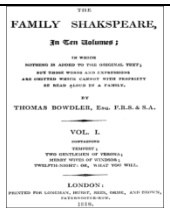
# *Hidden Meanings*
# *Morality and Melodrama*
Colin Lomas

In Victorian times, more than ever before, *morality* featured in art and literature. Perhaps the most characteristic and notorious apostle of Victorian culture was Dr Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825) editor of *The Family Shakespeare* in which any reference to sex was removed. Even the word "body" was replaced by "person". Anything remotely critical of the clergy was cut, along with "immoral" characters such as the prostitute *Doll Tearsheet* in *Henry IV Part II.*
His name became a verb "to bowdlerise" but in fact the task was actually carried out by his sister Harriet (1750-1830). But it was considered wrong to admit that a woman could actually understand the sexual allusions of Shakespeare's lewder passages which was necessary to do in order to excise them and so the censorship process was done under his name – he was a doctor of medicine, after all! The process continued with fifty more Shakespeare re-writes published throughout Victoria's reign. "Bowdlerization" was widely accepted.
Novelist George Eliot (1819-1880) poked fun at Harriet Bowdler in her novel *Adam Beade* where a character clearly based on Harriet is described as follows: "She is, I believe, a blue-stocking, but what the colour of that part of her dress is , must be mere conjecture, as you will easily believe when I tell you that … she said she never looked at the dancers in operas but always kept her eyes shut the whole time, and when I asked her why, she said it was so indelicate she could not bear to look". There was the *Blue Stocking* society of out-spoken women intellectuals from 1750 to Bowdler's time, by which time the "*angel in the home"* (see below) had become the female ideal. Quite possibly, Bowdler's crusade brought about this change - or it was the other way round, i.e. the tentative 18th century female emancipation went into reverse after 1800 and "Bowdlerization" was one result of this reverse.

- *The Family Shakespeare* Thomas and Harriet Bowdler 1818
- *Prostitute Doll Tearsheet in Shakespeare's Henry IV Part II*
- *Harriet Bowdler* (1750-1830) By Sir Thomas Lawrence
- *George Eliot* (1819-1880)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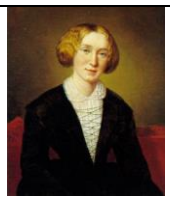


William Orchardson (1832-1910) *Le Mariage de Convenance* (The Marriage of Convenience) 1883 (Glasgow Museums).
The painting portrays a discontented young wife dining with her much older husband and the colours are subtle and muted. The lamp over the table highlights the story and is the divide between the wife, and the husband and the butler – the husband seems to have more in common with the butler.

The huge table emphasises the age gap and it appears that the marriage, as well as the meal, is over. The French title of the piece was to detract from the risqué subject matter as the owner would not have wanted it to appear as a statement on their own marriage.
The companion piece *Mariage-a-la-Mode After!* 1883 (The Fashionable marriage - After!) (Aberdeen Museum) depicts the husband now alone.

*The First Cloud* 1887 William Orchardson.
This is the last of three pictures by Orchardson that focus on the theme of the unhappy marriage. The first two in the series - *Mariage de Convenance* 1883 (Glasgow) and *Mariage à la Mode - After!* 1886 (Aberdeen Art Gallery) - depict the disadvantages of marrying for wealth rather than for love. The elderly husband is soon abandoned by his bored young wife.

In *The First Cloud*, the marriage is still based on an exchange of her beauty for his wealth, but the age gap is less noticeable. However, without love, the relationship lacks any firm foundation, and this first rift between the couple is merely the cloud before the storm. The picture was first exhibited at the Royal Academy with these lines from Tennyson: *"It is the little rift within the lute, That by-and-by will make the music mute*"
The setting, as with so many of Orchardson's costume dramas, is an elegant Victorian drawing room. The wife retires from the room through a pillared arch, her graceful form silhouetted against the dark opening in the curtains. Although she turns her back to us (and to her husband) her face is vaguely reflected in a mirror in the dark room beyond. The husband stands by the mantelpiece, looking extremely disgruntled, and possibly rather drunk, his hands thrust in his pockets. The psychological rift that has grown between the couple is emphasized physically by the empty expanse of parquet flooring that separates them.

VIDEO [(197) A Cherished Moment | Master Baby by William Quiller Orchardson - YouTube]

The 1860s saw the emergence of the woman as an "angel" in the house. Her entire life was to minister to children, her husband and aging parents as three paintings by Hicks demonstrate.
There was a popular poem by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) *Angel in the House* 1862 which presented the Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman who was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all pure.

George Hicks (1824–1914) did three paintings under the title *Woman's Mission* representing the three stages in a woman's life as "ministering angel".

The first picture *Guide of Childhood* 1863 shows the mother devoting herself to educating the child through nature study. The second picture *Companion to Manhood* 1863 shows the wife comforting the husband after he has received news of the death of someone close to him. The narrative is made clear in the picture through the discarded, black-edged envelope lying on the floor and the letter in the husband's hand. Hicks uses the picture's setting to reinforce the notion that she is a dutiful wife in every way. She is clearly able to run an efficient and comfortable home. The table is neatly laid for breakfast and there are fresh flowers in the vase on the mantelpiece. She is attractive and well groomed, but not frivolous in appearance. Her concern is solely for her husband's welfare and well-being. The third picture *Comfort of Old Age* 1863 shows the wife comforting one of the aging parents.

*(Sketch for) Woman's Mission: Guide of Childhood* 1863 George Hicks

George Hicks *Woman's Mission: Companion to Manhood* 1863

George Hicks *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age* 1863 Tate

The pictures anticipate John Ruskin (1819-1900) on the relationships between men and women in one of his many "sociological" essays. Ruskin recommends that the education of girls should lead to "true wifely subjection" on the part of "her who was made to be the helpmate of man. The woman's power is for rule not battle - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision...Her function is praise. By her office and place she is protected from all danger and temptation...This is the true nature of home - it is the place of Peace, the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division... And whenever a true wife comes, the home is always round her".
The angelic wife was contrasted with the fallen woman as shown in Rossetti's *Found* 1855 (below). Some fallen women can be saved, as in Holman-Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* 1853 (below).
Most literature at the time incorporated this simple division - angel vs fallen women. For example *Goblin Market* 1862 by Christina Rossetti (sister of Gabriel) where an "angelic" young girl saves her nearly-fallen sister who cannot resist temptations. By contrast, other works such as Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* 1847 and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* 1847 have female characters who do not neatly fit the angel-fallen mould.

This promotion of the woman as an angel may have been triggered by the early death of Prince Albert 1861 and the creation of a mythology about Queen Victoria being the truly loyal wife and the embodiment of Christian womanhood.

*The Crossing Sweeper* 1858 by William Powell Frith (1819-1909) has been described as breaking "new ground in its description of the collision of wealth and poverty on a London street". It shows a shoeless boy offering to sweep away the horse dung from the path of the young woman so she can cross the road. The sweepers were often regarded as nuisances who were little more than beggars. The woman is pointedly trying to ignore the boy.
The opinion that the poor were entirely to blame for their plight intensified over the Victorian period. This fuelled the Eugenics movement from the 1880s.

*The Life and Death of Buckingham* 1855 by Augustus Egg (1816-1863). This Buckingham is probably (duke) George Villiers (d. 1687) who was a "Restoration Rake" - an irresponsible aristocrat whose heyday was during the English Restoration period (1660–1688) at the court of Charles II. *Rake = Rakehell = Hell Raiser.*

The image of Buckingham dying alone and penniless in an inn is from a poem by Alexander Pope (d. 1744) who was a religious man who frequently attacked the debauchery of the wealthy. In fact, despite all his excessive gambling and drinking Buckingham died a wealthy man.

One rake who did fall was graphically portrayed in *Rake's Progress* (in National Gallery) by William Hogarth (8 scenes)

VIDEO [(197) A Rake's Progress By William Hogarth - Seven Ages of Britain - S1 Ep5 Highlight - BBC One - YouTube]

*Scene 1*. The *Rake* Tom Rakewell has inherited his father's fortune. He is being measured for new clothes. He is rejecting his pregnant fiancée Sarah. She is holding his ring and her mother is holding his love letters.





He will pay her off, but it is clear that she still loves him. *Scene 8*. Finally after years of thriftless extravagance he is in Bethlem asylum (i.e. Bedlam). Only Sarah Young is there to comfort him, but Rakewell continues to ignore her. There a sad realism to this picture. Scenes like this were commonplace. For example, the fashionably dressed women in this last painting have come to the asylum as a social occasion, to be entertained by the bizarre antics of the inmates.

*William Hogarth* (1697-1764) by Roubiliac 1741 (National Portrait Gallery). *Hogarth* in Chiswick High Road.

*Hogarth's tomb* St Nicholas's church Chiswick Mall. Lament to Hogarth by friend and actor David Garrick (1717-1779) on the tomb

*Farewell great Painter of Mankind. Who reach'd the noblest point of Art. Whose pictur'd Morals charm the Mind. And through the Eye correct the Heart. If Genius fire thee, Reader, stay. If Nature touch thee, drop a Tear. If neither move thee, turn away. For Hogarth's honour'd dust lies here.*

Augustus Egg (1816-1863). *Past and Present* 1858. *No. 1 Misfortune. No. 2 Prayer. No. 3 Despair.* The husband discovers his wife's infidelity. He dies five years afterwards. The two later pictures show the same moment (note the moon) a fortnight after his death. The two children are in a cheap room where they are praying for their lost mother who is under a vault by the river, holding a child. The pictures are packed with symbolism to reinforce the moral lesson.



No. 1. The woman's serpent bracelets are like handcuffs. An apple with its worm-ridden core by a small knife. The man's his right foot rests on a picture of her lover. The children are building a house of cards which can fall easily. It is built on top of a tale of adultery Balzac. On the rear wall is a picture of the wife beneath a painting of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (labelled "The Fall") and the husband beneath a shipwreck scene (labelled "Abandoned"). The mirror shows the open door, through which the wife is soon to depart.

In No. 2 the two pictures from No 1 can be seen. In No. 3 the fallen wife clutches a bundle of rags from which protrude the emaciated legs of an infant, possibly dead. Posters on the wall ironically advertise two contemporary plays, "Victims" by Tom Taylor and "The Cure for Love" by Tom Parry, both tales of unhappy marriages, and also "Pleasure excursions to Paris", perhaps a reference to the novel by Balzac in the first picture.

The drowned fallen woman appears in many paintings and may have been inspired by a poem. *"Make no deep scrutiny. Into her mutiny. Rash and undutiful. Past all dishonour. Death has left on her. Only the beautiful".* From *The Bridge of Sighs* 1844 by Thomas Hood . Several clues in the poem, which harps upon beauty, sins and scorn, hint that the woman was pregnant and had been thrown out of her home.


*Found Drowned* 1850 G F Watts (1817-1904). *Drowned! Drowned!* 1860 by Abraham Solomon.

such unconscious (or at least internalized) parental influence. In James Hayllar's *The Only Daughter* (Figure 38, 1875) that influence is largely conscious and external. There is a hint that the father has taught the daughter how to express love physically, for she holds his hand in the same reserved way as that of her fiancé. The daughter also momentarily expresses greater physical intimacy with her father than with her fiancé, but it is conscious, sexually tame, and dictated by the formal requirement of asking permission to marry. Moreover, the father, trying to hide his sense of loss, looks away, holds onto his newspaper, and absent-mindedly squeezes his daughter's fingers by reaching back over his shoulder without even turning around. Hayl-

James Hayllar (1829-1920) *The Only Daughter* 1875 (Private Collection)

Charles Cope West (1811-1890) *Palpitation* 1844 (V&A).
The artist described this scene as 'a young lady waiting for her letter, while the postman and servant are gossiping on the doorstep'. It is unclear whether the palpitation of the title is caused by the lady's anxiety to receive a letter from a suitor or to intercept a letter from an illicit lover. She waits anxiously while the postman and housekeeper pass the time of day.

VIDEO (197) Charles West Cope (1811-1890) English painter ✻ - YouTube Paintings by Charles Cope West

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) *Found* (Delaware )
Started around 1855, he never completed the picture but he worked on it until his death! The farmer has come to the town and by chance found his long lost love, now a prostitute. The calf's role in the painting is two-fold. First, it explains why the farmer has come to the city. But more importantly, its situation as "an innocent animal trapped and on its way to be sold" parallels the woman's and raises questions on the woman's state of mind. "Is the prostitute rejecting salvation or is she accepting it; or is she repentant but unable to escape her fate, like the calf?"

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888) *The Outcast* 1851 (Royal Academy).
This depicts a family's reaction to a daughter bearing an illegitimate child. It is a melodramatic tale with a stern father of inflexible puritanical morality casting out a fallen woman and her illegitimate baby - probably his daughter and grandchild - from his "respectable" house.

Despite the snow visible on the ground outside, the unforgiving man stands by an open door, gesturing angrily for her to depart. Another young woman - probably another daughter - kneels, begging him to relent, while another weeps behind. The mother of the family comforts a weeping son, while a fourth daughter looks on in confusion. An incriminating letter lies on the floor and a biblical painting - probably Abraham casting out Hagar and Ishmael hangs on the wall.
The painting is ambiguous: it could be meant as a warning to other women to avoid a similar fate, or could be intended to evoke sympathy for the plight of the young mother abandoned by her family.

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888) *Throwing off Her Weeds*1846 (Private Collection).
A young widow is impatient to discard her black mourning clothes (known as widow's weeds) because she has plans to marry again. The seamstress is showing her a lilac-coloured dress, a colour considered appropriate for a woman in the last phase of mourning.

At this time, the mourning period for a husband was expected to be at least two years. Originally the picture included a figure of a soldier - the widow's new suitor - entering through the doorway. Critics thought this was vulgar, and Redgrave painted the figure out, but he kept a number of other visual clues to suggest that the woman is soon to be married again: there is a bridal bonnet in the hat-box in the foreground, and a sprig of orange blossom (a flower which was usually worn or carried at weddings) on the dressing table.

Alexander Farmer (1825-1869) *An Anxious Hour* 1865 (V&A).
Farmer specialised in genre scenes, often with sentimental subjects. *An Anxious Hour* reflects the high death rate of Victorian children from disease. The sitter is probably the artist's sister Emily, a watercolourist who painted similar subjects.

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888) *The Governess* 1844 (V&A). This picture was first exhibited with the quotation "She sees no kind domestic visage here". The position of governess was one of the few professions open to middle-class women of modest means, but it was often a lonely and difficult life because the social status of a governess was ambiguous. She was not a servant in the usual sense but nor was she on equal terms with the family who employed her.

Here, the young woman holds a letter which has obviously stirred memories of home. It may be news of a death in her family - letters or cards with black borders were used to announce deaths. Redgrave had a personal interest in representing the life of a governess: his sister Jane was a governess and died young.
Redgrave painted an earlier version with the teachers alone. He altered it at the request of the buyer to make the picture more cheerful by adding the children (the governess's pupils) playing in the sunlit garden.

Charles West Cope (1811-1890) *The Young Mother* 1845 (V&A). Cope often painted domestic scenes. Although nursing mothers were seldom portrayed in 19th-century art, the critics admired this work. One described it as 'a simple subject, which is treated with infinite sweetness'. The artist sold several paintings to John Sheepshanks, who was a friend of his father.

*Mother and Child* 1852 (V&A). Cope was a Roman Catholic and this seems to have been reflected in his preference for religious subjects, and for icons of motherhood such as this. Clearly the 'Virgin and Child' archetype stands behind his repeated versions of mother and baby. To some extent the role of mother is idealized, but at the same time Cope shows a real insight into the tender bond between mother and baby.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882*) The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* 1849. Tate.
The Virgin Mary is shown here as a young girl, working on an embroidery with her mother, St Anne. Her father, St Joachim, is pruning a vine. The picture is full of symbolic details. The palm branch on the floor and thorny briar rose on the wall allude to Christ's Passion, the lilies to the Virgin's purity, and the books to the virtues of hope, faith and charity. The dove represents the Holy Spirit. This was Rossetti's first completed oil painting and the first picture to be exhibited with the initials PRB - Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood - at bottom left.

Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) *Windsor Castle in Modern Times* 1843 (Royal Collection). Landseer met the royal couple 1840, a few months after the wedding. Landseer was paid an incredible £800. Imagine prince Albert as the Ranger of the Great Park at Windsor, after a day shooting and returning laden with booty - kingfisher, jay, mallard, woodcock, pheasant and ptarmigan - which he proudly displays in the drawing room.

He sits in outdoor clothing, with muddy boots, bag and powder pouch, patting his favourite dog with other dogs fussing around. The Queen welcomes her husband home by presenting him with a flower.
The scene is set in the White Drawing Room at Windsor with a view of the East Terrace, upon which Queen Victoria's mother is seen enjoying a circuit in a bath chair. Landseer was a prolific painter but is more famous for designing the lions in Trafalgar Square.

Unknown artist *Princess Beatrice of Battenberg; Queen Victoria* late 1870 (NPG).
Beatrice, the youngest daughter of Queen Victoria, was called 'Baby' by her mother well into adult life. As a child she resolved never to marry but fell in love with Prince Harry of Battenberg when she was twenty-seven. This caused great distress to her mother for whom she acted as companion and secretary and only after the intervention of Beatrice's eldest sister did the queen agree to the marriage. She did so on condition that the couple lived in England and that Beatrice continued to act as her private secretary.

*Nameless and Friendless* 1857 (Tate). Emily Mary Osborn (1828-1925) was a genre painter who specialised in the theme of the victimised and distressed young woman. Nameless and Friendless is her most famous work and shows an impoverished young female artist, accompanied by her younger brother, attempting to sell one of her pictures to a dealer. The picture contains subtle references to the plight of the single woman seeking employment: she stands nervously pulling a loop of string with downcast eyes as the dealer disdainfully judges her work.

She is also shown to be as much an object of scrutiny as her painting, as two men behind her compare her to the bare-legged ballet dancer in the print they examine. In the context of contemporary campaigns for female education and employment, the painting suggests that the woman has been forced by circumstance to exploit the meagre 'feminine' skills she acquired in girlhood to pursue the unfeminine activity of earning her own living in a hostile urban environment.
The difficulties experienced by women in exhibiting and selling their works led to the formation of the Society of Female Artists in 1857, the year Nameless and Friendless was first exhibited at the Royal Academy. Emily Mary Osborn was a member of this group and was associated with a campaign for women's rights. Despite the subject matter of this work, Osborn went on to develop a successful career: *Nameless and Friendless* was exhibited at the International Exhibition in 1862 and Queen Victoria purchased her painting *The Governess* (below) after it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1860.

*The Governess* 1860. Emily Mary Osborn. This is more than a snapshot of private family life. It offers a window on to the Victorians' divided society.
In this Victorian satire, members of a vulgar bourgeois family terrorise their gentle and ladylike governess. Her four young charges, who have evidently reported her to their mother, look on petulantly, or in mischievous glee, as she is berated for some supposed fault. With her simple black gown and proud, composed demeanour, the accused governess is entirely the innocent party, silhouetted against white curtains that symbolise purity.

In contrast, her crass, fashionably dressed employer - perhaps the wife of a nouveau riche industrialist or merchant - is the embodiment of an ill-judging parent with more money than sense, who indulges her children's every whim and accepts unhesitatingly their account of this dispute.

John Everett Millais (1829-1896) *Trust Me* 1862 (Private Collection)
The letter creates a confrontational divide between father and daughter. The elderly father does not approve of the nature of the letter that his daughter safeguards from him. With a symbol of authority (the riding crop with whip), the father says, “Trust me.” Or, perhaps, the woman defies her father with the words, “Trust me,” as the crocuses blossom to indicate the spring of love.

VIDEO (197) Hunt, the Awakening Conscience - YouTube *The Awakening Conscience*

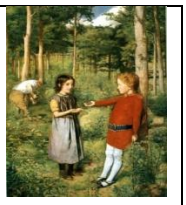
*The Awakening Conscience* 1853 William Holman-Hunt (1827-1910). Tate. This is packed with moral symbolism:

- The mistress – probably a not well-educated country girl – lives in house paid for by her lover
- The cat playing with a bird, as he plays with her.
- Tapestry which hangs unfinished on the piano the threads which lie unravelled on the floor
- Edward Lear's musical arrangement of Tennyson's poem *Tears, Idle Tears* lies discarded on the floor
- The music on the piano, Thomas Moore's *Oft in the Stilly Night* the words of which speak of missed opportunities and sad memories of a happier past
- The discarded glove and top hat thrown on the table top suggest a hurried assignation
- The bright colours, unscuffed carpet, and pristine, highly-polished furniture speak of a room recently furnished for a mistress
- Star above the girl's head (a sign of spiritual revelation). It also bears a verse from the Book of Proverbs (25:20): "*As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart*".
- The mirror on the rear wall provides a tantalizing glimpse out of the scene
- The window — opening out onto a spring garden, in direct contrast to the images of entrapment within the room — is flooded with sunlight
- The girl's companion could be singing a song that suddenly reminded her of her former life and thereby act as the unknowing catalyst for her epiphany
- There are notes on the various painting techniques used by Hunt in the *spandrels* - top corners

Jean Beraud (1849-1936) *Apres la faute (After the Misdeed)* 1890 (National Gallery).
This work can be placed among the artist's *genre* paintings of late 19th-century Paris. Here the tone is moralising. The subject of women who fell prey both to their own passions and to the opposite sex was popular in England and France in the 19th century.

Arthur Hacker (1858-1919) *The Cloister or the World?* 1896 (Bradford Museum)
In her mind’s eye, the young woman is in a dilemma of choice between worldly delights behind her and spiritual fulfilment beside her. The *Cloister or the World*? was the picture of the year at the Royal Academy in London.
Hacker painted genre and historical scenes early in his career and turned to myths and allegories later. In Bradford Art Gallery.

*The Woodman's Daughter* 1851 by John Millais (1829-1896) concerns seduction and unrequited love. Inspired by a contemporary poem it tells story of Maud, a poor woodman's daughter, and a wealthy squire's son. As adults, the son eventually seduces the girl. Because their difference in social class prevents them from marrying, Maud, in her despair, drowns their illegitimate child and goes mad. Millais portrays the budding romance of the woodman's daughter and the squire's son when the two were children. The girl and the boy occupy the centre of the piece. The squire's son solemnly extends his arm toward the girl, offering her a handful of strawberries.



With eager innocence, the woodman's daughter cups her hands to receive the proffered gift. Millais explicitly shows the difference between social rank through the children's clothing. Maud wears a drab grey dress; no decoration of any sort adorns the plain material. The girl is clearly a member of the working class. The boy, on the other hand, wears a striking red outfit, complete with a dark blue belt, pristine white stockings, and black shoes. His attire provides a startling contrast to the modest clothing of Maud. Furthermore, the boy also appears at odds with the forest itself. While Maud and her father (who bends down and works to the left of his daughter in the painting) almost blend into the woods, the squire's son stands out and is out of place in the forest. The visual contrasts between the girl and boy foreshadow the tragic events to come in their relationship.
Because Millais sets the painting in a forest, the colour green predominates. Millais paints the scene with the painstaking attention to detail advocated by Ruskin. This intentness to detail helps make Millais such a famous PRB artist. One can see individual leaves on the saplings and brush plants growing low to the ground. Millais also paints the foliage and bark of the trees with precision. In the upper portion of the painting, a blue sky containing white clouds lies behind the trees.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 1891 by playwright Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) neatly illustrates the ideas of the aesthetic movement. Dorian Gray is painted by an artist Basil who is infatuated by Dorian's beauty; *he believes that Dorian's beauty is responsible for the new mode in his art as a painter*. It doesn't matter that Dorian Gray lives an immoral and hedonistic life. All that matters to the artist Basil is that the painting is beautiful.
*Oscar Wilde* 1856-1900.

Through Basil, Dorian meets Lord Henry Wotton, and he soon is enthralled by the aristocrat's hedonistic worldview: that beauty and sensual fulfilment are the only things worth pursuing in life.
Understanding that his beauty will fade, Dorian expresses the desire to sell his soul, to ensure that the picture, rather than he, will age and fade. The wish is granted, and Dorian pursues a libertine life of varied and amoral experiences; all the while his portrait ages and records every soul-corrupting sin. The story deeply offended "polite" very Christian middle-class society, even though Dorian Gray pays for his libertine life-style with his life. After a lifetime of immoral living, in desperation he stabs the aging painting. Later his servant finds an old man, dead on the floor and nearby is the painting (not seen since it was finished) of a handsome young Dorian Gray.
It is an example of Gothic fiction with strong themes interpreted from the legendary Faust - the man who sold his soul to the devil.

Conclusion.

Throughout the Victoria's reign (1837-1901) art in general served the social purpose forcefully articulated by John Ruskin (1819-1890), which was that a piece of art should have a moral, religious, literary or educational purpose. Crack began to appear in this consensus in the 1880s with the *Aesthetic* movement. This was founded on the belief that a work of art should be judged entirely on *aesthetic* criteria, regardless of whether of whether or not it had any higher purpose, or "message". All that mattered was whether it was visually beautiful or musically pleasing, i.e. that it appealed to the senses. The phrase *Art of Art's Sake* is used to summarise idea.