in his career, whilst Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and A. C. Swineburne shared a chapter (Livesey 261). In the chapter devoted to Wilde, Walter Hamilton praises him for his achievements, noting that his career is still early "it has been full of promise for the future" and defends him from "the gross personal abuse which some journals have […] showered on him"[9] (85, 87). Hamilton is clearly enthusiastic of the impact of Wilde's aestheticism when he writes: "Oscar Wilde defies conventionality, and has set a fashion of garb which one might well which to be universally adopted" (109). His status as an author grew gradually, and with the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* his most famous story, and his success on the theatre stage with his social comedy plays he reached the peak of his career around 1895 (Sloan 18-20, Miller 17, Murray vii).

Oscar Wilde began to "experiment" with relationships and sex with men in 1886, the same year as his second son was born (Sloan 18). Robert Ross, who would later be Wilde's

[9] Having in mind that this is more than a decade before the trials.

literary executor, was the one who introduced Wilde to male prostitutes and rent boys, many of whom Wilde became involved with. One of them, Charles Parker, testified against Wilde during the trials (Miller 15, Sloan 23). According to Robert Keith Miller, Wilde would have maintained his social position, if he had only confined himself "to relationships of this sort". "Late-nineteenth-century society was willing, for the most part, to overlook almost any indiscretion so long as it was not made public", stated by Miller (15). However, Wilde's downfall started the day he met Lord Alfred Douglas in 1891, and the situation was further fuelled by Wilde and Bosie's public appearances together and not hiding their close relationship (Sloan 22).

One day in February 1895 Wilde's life would change forever, Bosie's father, the Marquess of Queensbury, had left a card in one of London's clubs for Wilde, with the inscription "To Oscar Wilde, posing sodomite [*sic*]" (Sloan 25). Wilde sued the Marquess of Queensbury for libel, which he lost, and this was the start of two more trials against Wilde for sodomy (Miller 17-9, Sloan 25-7). In the end, Wilde was convicted for "gross indecency and corruption", and sentence to two years of imprisonment and labour in Reading Gaol (Sloan 25-7). The Oscar Wilde who was released from prison 18th May 1897 was not the same man as prior to the scandal. He left for France the next day, and never returned to Britain. Wilde died in November 1900 in Paris, ill and depressed. In his last days, "Wilde believed that his artistic achievement would finally be recognised by future generations, who would also accept all that he had been" (Sloan 28-29). After the trial his novel disappeared for a period of time, as it and Wilde's reputation had suffered as a result of the trials. Post Wilde's death his society comedies were gradually revived (Bristow xxxii).

Oscar Wilde's personal life intersected with the changes in the nineteenth-century conceptions of homosexuality. In the fin de siècle a gender crisis that affected both men and women took place. According to Elaine Showalter, masculinity is a socially constructed role, in the same way as femininity. Masculinity is defined "within particular cultural and historical circumstance, and the *fin de siècle* also marked a crisis of identity for men on all levels" (*Sexual* 4, 8). Further, Showalter writes "men and women were not as clearly identified and separated as they had been" (*Sexual 9*), as well as the increasing emancipation of women lead to fear of waning virility in men (*Sexual 10*). Finally, in the last decade of the nineteenth century the long reigning patriarchy was under attack by both women and various groups of men challenging the established structures in society (Showalter, *Sexual 11*).

Today, historians of sexuality argue that male homosexuality, along with the male homosexual role, "are "inventions" of the late nineteenth century" (Showalter, *Sexual* 14). In

The History of Sexuality, Michael Foucault writes "the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy, and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality (43). On the subject of the "birth" of homosexuality Foucault writes, "homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a king of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43). Central in the creation of the concept of homosexuality in the 1880s, are John A. Symonds, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and Havelock Ellis (Showalter, *Sexual* 14).

The Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885 quickly outlawed the growing homosexual subculture that began in Britain in the 1870s and 1880s, breaking with Victorian morals. All homosexual acts in Victorian Britain, private or public, were made illegal by the amendment (Showalter, *Sexual* 14).

> Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to, the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour (qtd. in Showalter, *Sexual* 14).

One of the reasons why the Wilde trials, in 1895, became such a big deal was because it coincided with a "moral panic" that spread in the Victorian society. The explanation is twofold. Firstly, in the last decade of the nineteenth century the best arguments and the strongest voice belonged to the "cultural pessimists", and secondly the cultural impact "degeneration" had on society (Foldy 70). The theory of "degeneration" referred "broadly to the natural (and inevitable) process of the physical and mental deterioration of the human species" (Foldy 70), and additionally the concept was used in a moral context to express a sense of "moral backsliding" (Foldy 70). The consequences of the "moral panic" was that mechanisms of restraint, and the heterosexist structures of restraint were drawn tighter, and remained tightened until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 de-criminalised homosexuality (Foldy 70).

Homosexuality, or love between to persons of the same sex was generally not accepted in the Victorian society as it broke with the perceived normal organisation of society between a man and a woman. The Victorian society was homophobic in the nineteenth century, as shown in the way the Victorians used law to protect themselves and society from deviants (Cook 47). The best example on this is the Labouchère Amendment from 1885, essentially criminalising homosexuality. Cook points out that "popular opinion might be assumed to be violently antipathetic to homosexual behaviour" (47). On homosexuality, R.W. Connell writes that "the late nineteenth century was the time when "the homosexual" as a social type became clearly defined" (Connell 252). Unlike the earlier view of sodomy being an act undertaken by a man "who gave way to evil", now homosexual desire defined a particular type of man called the "invert" (Connell 252). As a consequence homosexuals were "expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group, symbolically assimilated to women or to beasts" and as a continuation "heterosexuality became a required part of manliness" (253).

As Michael Wheeler points out that "in order to understand Victorian fiction it is essential to understand Victorian religion – perhaps the most passionately contested aspect of a culture, which seems increasingly remote from us, two centuries on" (180). The words of the Bible were well known and widespread in sermons in church on Sundays, and as Wheeler notes "copies of the Bible and of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* were to be found in the homes of the 'deserving poor'" (180). Victorian Britain was Christian, according to Wheeler, largely Protestant and they used the Authorised Version of the King James Bible from 1611. Because so many people had a deep knowledge of the content of the Bible, the Victorian novelists used biblical allusions, thematic and references in their novels.

One very important reason for the Victorians' aversion towards homosexuality is found in reading of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Book of Genesis (Bible 16-18). The story has been used as a metaphor for "deviant" sexual conduct, also giving the name to homosexuality in the nineteenth century, usually referred to as "sodomy". In Genesis chapter 18, God revealed to Abraham that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah "because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous" (Bible 17 Gen 18:20). Abraham did not want the Lord to kill the "righteous" along with the "wicked" (Bible 17 Gen 18:23), and as a response God sent two angels to examine (Gen 19:1), who Abraham's nephew Lot invited to lodge and eat with him (19:2-3). The passage which has been interpreted as the homosexual "evidence" is Genesis 19:4-8:

> ***4*** But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:
> ***5*** And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.
> ***6*** And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after them.
> ***7*** And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.
> ***8*** Behold now, I have to daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to the them as *is* good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof
> (Bible 17-18, Gen 19:4-8)

The key to understanding the passage is looking at the word "know" in verse 5 and 8. In verse 8 Lot offers his two daughters to the men of Sodom "which have not known man", meaning that they are virgins who never have had sex with men. When you use the same meaning on the usage in verse 5 the meaning becomes evident – that the men of Sodom wants to have sex with the men/angels in Lot's house. The punishment from God is severe, and he burns and destroys Sodom and Gomorrah (Bible 18). This passage is what the Victorians had as their foundation of their perception and divergence towards homosexuality. This is also where the idea of punishment as a reaction to that kind of sin comes in.

The reception of Oscar Wilde becomes important pieces of evidence, showing how the novels were received in the contemporary time, and also supplying information on what society thought about deviant men, what this thesis calls fallen man. Both versions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* received mixed reviews upon publication. According to Joseph Bristow, the "fiercest assault" on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (the first published version), and possibly the most interesting one, was an unsigned notice in the *Scots Observer*, 5th July 1890 (Bristow xxi, Beckson 74). The review opens with "why go grubbing in muck-heaps?" referring back to the contents of the story (Beckson 75).

> Mr Oscar Wilde has again been writing stuff that were better unwritten; and while *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (…) is ingenious, interesting, full of cleverness, and plainly the work of a man of letters, it is false art – for its interest is medico-legal; it is false to the human nature – for its hero is a devil; it is false to morality (…). The Story – which deals with matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a

> hearing *in camera*[10] is discreditable alike to author and editor. Mr Wilde has brains, and art, and style; *but if he can write for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraphboys* [*sic.*], the sooner he takes to tailoring (or some other decent trade) the better for his own reputation and the public morals (Beckson 75, italics my own).

This review, conveniently anonymous, apparently has two agendas; firstly mocking and insulting the story as well as the author, and secondly, and more interestingly, the person behind the review is insinuating that there is homosexuality and homosexual desire present in the story. By mentioning "outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraphboys [*sic*]", the writer refers to the Cleveland Street Affair from 1889, a Victorian scandal where upper-class men had paid young, male, telegraph-messengers for sexual favours. One upper-class "gentleman" was exposed, leading him to flee Britain, never to return. This is an example from real life showing that that the fallen man did exist in the Victorian era, though not under that particular name. The example shows the transgression breaking with sexual morality and the expected male role resulting in societal reactions and social condemnation. Two telegraph messengers were fired; only one was convicted according to the Labouchère Amendment (Bristow xxi-xxii, Cohen 8-9). As a result of the attacks on the story's lack of morality, Oscar Wilde wrote his preface to the 1891 version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, emphasising on morality and art.

De Profundis was published posthumous by Robert Ross who was Wilde's literary executor. He edited the letter, and sent copies to editors and writers he envisaged would be central in "restoring Wilde's reputation as a writer" (Beckson 242). William T. Stead replied: "I have been profoundly moved by *De Profundis.* We all owe you thanks for having permitted us to see the man as he really was" (Beckson 242). Laurence Housman, brother of dramatist A. E. Housman, also answered Ross. "It is, for the most part, beautifully thought and written; and it is the *right* sort of book to come now in order to touch the hearts of men made cruel by ignorance of human nature and history. Its reception seems to me remarkable, - unprophesiable five or six years ago" (Beckson 243). Finally, Edmund Gosse, not an admirer of Wilde, wrote "the publication of so extraordinary a document is an event in English literature, an event which I welcome cordially" (Beckson 243).

However, not all critics were as positive as the gentlemen just mentioned. In a review of *De Profundis,* which Edward V. Lucas calls "an analysis of his temperament, and a *history of his ruin*" (Beckson 245, italics my own), Lucas wrote:

[10] In secret

"[…] and yet while realizing the terrible conditions under which it was written, and possessed by every wish to understand the author and feel with him in the utter wreck of his career, it is impossible, except very occasionally, to look upon his testament as more than a literary feat. Not so, we find ourselves saying, are souls laid bare. This is not sorrow, but its dexterously constructed counterfeit" (Beckson 245).

3.1 Beneath the Surface: Homosexual Desire, Rumours, and Scandal in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.
It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.
- Oscar Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

I love scandals about other people, but scandals about myself
don't interest me. They have not the charm of novelty.
- Dorian Gray, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a representative of late-Victorian Gothic fiction, which never directly mentions homosexuality or homosexual desire, but was read in its contemporary time as highly inappropriate, in its assumptions of "deviant sexuality" and how that automatically created scandal. In modern times the novel has become one of the most well known representations of homosexuality in literature. According to Greg Buzwell, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* ranks alongside two other Gothic novels of the fin de siècle, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker (British Library). Further, Buzwell emphasises that these three texts are "representations of how fin-de-siècle literature explored the darkest recesses of Victorian society and the often *disturbing private desires that lurked behind acceptable public faces*" (British Library, emphasis my own). Oscar Wilde's novel differs from other contemporary literary works in the novel's emphasis and influence by aestheticism, where Wilde aimed to explore the connection between art and life, beauty and vanity (Livesey 261). Wilde was against the perceived nineteenth-century way of judging art and literature, where the moral lesson the piece of art or literature could teach the readers or viewers was the only correct manner. Wilde believed in the aesthetic way of judging art, asking if it is beautiful or meaningful as a work of art (Livesey 262). Underneath Wilde's literary treatment of sin and corruption, art and beauty and vice and crime, there is a sub-text of "homoerotic longings or activities" noticed by contemporaries of Wilde but also by later literary scholars such as Michael S. Foldy and Peter Raby (Foldy 80, Raby 165). Foldy also remarks that this homosexual aspect of the novel is never explicitly articulated; however it ignited "a heated public debate on art and morality" in the press (80). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the indirect treatment of

homosexual desire and the aspect of "hiddenness" related to same-sex affection and homosexuality are particularly interesting in my discussion of the novel, also because the idea of hiding or covering up the surfaces seems important to the text of the novel. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel that enacts the idea of hiddenness, even closetedness, which is the idea that there is something to hide. Central to the concept to the fallen man is the aspect of keeping a secret or hiding the truth from "society", because when that protective hiddenness erupts and the truth is revealed, the status as a fallen man automatically follows.

Another interesting aspect of Wilde's novel is his choice of genre. Jerrold E. Hogle remarks that the Gothic fiction had resurgence in the 1890s, like it did in the 1790s (1). Hogle comments on a few general parameters of Gothic fiction, and highlights that within a specific space, such as a large old house or an urban underworld, or a combination of such spaces, "are hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, physiologically, physically, or otherwise at the main time of the story" (2). The Gothic genre deals with how "the middle class dissociates itself and the fears they are surrounded by, amongst them the sexually deviant" (Hogle 9).

As a direct response to the controversy partly caused by the perceived references to homosexual desire in the first edition of the story, Wilde wrote a preface several months before the publication of the second version of the novel, indirectly dealing with the many critical reviews and responses to *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* and the lack of morality in the story. The preface seems to have three aims; firstly to "take weapons out of the hands" of those who had attacked the first edition published in *Lippincott's,* and for Wilde to repeat the major creed of aestheticism. Secondly, Wilde wanted to respond to the criticism which arose from the first version of the story. Thirdly, Wilde's intent is to be provocative (Gillespie 3, fn. 1). By presenting a preface to the reader, listing twenty-five epigrams, Wilde indirectly tells the reader how to "attack" and read the following text. Wilde uses the preface to protect himself from criticism and later attacks, because he clearly states that books cannot be moral or immoral (Wilde, 3). Additionally, by writing the preface in this very specific manner Wilde created an effect of depoliticising his fictional story as well. A possible effect of Wilde doing this was that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* would less likely be seen as what would later be called "homosexual propaganda". In effect I think Wilde's actions of both bowdlerizing and writing the preface to the novel shows that Wilde did not write the story of Dorian Gray to spread homosexual propaganda, rather creating a story in the name of surface and aestheticism. Wilde does not say that there is nothing beneath the surface in the novel, but rather he believes the surface itself is much more interesting. At no point, does he deny the

gay charges of homosexual content, but he is essentially saying that those people in search for a homosexual subtext are literally looking in the wrong place. They should be looking at the surface, not under. This is a sharp contrast to *De Profundis,* which is essentially about the depths.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there are two male characters in particular who show signs of homosexual desire. The first being Basil Hallward, the aesthetic artist and painter moulded according to Wilde's aesthetic ideals, and the wealthy, upper-class dandy, Dorian Gray. Specifically in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* it seems like the Gothic plays a dual role in this story; first and foremost as a genre and frame for the story enabling the author to play with the supernatural in relation to sexuality and secondly I argue that Wilde uses the Gothic as a device of emphasising his focus on the surface, and not the depth of the novel.

3.1.1 Basil Hallward

The Picture of Dorian Gray opens in an aesthetic spirit in an artist's studio, where one of the first persons who are introduced to the narrative and the reader is the artist Basil Hallward. Basil plays an important role in the novel, though somewhat in the background, as the man who in the most prominent way expresses his homosexual desire (and homoeroticism), hidden and concealed in his art. Like in the case of Dorian Gray, the novel never states explicitly that Basil is a homosexual man, and that is why this part on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* does not emphasise Basil's nor Dorian's sexual orientation as certainties, rather exploring the expression of homosexual desire and homoeroticism in the novel. Crucial for understanding and "decoding" Basil's homosexual desire is aestheticism and art as ways of both concealing and expressing desire for another man.

The most prominent way Basil's homosexual desire is expressed in the novel is in the way he speaks about Dorian and utters his deep affection of him mostly in conversation with Lord Henry Wotton, but also at times where Dorian Gray himself is present. The following quote is from the very beginning of the novel before the reader is properly introduced to the character and personality of Dorian Gray. The passage is taken from a conversation between Basil and Lord Henry, where Basil tells him about the first time he saw and met Dorian at a social gathering:

> I turned halfway round, and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met I felt I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew I had

> come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating, that if I allowed it to do so it would absorb my whole nature, my very art itself…. Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows (10).

To a modern reader the passage clearly uses a language to describe affections, which is on a level above that of "only" friendship. For a contemporary reader in the 1890s this passage undoubtedly crosses the line of what was proper conduct and feelings between two men, challenging what was accepted morally. The words used by Basil to describe his bodily and very physical reaction to seeing Dorian Gray for the first time was quite provocative for the contemporary readers; Basil growing pale, the "curious sensation of terror", which can also be read as a "wave" of romantic emotions in Basil. These reactions are similar to falling in love, which in the Victorian literature and real life was not societally condoned for same-sex love, though it did happen in secret and hidden. Further in the end of the passage Basil mentions that he feels he is on the "verge of terrible crisis" in his life (10). This can be seen in relation to his homosexual desire for Dorian Gray and taking it one step further, possibly also referring to coming to terms with his sexuality and identity. In his book *Sex Scandal,* William A. Cohen writes that the term "personality" has a sexual charge in Wilde's essay "The Critic as Artist" (197). "Personality" also appears in the passage above, and during the trials Oscar Wilde was cross-examined in court about a very similar passage, which was "expunged from the novel" as Cohen phrases it. The focus of the attorney was to find out whether Wilde thought that kind of language and feelings were appropriate "of one man towards another" (197).

Further in the text there are many examples of how Basil expresses his affection and emotions for Dorian. By putting them together and looking more closely at them it does become evident that there is something particular and "unusual" in the way Basil utters his feelings towards another man, and that homosexual desire definitely is present. For instance when Lord Henry asks Basil how often he sees Dorian Basil replies: "every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me" (12). This might be seen as ambiguous as it can both refer to Dorian being his muse and inspiration in art, but also as an utterance of homosexual desire and love. On the following page Basil tries to make Lord Henry see that Dorian is much more to him than just a model for his paintings, without saying explicitly what he is: "I see things differently. I think of them differently. Harry! if you only knew what Dorian Gray is to me!" (13).

The most important point in relation to both Basil and Dorian, is the aspect of hiding their homosexual desire to the greater society is of utmost importance. Furthermore, I argue that the way Basil and the text conceal the homosexual desire is the interesting point in this situation. This is something that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about in her work *Epistemology of the Closet* where Sedgwick examined how "the homosexual became a figure who was uniquely associated with secrecy, and whose sexuality belonged in a separate place, known to us as 'the closet'" (Cocks 3, Sedgwick 67-90). What Sedgwick is both naming and describing, is something that was an unknown phenomenon in the last decade of the Victorian era. For the people having same-sex relationships or same-sex desire secrecy and hiddenness was a necessary thing, because of how the Victorian society condemned and punished deviancy. The two following passages shows Basil's need and want for hiding his homosexual desire for Dorian Gray in two different ways. The first passage concerns Basil's need to keep the name of the people he love a secret, firstly to protect himself and not risking to be revealed for his "deviant" feelings. Secondly, he is afraid that the person he loves will be taken away from him, which unfortunately is the case in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* where Lord Henry "steals" Dorian from him.

> When I like people immensely I never tell their names to any one. It is like surrendering a part of them. I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvellous to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it. (…) It is a silly habit, I dare say, but somehow it seems to bring a great deal of romance into one's life (8).

> Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait for the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul (9).

The first passage describes the hiddenness and closetedness in almost romantic terms, possibly showing how Basil has turned the enforced hiddenness into something beautiful and artistic. I believe that the passage clearly hints to Basil's homosexual desire, and that "people" in this case refers specifically to men. The second passage depicts one of the most "direct" ways Basil tries to convey his feelings, desire and love for Dorian. Instead of

focusing on Dorian the text uses Basil as the focal point. The essence of the second passage is Basil's fear of the exposure of "the secret of my own soul" (9), which most likely is his sexual orientation. He believes that he has transferred his homosexual desire for Dorian from his heart and mind onto the canvas, and is terrified of people seeing this in the picture. It seems to me that the text uncannily prefigures what would happen to it later, that its smallest signs would be mined for potential gay meaning. In fact, the fear Basil shows in the last paragraph above, literally comes true during the Wilde trial. The phrase of the painting showing the secret of the soul becomes like a mantra throughout the novel for Basil, but Dorian also adopts it.

Joseph Bristow points out in his introduction to the 2006 Oxford edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that Wilde rewrote passages from the *Lippincott's* 1890 version of the story, and thereby bowdlerised the story in particular passages relation to chapter I where Basil conveys his homosexual desire for Dorian, or as Bristow phrases it to "tone down Basil's enthusiasm for Dorian Gray" (xxv), but Wilde also changed Basil's "romance" to his "ideal" (xxv-xxvi). Below is an example of Wilde's bowdlerisation of the 1890 *Lippincott's* version. What Wilde removed is illustrated in italics:

> [1890]
> "As a rule, he is charming to me, and *we walk home together from the club arm in arm, or* sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things" (Wilde, *DG* 194).
> [1891]
> "As a rule, he is charming to me, and we sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things" (Wilde, *DG* 14).

Basil is most prominent in the first chapters of the novel, and only sporadically returns during the rest of the novel. In chapter IX Basil once again appears in the narrative after being away for a considerable amount of time. It seems that since the reader encountered with him last time there has been a development in his character and personality, depicted in his attitude towards the painting of Dorian. From the very beginning of the novel upon the completion of the painting Basil's view was that the painting was never to be displayed in any gallery namely because of all that he had put into it of his own soul, which has been interpreted as his homosexual desire for Dorian. However, at this point in the novel Basil has changed his mind, in addition to being a long time since he painted Dorian. He is now eager to display the painting in a Parisian gallery for the whole world to see, to Dorian's

great despair. I believe that this transition in Basil can be read as analogous to what we today call "coming-out" of the closet. According to Sedgwick "coming out" is a speech act or something performative, which means that somebody has to perceive you as having "come out" for it to be an act (3-4). Early in the novel this secret of his was something he was willing to hide for any cost, whereas it seems that having time to think and reflect (and also the absence of Dorian in his life) subsequently made him change his mind. He is no longer afraid of what people will say, or the societal reactions. Foucault argues that the homosexuality was "everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away" (43). In this chapter Basil confesses to Dorian the reason why he earlier did not want the picture displayed. Whereupon Dorian answers: "My dear Basil, what have you told me? Simply that you felt that you admired me too much. That is not even a compliment" (96). It becomes evident that the homosexual desire and love Basil feels for Dorian is not reciprocal, and Dorian does not understand this desire either. According to Sedgwick's definition of "coming out" Basil does not fulfil the criteria as nobody perceives him as homosexual afterwards. Instead, Dorian's response merely functions in an opposite way, pushing Basil back into the closet of which he attempted to come out of.

The tragic irony in the novel when it comes to Basil is that Dorian murders him after saying "I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished" (132). Basil being the only male character in the novel who truly loves Dorian and tries to protect him, ends up murdered by the man he loves because he does not understand and his soul is so corrupted. Basil becomes a fallen man first and foremost for having homosexual desire and romantic feelings for Dorian, which transgresses with Victorian morality and perception of how man and woman is the only true union between humans (Tosh 27-8). Basil's fallenness can both be seen as literal, as the mentioned homosexual desire for Dorian. In addition, it can be seen through the lens of aestheticism and art where Basil transfers his desire and feelings for another man onto the canvas. Moreover, as mentioned above, the reading of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the trials is in itself a kind of "outing" of homosexuality and homosexual desire, thus also functioning as a fall for the characters in the text.

3.1.2 Dorian Gray

The second fallen man in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the eponymous, Dorian Gray. The protagonist of the story is a much more complex character and a much more complex fallen man. He is obviously devoted much more space as he is the focal point of the story. Unlike Basil, he is described as a young, beautiful and incredibly vain dandy early in his twenties when the novel begins (13). Dorian is described in behaviours often coded as feminine, such as crying and flinging himself on the divan (26). He belongs to the wealthy part of the British society, and early in the novel Lady Brandon remarks that he "doesn't do anything, - oh, yes, plays the piano – or is it the violin (…)?" (11), something which was unusual for a man. Such accomplishments as playing an instrument, and not "doing" anything was much more common for girls and young women waiting to be married.

Dorian Gray lives a completely different life than the artist Basil Hallward, more precisely he leads a much more debauched life. At first Wilde is vague when he introduces the idea of Dorian having homosexual desire and living a sexually deviant life. Unlike the information we have on Basil, Dorian is the victim of gossip and rumours spreading through the respectable society of London. In chapter XI the reader is presented with this introductory passage regarding Dorian's sins: "Even those who had heard the most evil things against him, and from time to time strange rumours about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs, could not believe anything to his dishonour when they saw him. (…) There was something in his face that rebuked them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the memory of the innocence that they had tarnished" (106). Later on the same page the text presents which at first glance might seem innocent, but when close-reading it this fuels up under the previous passage: "or in the sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the Docks, which, under an assumed name, and in disguise, it was his habit to frequent, he would think of the ruin he had brought upon his soul" (106). First of all a man like Dorian should never be near the Docks, first and foremost a lower-class area often associated with crime and secondly, an area also known for prostitution. Further, Dorian goes there for a specific reason, which forces him to give a false name and wear a disguise. This clearly signals the need of hiding his identity and further raises the question if he also tries to conceal homosexual desire and his homosexuality when meeting with male prostitutes?

In the novel there is a development in the accusations and rumours concerning Dorian Gray, and he, unlike Basil, experiences the consequences associated with being linked to matters of homosexuality. The narrator informs the reader of Dorian nearly being blackballed

from a London club, and two gentlemen "got up in a marked manner and went out" (118). After Dorian passed his twenty-fifth birthday the rumours escalade, and become more tangible. The rumours said that Dorian was seen "brawling with foreign sailors in a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel[11]", and further that "his extraordinary absences became notorious, and when he used to reappear again in society, men would whisper to each other in corners, or pass him with a sneer, or look at him with cold searching eyes" (118).
It does seem that the text has been carefully crafted in terms of moving forward without revealing anything explicit about homosexual desire or homosexuality in Wilde's revision, but still there are sentences present that could be read as carrying homosexual undertones, such as that "it was remarked, however, that that some of those who had been intimate with him appeared, after a time, to shun him" (119). The sentence is ambiguous in the sense that homosexuality does not "have" to be the only explanation for people shunning him. As readers we are not told everything about Dorian's life and background, only what the text wants us to know. However, when that is said, it is perfectly possible to read in the context of homosexuality. From this it is interesting asking why is it interesting that Wilde chooses not to make Dorian's sexual orientation clear? The effect of Dorian's possible homosexuality being left ambiguous is that Wilde opens up for more than one interpretation to Dorian's "sin". Also, one possibility is that Dorian's homosexuality is not important to Wilde, and that he rather wants the reader to look at the surface and not in the depth. By this saying Wilde is saying that the emphasis of the novel is on the beautiful and aesthetic. All other things are irrelevant to him.

Something, which further supports the assumption of Dorian's homosexual desire, is what is being said about him at a party Basil attends. It has come to the point where almost no gentlemen in London invites Dorian Gray to their homes, nor do they want to visit him (126). In conversation with a Lord, Basil mentions Dorian's name upon where "Staveley curled his lip" and said that Dorian was a man "whom no pure-minded girl should be allowed to know, and whom no chaste woman should sit in the same room with" (126). This sentence has an ambivalence to it, which means that the sentence could mean at least a couple of things as we are dealing with plausible deniability. Firstly, the people present have the feeling that some sort of "sex thing" is going on, and because they do not know what it is, the most likely alternative is that Dorian "has" to be a lady-killer and she has to be protected. A second alternative reading is that people have heard rumours about Dorian being active in same-sex

[11] A very poor area where the lower-classes lived in the East End.

relationships. It is reasonable to assume that late-Victorian society would not be comfortable with a chaste woman sitting in the same room as a homosexual, as that would be considered threatening in a different way than if he was a lady-killer. In my reading I lean towards the second meaning because that is in accordance with the novels persistency with hiddenness in relation to homosexual references. Basil is shocked by every negative rumour that was said about Dorian at that party, because his infatuation of Dorian blinds him. A long list of young men is mentioned in relation to suicide, tarnished names, ruined careers, ostracized from society, sorrow and shame. The paragraph below illustrates the massive reaction Dorian's lifestyle gains, and it is clearly very controversial, as people do not want to be associated with him.

> Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent's only so, and his career? I met his father yesterday in St. James's Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. And what about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentlemen would associate with him? (126-27)

What is interesting is that though Dorian is shunned and receives negative attention from members of his wealthy society due to rumours and assumptions on his sinful and morally deviant lifestyle, Dorian still has his close circle of friends including Lord Henry, Basil and Lady Brandon and her circle of friends. This can be explained in different ways, but it has to be mentioned that though Victorian moral and attitude towards homosexuals was clear, some might have accepted the "deviancy". This resembles the same treatment of Mrs Medora Phillips in the American novel *Bertram Cope's Year* published in 1919. Where Mrs Medora embraces the homosexual friends of her, finding them exotic and entertaining. The possibility of the friends not knowing or understanding Dorian's personality/sexuality is also possible.

Homosexuality is important here and so is the theme of syphilis, two ideas that connect to fallenness in different ways. Elaine Showalter writes that syphilis was "surely the symbolic disease of the *fin de siècle*" and was the result of sexual transgression, which led to moral panic (Showalter "Syphilis" 166, *Sexual* 188). Stephen Kern writes that syphilis "was

an ideal Protestant disease as well as an ironically Victorian disease. One transgression, a single sexual contact, could lead to a lifetime of suffering. There was no way of knowing for certain if one had been contaminated or not. . . . One was never certain of the cure and, of course, none was deserving of cure. No precautions against it were sufficient, paralleling the Christian notion that no human works could possibly influence divine salvation" (42). Further Showalter writes: "the iconography of syphilis was primarily masculine, with its dramatic inscriptions on the male body" (*Sexual* 192). Late-Victorian patriarchs saw syphilis as "God's divine judgement on male lust" (*Sexual* 193). In the late nineteenth century syphilis also became covertly linked with male homosexuality (*Sexual* 195).

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* syphilis is presumably present, but not directly stated. Basil tells Dorian that "sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face" (Wilde, *DG* 126). "If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands even" (126). When a friend of Dorian's came to Basil to get his painting done, Basil refused him because "there was something in the shape of his fingers that I hated" (126), showing that people with visible syphilis were stigmatised. Dorian Gray is to recognise the signs of syphilis in his painting as he continues to transgress. Dorian sees sign of syphilis in "the lines of cruelty round the mouth" (77). Further, when Basil sees the painting "an exclamation of horror broke from the lips of the painter as he saw (…) the hideous face on the canvas" (130). A final example is, when Dorian discovers that the painting sweats blood (145).

For the fallen woman one bodily change, which easily could reveal sexual transgression and establishing the status of a fallen woman was pregnancy. However, biology never enabled men to bear children and therefore the sexual transgression is not as easy to detect on a man's body, and therefore fallen men was more or less "protected" from revelation. However, in this setting the illness of syphilis functions as a sign of the male fall. It is an illness transmitted by sexual contact and as Showalter pointed out that "syphilis was primarily masculine with dramatic inscriptions on the male body" (*Sexual* 192). In this setting the syphilis, which in the Victorian period was not curable, therefore was something irreversible, like pregnancy or the loss of virginity for a woman. The syphilitic man would be marked in different ways on the body as the illness developed[12], in addition to syphilitic madness or insanity, which Wilde possibly is playing on as the explanation for Dorian's madness (Showalter, "Syphilis" 175). So, interestingly, on the one side in the novel we have

[12] For a full list of symptoms of syphilis see Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy* pp. 192-193,

homosexuality, which is hidden and ambiguous, and on the other side we have syphilis, which is visible and unambiguous.

As I analyse the fall of Dorian it becomes evident that his fall is more complex than that of Basil. It is possible to divide Dorian' fall in two ways where the first is due to him (possibly) living out his homosexuality and homosexual desire, in addition to the rumours and scandal which ruin his good name and reputation, with emphasis on the last two aspects, as Dorian's homosexuality is never directly proven in the text. On a second level, Dorian falls because he commits several severe crimes. He murders Basil, he reverses the traditional pattern of the homosexual being blackmailed, where in the novel, Dorian is blackmailing a heterosexual man. Finally, he commits suicide, which was a criminal offence. What further complicates the discussion of Dorian's fallenness is the supernatural aspect of the picture, which challenges the interpretation of Dorian Gray. Are we to perceive them as two separate personas or are we to look at the picture as an embodiment of Dorian? I argue that the supernatural functions as a mechanism of hiding the true character and double life Dorian lives. This mirrors the situation of living double lives, which the homosexuals in late-Victorian society where same-sex relationships were illegal and not socially condoned. Risks of being revealed were prosecution and being socially ostracised. Further I argue that the novel has a need for hiding a secret, and the picture becomes a symbol for hiding sexuality and keeping the façade, which the Victorians were so preoccupied with. By hiding the picture, Dorian can commit all the transgression he wants, and still keep the façade in the social life because all consequences of his transgression is inflicted on the picture and not him, until he ruins the picture and simultaneously commits suicide. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there is always an alternative explanation for things. In using plausible deniability, the text provides alternative explanations for Dorian's visits to the docks, which is a euphemism for Dorian having same-sex relationships with sailors, where Dorian supposedly is to have attended an opium den. Not all alternative explanations are plausible, but still they are present. I believe is a device deliberately created by Wilde to further emphasise the hiddenness of all things related to homosexuality and homosexual desire in the novel. The trials of Oscar Wilde became a way of outing the characters, the novel, and finally Wilde himself, as it served the readers with a specific way of reading the novel. The trials destroyed the ambiguity of the novel, moreover going against Wilde's focus on the aesthetic surface of the novel.

3.2 From the Depths: *De Profundis* and Oscar Wilde's Own Fallen Man Story

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age…
I treated Art as the supreme reality, and Life as a mere mode of fiction.
Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*

Oscar Wilde's letter to Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie), as we know as *De Profundis*, was written whilst Wilde was imprisoned in Reading Gaol serving his two-year long sentence for "gross indecency" (Beckson 28). It was written between January and March 1897 as a personal letter to Bosie, Oscar Wilde's lover and the one being the reason for the 1895 trials. However, the original title Wilde gave the letter was "Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis" meaing "Letter: In Prison and in Chains", which was inspired by Horace (Bristow, "Biographies", 29). After many requests for pen and paper, which were denied, Wilde finally got access to both pen and paper in the summer of 1896 when Reading Gaol got a new warden, Major Nelson. Nelson believed that writing would be a better "treatment" for Wilde than hard labour or isolation. (Bristow, "Biographies", 29, Belford 278). The pages were taken from Wilde as soon as he had finished them, and was only allowed to read and revise them towards the end of his sentence. Wilde was released from Reading Gaol on 18th May 1897 and upon his release he was given the complete letter (Belford 272). There is something about this, which is both fascinating and awful. This is also "anti-aesthetic" as a form of punishment, as was the initial hard labour sentence. What Wilde was doing when writing *De Profundis* was writing as function and treatment, and not form.

After Wilde's release from prison he never revised or edited the letter, he then gave the original version of *De Profundis* to Robert Ross, the man Wilde had his first homosexual affair with in 1886, with specific instructions (Belford 278, Miller 15). Wilde instructed Ross to make two typed copies of the letter, where one was to be given to Wilde. He told Ross to send the original to Bosie, something Ross never did in fear of Bosie destroying it. Instead, Ross sent Bosie a typed copy, and kept the original for himself[13] (Tóibín 243). According to Barbara Belford, Bosie stated that he never read the letter and that he had burnt his copy

[13] Robert Ross donated the original letter to the British Museum in 1909 with a clause saying that no one was to read it for fifty years (presumably to avoid Bosie getting hold of it and destroying it). It is now in the British Library collections (Tóibín 243).

(278), whereas Douglas Murray claims that Ross never sent a typed version to Bosie (102). It is of course debatable what is true and not. The letter was published for the first time five years after Wilde's death, in 1905, in a bowdlerised, shorter, and edited version by Robert Ross, who became Wilde's literary curator (Beckson 28). Ross changed the title of the letter from Wilde's original title to *De Profundis*, which is taken from the penitential Psalm 130 "From the depths, I have cried out to you, O Lord" (Tóibín xxxii). In addition to changing the title, possibly a part of the process of restoring the reputation of Wilde as a writer, Ross also edited the text itself. Ross removed over one thousand words, the majority were "fiercely critical of Douglas and his father" (Beckson 242, Tóibín 243).

In prison Wilde experienced both physical and mental breakdown. Wilde lost the right to see his children, and he lost his good reputation and his name. The Wilde trial also revealed that "even social position was not enough to let a man escape unharmed", and following the trial Bosie was rejected, ostracised and had to live in exile (Murray, *Bosie* 87).

The text of *De Profundis* can be seen as consisting of two main parts, where the first part is Wilde's explanation for his path to fallenness. The majority of the text is descriptions of his relationship to Bosie, unflattering, though mostly true, character descriptions of Bosie as well as actions leading to the fall. The second part is, in my opinion, more literary as it explores a religious dimension. Wilde ends up characterising and identifying himself with Christ. Though there are also clear literary qualities in the first section, the main emphasis will be on the second section where Wilde transforms himself and his suffering into a Christ-like figure and how this links to the fallen man story. The following discussion is an attempt to read *De Profundis* as a literary text, and though it in some ways is true story, it is also a fictional text.

As pointed out earlier, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is ambiguous in many ways, and it seems that Wilde continues his use of ambiguity in *De Profundis,* specifically in terms of genre. The most obvious reading of *De Profundis* is of course as a letter and non-fiction prose, which it Wilde intended it to be. However, I argue that it is also possible to read *De Profundis* as a piece of literature describing Wilde's own fallen man story as a narrative. What constitute the narrative are the biographical information and Wilde's experiences and emotions. What further make this especially interesting are the duality, which surrounds the narrative, the fact that Wilde falls in two ways; one literal/fictional and one actual in real life. What first strikes you when reading *De Profundis* is that it is basically like a dramatic monologue performed by Wilde: "As I sit here in this dark cell in convict clothes, a disgraced and ruined man, I blame myself" (47). Secondly, the story Wilde tells in *De Profundis*

incorporates Aristotle's four core aspects of a Greek tragedy: *hubris, hamartia, catharsis,* and the tragic hero. Though the two last aspects really belong to the second part of *De Profundis*, it is more natural to discuss them in relation to the others. Wilde's *hamartia* as I analyse *De Profundis* are two things: the first being Wilde meeting with and engaging a relationship with Bosie in the first place, "you (Bosie) required my entire existence. You took it" (53) and "our ill-fated and most lamentable friendship has ended in ruin and public infamy for me" (45). Secondly, suing the Marquess of Queensberry, which ultimately lead to the following trials convicting Wilde to imprisonment, and ending his life and career. In *De Profundis, hubris* is presented as the overwhelming self-confidence in Wilde that eventually leads to his fall. His celebrity status and fame made him think he was invincible, and it had fatal consequences. Though we see signs of Wilde presenting himself as a "tragic hero" throughout the first part, where he lingers on the injustice of only him being convicted: "They have permitted you to see the strange and tragic shapes of Life as one sees shadows in a crystal. The head of Medusa that turns living men to stone, you have been allowed to look at in a mirror merely. You yourself have walked free among the flowers. From me the beautiful world of colour and motion has been taken away" (47). This becomes even more powerful in the second part when Wilde in a way compares his suffering to that of Christ, and re-creates himself as a Christ-like figure. Finally, *catharsis,* meaning purgation or purification (Abrams 371), is an interesting aspect that will be discussed in further detail in the next section. Though I would like to point out that unlike the other aspects *catharsis* is aimed at the audience feeling relief in the end. The general perception of the contemporary audience/readers was that Wilde had been purged and came out from prison a repentant sinner.

In this first part *De Profundis* strikes out as being more private than public in form, which is illustrated in the way he addressees Bosie as well as in his attacks on Bosie's persona, behaviour and ill-treatment of Wilde. Further, in this first section we see that Wilde quite drastically moves away from his earlier aspirations of aestheticism, which all of his authorship and life as a celebrity has been founded upon, and that he enters the realm of what seems to be more like realism. This goes against the surface-focus that Wilde created for *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Conversely, *De Profundis* is literally from the depths. Tóibín remarks that "he writes not as art, but as a desperately serious matter" (xxvi), beauty, art and happiness are not any longer in focus in Wilde's writing, rather the cold and harsh facts and realities of life, never before told be Wilde (possibly because he has never encountered with them at any earlier stage). In this first part Wilde lays the foundation of his fallen man story,

where he in a very literally way describes the actions and events leading up to the fall with trials and later imprisonment. “I cannot allow you to go through life bearing in your heart the burden of having ruined a man like me. […] I must take the burden from you and put it on my own shoulders. I must say to myself that neither you nor your father, multiplied a thousand times over, could possibly have ruined a man like me: that I ruined myself: and that nobody, great or small, can be ruined except by his own hand.” (99)

As I have previously remarked the Wilde who wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not the same person who came to write *De Profundis*. The life he had lived as a celebrity was definitely over and so was his career and family life. The life in prison was immensely different from the flamboyant artistic life he had lived with Bosie. Through the lines and pages of *De Profundis* the bitterness and feeling of injustice is very much present.

In the second part of *De Profundis* Wilde changes the direction of his fallen man story, from what seems to be more private to more public and also more easily read as literature. What is interesting throughout *De Profundis* is that Wilde is laying bare his vulnerabilities and he is definitely staging and performing himself, which is something associated with his literary career. In this second part Wilde moves away from the biographical details and the close narrative of his fall to a more “philosophical” narrative of among other things suffering. In addition to Wilde as a literary figure he introduces a second literary figure in Christ, who becomes very central in Wilde’s narrative in the last part of *De Profundis*. In his article Michael R. Doylen discusses the presence of Christ in the narrative. He believes that Wilde’s version of Christ in *De Profundis* is similar to the way Wilde presents Christ in “The Soul of Man”, and that Wilde’s Christ is “thoroughly secular”, but becomes important to Wilde because of the “embodiment of certain aesthetic principles” (560).

What really is interesting in Wilde’s choice of using Christ in *De Profundis,* which might have been a very deliberate choice by Wilde in terms of reinventing his name after imprisonment, is that for Christianity, the ultimate fallen man story is that of Christ, and therefore he also becomes the ultimate fallen man for the religious Victorians as well. Christ’s fall has of course a very different meaning and acceptance than Wilde’s fall, mainly because he is the Son of God and the saviour of man. Could Wilde’s use of Christ in *De Profundis* signify that Wilde did not see his fall as anything different to that of Christ? In the Bible Christ literally dies, and Wilde dies only a few years after his release from prison. His fall and the wide range of consequences made life difficult to live, and Wilde was not the same as before his scandal. The first thing Wilde is using Christ for is self-fashioning himself

as he seems to be creating a new identity and name. As Ruth Robbins remarks, the following passage from *De Profundis* deals with the way Wilde describes Christ's personality, which is "of course, very close to the common perception of Wilde's own personality" (173).

> His miracles seem to me to be as exquisite as the coming of Spring, and quite as natural. I see no difficulty at all in believing that such was the charm of his personality that his mere presence could bring peace to souls in anguish, and that those who touched his garments or his hands forgot their pain;… or that when he t aught on the hillside the multitude forgot their hunger and thirst and the cares of the world, and that to his friends who listened to him as he sat at meat the coarse food seemed delicate, and the water had the taste of good wine, and the whole house became full of the odour and sweetness of nard" (117).

Suffering becomes something Wilde emphasises throughout *De Profundis* and especially in the second part. The emphasis on the suffering is on Wilde's life in and existence in prison, as well as the knowledge of all that he has lost; from contact with his children to his artistic career and fame. So, what Wilde is doing is that he is writing his own fallen man story and he is taking control over it by transmuting his suffering into that of Christ, and in essence he is creating himself as a Christ-like figure, with the potential of incarnation. This shows a complete change, as it is very different from what he has done earlier in his writings. Unlike *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the fallen man story in *De Profundis* is specifically about morality, in the way Wilde contemplates on why Bosie has done this horrible thing to him, at the same time as he also accepts his own fault in the events leading to the fall.

> But it is when he deals with the Sinner that he (Christ) is most romantic, in the sense of most real. The world had always loved the Saint as being the nearest possible approach to the perfection of God. Christ, through some divine instinct in him, seems to have always loved the sinner as being the nearest possible approach to the perfection of man. His primary desire was not to reform people, any more than his primary desire was to a relieve suffering. To turn an interesting thief into a tedious honest man was not his aim. […] But in a manner not yet understood of the world he regarded sin and suffering as being in themselves beautiful, holy things, and modes of perfection (128).

It is especially interesting to look at the contemporary reception of *De Profundis* when it was published in 1905. Many early readers applauded *De Profundis* because they believed that the time in prison "had had a redemptive effect on Wilde" (Doylen 548). The readers believed that *De Profundis* simply was Wilde's confession writing and that he came out of prison a repentant sinner. Michael R. Doylen points on Ross' editing choices as a possible explanation to the readers' perception of Wilde's transformation, because Ross omitted "all references to Douglas and to Wilde's sexual relationship with him (548). Rather, he focused on "Wilde's celebration of Christ and on his resolve to lead a Christ-like life after his release" (Doylen 548). Thought it was far from the truth, people read *De Profundis* strictly as a narrative of a repentant sinner. Wilde was still homosexual after being released from prison, though he is quite direct and conveys his dissatisfaction with Bosie, he still had feelings for him, which in essence meant that Wilde was far from "purified" in prison. In fact by reading and interpreting *De Profundis* as a repentant sinner story this shows that the readership was in a way willing to see Wilde as a male equivalent of one of those fallen women who finally repent of their sins and are redeemed of their sins and deeds, such as Ruth in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel. This was far from Wilde's project and what he was really doing. The narrative of *De Profundis* is filled with homosexual desire despite the outrage and disappointment Wilde has towards Bosie, and essentially what Wilde is telling, apart from his fallen man story, is a love story where he basically repeats the exact sins he was convicted for.

In this chapter we see that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a work, which deals with homosexuality and homosexual desire depicted through the two characters Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray, and that these aspects when practised leads to the status as fallen men. Throughout, the depiction of homosexuality and homosexual desire in the novel is highly ambiguous as many of the situations and signs both can be analysed as being heterosexual and homosexual; something which is a deliberate decision from Wilde's side, because of the illegality of homosexuality. In addition to the ambiguity, that Wilde chose the Gothic genre deliberately as a means to disguise the fallen man story that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is, called forth by homosexual desire as a representation of deviant sexuality. Wilde's preoccupation with hiding the deviant content and aspects complies with the hiddenness and keeping a secret about sexuality, which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about in her book *The Epistemology of the Closet.*

This chapter also shows how homosexuality, fallenness, scandal and rumours work together. When the knowledge of the secret of deviant sexuality is spread with scandal and rumours the road to fallenness, and being stigmatised and ostracised is fairly short. Scandal and rumours do not have to be true to ruin a man's life, and the power of scandal and rumours should not be underestimated as shown in this chapter. In this chapter venereal disease becomes an important factor in the concept of the fallen man. The transgressions of a fallen woman are often revealed by pregnancy, but this aspect is impossible for a fallen man, from a biological perspective. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* syphilis becomes a sign of Dorian's fallenness, both revealing his transgression, in addition to functioning as a means of punishment for his actions, as syphilis at the time is an irreversible illness leading to death.

In *De Profundis* Wilde takes charge of his own fallen man story. *De Profundis* can be seen as consisting of two parts, where the first lays the foundation of the fallen man story describing the actions and events leading to Wilde's own fall. Unlike the first part, the second part is more easily interpreted as literature, as Wilde uses the figure of Christ to transmute his suffering and ends up making himself to a kind of Christ-like figure. This was possibly an attempt from Wilde to reinvent himself and his career. Many people thought that *De Profundis* was Wilde's confession and sign of him being a repentant sinner, which it was not.

Conclusion

In England, if a man fall, he falls never to rise again. There are in the British a certain bloodthirstiness and a certain instinctive cruelty, which not centuries of Protestant practice have been able to moderate. These qualities of the nation account for the facts that not only is our penal legislation the severest in the world, but that a conviction entails the immediate and irreparable social death of the offender [sic].

- Robert Sherard, *Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship* (1902)

This thesis shows that the fallen man is present as a character in Victorian literature and that it is a complex concept, where the fall and the character of the fallen man are represented in many different ways. My research shows that what leads to male fallenness is transgressing the morality, values and social codes of the nineteenth-century society. In the process of male fallenness we see that the traditional perception of masculinity is challenged and often undercut, resulting not only in fall from a high to a low position but also a fall from masculinity, compromising the male role and in most cases leading to social death. In the novels discussed the fallen men are unable to restore their social status and most of them die in the end. The exception being Mr Bellingham in *Ruth* who returns to the narrative with a new identity as Mr Donne, leaving the tarnished and fallen man behind.

In the process of fallenness the fallen woman loses two of her most possessed virtues, her virginity and purity. It is worth noting that the Victorian society was more accepting to the loss of male virginity, though only if the sexual transgression did not create a scandal. Because losing virtues such as virginity and purity do not have the same implications for men, my research has concluded with three virtues that are more relevant to Victorian men when transgressed against. The male virtues that are lost and compromised in the male fall are social status, money and the ability of sexual continence, the ability to pass on one's property and values through a direct line of descent.

In this thesis there are four main ways of falling. The first is linked to male promiscuity and sexual relations prior to marriage, which previously were accepted by the nineteenth-century society because of the current double standard. My research shows that there is an exception to this related to fear of scandal and ruination of social status, and it therefore seems that the double standard seems only to apply in cases where the sexual transgression is not widely known and leads to scandal. Further, we see several examples in this thesis related to financial fall, where men transgress the expectations related to men's financial status. With the financial fall there is also a wider ramifications for the family and

people close to the fallen man. Losing your fortune due to gambling, committing financial forgery and not being able to support your family financially are examples of financial fall, which also undercuts the masculinity and expected male role in the Victorian period. A third way of falling is linked to failed aspirations of social mobility, exemplified in this thesis by the failed upwards social mobility of a working class man. This also proves that male fallenness is also applicable to the lower class in society, at least as long as the lower-class person is trying to get higher. Lastly, the fallen man also mirrors the development of masculinity during the nineteenth century. In the last decade deviant sexuality, in this case homosexuality and homosexual desire leads to fallenness.

My research shows that four aspects are recurrent in the depiction of male fallenness, namely hiddenness, illness, knowledge of the fall, and scandal. A tendency is that the male characters try their best to hide their fall and cover up any evidence, and this aspect becomes especially clear in the discussion of fallenness linked to homosexuality and closetedness. Illness develops to be an important factor in three ways. Firstly, when it contributes to the fall preventing the man from carrying on his responsibility as the family's breadwinner. Secondly, illness acts as a sign of fallenness and finally when it becomes the punishment for transgressing. The most obvious sign of female fall is pregnancy, which for men is impossible. Illness, and venereal disease in particular, becomes the male equivalent of pregnancy in revealing male fallenness. Knowledge about the fall is central to all the characters and further knowledge about the fall and transgressions determine whether the characters are punished or not. In this thesis different approaches to who knows of the fall are presented, from publicity in newspapers, which efficiently spreads knowledge of and confirms the male fall, to examples where very a limited number of people know about it, also to the extent where only God and the reader know about the male fall. Scandal is one aspect that is always in the consciousness of the fallen men or people close to them, and often the scandal brutally exposes the fallenness.

I believe that this thesis and the concept of the fallen man can contribute to a new reading of men's presence in Victorian literature, in addition to analyse masculinity in a new light. This topic is understudied and overlooked, but this thesis proves that male fallenness is present in nineteenth-century literature, and that even minor characters can play a role and are important in understanding male fallenness. It is in these hidden characters that we can understand the hidden role of fallen men.

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