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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOLOGY

The Conflict Between Aestheticism and Morality in Oscar Wilde's Novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray"

(Bachelor's thesis)

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The 19th century sees a variety of literary movements in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. As one of those literary movements, aestheticism, the anti-utilitarianism movement, rises suddenly at the end of the 19th century and withers away soon. Due to the intensifying crisis, the fashion of aestheticism began to decline after 1930s. Oscar Wilde known as the milestone of aestheticism, has been deprived of his reasonable reputation in the literary world. However, the gold will shine. In the recent years, the studies of aestheticism and Oscar Wilde have begun to shine in the literature field.

The only novel by Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, can be considered as a revolutionary piece of literature of literature not only because it broke out of the traditional value and belief pattern of the Victorian age but also because it replaced the traditional pattern with new concepts coined by Wilde and his former tutors. Several themes such as aesthetic lifestyle or influence and corruption, were issues that many had been afraid to address in the time before Wilde.

The Aesthetic Movement in England, as interpreted by Oscar Wilde, revolved around the ideal that the utility of one's actions should be to create the maximal amount of beauty and pleasure in one's life, and nothing more. Wilde's Dorian Gray appears, at first glance, to promote this philosophy unequivocally. Indeed, a lifestyle based on this aestheticism is espoused in Wilde's opening preface as well as throughout Lord Henry's professorial lectures. Upon closer inspection, however, Wilde's novel is not as wholly embracing of aestheticism as this implies. Wilde realized and depicted in the life of Dorian Gray, a need for a more controlled and deliberate approach to aestheticism, without which morality will inevitably be elusive. The adoption of unrestrained aestheticism, as exhibited by Dorian, results in a lack of remorse, self-absorption, and intellectual regression. For the sake of preserving morality, a concept proven incompatible with pure aestheticism, more deliberation is necessary from the aesthete in deciding upon action. If, in the pursuit of one's desires and of the beautiful aspects of life, the condition of others' or of one's own intellect is jeopardized, the enjoyment garnered must sometimes be sacrificed for the greater good. As Wilde makes clear, it is only through a more restrained philosophy that aestheticism and morality may eventually align.

In this thesis, we will place the main focus on the matter of aestheticism and morality, the causes that it has and the consequences that result from an aesthetic lifestyle. In order to analyze these aspects, it is inevitable to have a closer look at Oscar Wilde's beliefs about art and morality which serve as a basis for understanding the main character's behavior in the novel.

The present study consists of the following parts: Introduction, three parts, Conclusions, List of Literature Used, and Ukrainian summary.

To begin this thesis, in the first part, we will outline Wilde's thoughts on art and aestheticism and the literary features of Victorian age. This background information is essential to understanding the main character's motivations in the story, which can often be related to Wilde's life as an artist.

In the second part, we will then make a detailed analysis of the chapters of the novel and the main characters like Basil Hallward, Lord Henry Wotton, Sibyl Vane and Dorian Gray and will explain how their aesthetic behavior and their moral beliefs can be linked to Wilde's thoughts.

To end, in the third part we will find and explain the themes and the symbols of the novel. However, it is also important the influence of the novel and O. Wilde's aestheticism and morality on modern generation.

The problem of the topic is very up-to-date, because the people in our time our very simular to the people in Oscar Wilde's time. The world has changed but the human behavior remained the same. So the conflict between aestheticism and morality is very important nowadays.

Part 1

Oscar Wilde and Aestheticism.

1.1.Aestheticism and its features.

Aesthetics owes its name to Alexander Baumgarten who derived it from the Greek aisthanomai, which means perception by means of the senses. As the subject is now understood, it consists of two parts: the philosophy of art, and the philosophy of the aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art. Non-art items include both art efacts that possess aspects susceptible of aesthetic appreciation, and phenomena that lack any traces of human design in virtue of being products of nature, not humanity [7].

Introduced into the philosophical lexicon during the Eighteenth Century, the term "aesthetic" has come to be used to designate, among other things, a kind of object, a kind of judgment, a kind of attitude, a kind of experience, and a kind of value. For the most part, aesthetic theories have divided over questions particular to one or another of these designations: whether artworks are necessarily aesthetic objects; how to square the allegedly perceptual basis of aesthetic judgments with the fact that we give reasons in support of them; how best to capture the elusive contrast between an aesthetic attitude and a practical one; whether to define aesthetic experience according to its phenomenological or representational content; how best to understand the relation between aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. But questions of more general nature have lately arisen, and these have tended to have a skeptical cast: whether any use of "aesthetic" may be explicated without appeal to some other; whether agreement respecting any use is sufficient to ground meaningful theoretical agreement or disagreement; whether the term ultimately answers to any legitimate philosophical purpose that justifies its inclusion in the lexicon. The skepticism expressed by such general questions did not begin to take hold until the later part of the Twentieth Century, and this fact prompts the question whether (a) the concept of the aesthetic is inherently problematic and it is only recently that we have managed to see that it is, or (b) the concept is fine and it is only recently that we have become muddled enough to imagine otherwise. Adjudicating between these possibilities requires a vantage from which to take in both early and late theorizing on aesthetic matters [2].

Artistic formalism is the view that the artistically relevant properties of an artwork - the properties in virtue of which it is an artwork and in virtue of which it is a good or bad one - are formal merely, where formal properties are typically regarded as properties graspable by sight or by hearing merely. Artistic formalism has been taken to follow from both the immediacy and the disinterest theses [5]. If you take the immediacy thesis to imply the artistic irrelevance of all properties whose grasping requires the use of reason, and you include representational properties in that class, then you are apt to think that the immediacy thesis implies artistic formalism. If you

take the disinterest thesis to imply the artistic irrelevance of all properties capable of practical import, and you include representational properties in that class, then you are apt to think that the disinterest thesis implies artistic formalism [7].

This is not to suggest that the popularity enjoyed by artistic formalism during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries owed mainly to its inference from the immediacy or disinterest theses. The most influential advocates of formalism during this period were professional critics, and their formalism derived, at least in part, from the artistic developments with which they were concerned. As a critic Eduard Hanslick advocated for the pure music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, and later Brahms, and against the dramatically impure music of Wagner; as a theorist he urged that music has no content but "tonally moving forms" [14]. As a critic Clive Bell was an early champion of the post-Impressionists, especially Cezanne; as a theorist he maintained that the formal properties of painting - "relations and combinations of lines and colours" - alone have artistic relevance [4]. As a critic Clement Greenberg was abstract expressionism's ablest defender; as a theorist he held painting's "proper area of competence" to be exhausted by flatness, pigment, and shape [13].

Not every influential defender of formalism has also been a professional critic. Monroe Beardsley, who arguably gave formalism its most sophisticated articulation, was not [5]. Nor is Nick Zangwill, who recently has mounted a spirited and resourceful defense of a moderate version of formalism [34]. But formalism has always been sufficiently motivated by art-critical data that once Arthur Danto made the case that the data no longer supported it, and perhaps never really had, formalism's heyday came to an end. Inspired in particular by Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, which are (more or less) perceptually indistinguishable from the brand-printed cartons in which boxes of Brillo were delivered to supermarkets, Danto observed that for most any artwork it is possible to imagine both (a) another object that is perceptually indiscernible from it but which is not an artwork, and (b) another artwork that is perceptually indiscernible from it but which differs in artistic value. From these observations he concluded that form alone neither makes an artwork nor gives it whatever value it has [10]. But Danto has taken the possibility of such perceptual indiscernibles to show the limitations not merely of form but also of aesthetics, and he has done so on the grounds, apparently, that the formal and the aesthetic are co-extensive. Regarding the Brillo boxes that Warhol exhibited in 1964 and those delivered to markets he maintains that aesthetics could not explain why one was a work of fine art and the other not, since for all practical purposes they were aesthetically indiscernible: if one was beautiful, the other one had to be beautiful, since they looked just alike [10].

But the inference from the limits of the artistically formal to the limits of the artistically aesthetic is presumably only as strong as the inferences from the immediacy and disinterest

theses to artistic formalism, and these are not beyond question. The inference from the disinterest thesis appears to go through only if you employ a stronger notion of disinterest than the one Kant understands himself to be employing: Kant, it is worth recalling, regards poetry as the highest of the fine arts precisely because of its capacity to employ representational content in the expression of what he calls "aesthetic ideas" [18]. The inference from the immediacy thesis appears to go through only if you employ a notion of immediacy stronger than the one Hume, for example, takes himself to be defending when he claims that in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the fine arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment [16]. It may be that artistic formalism results if you push either of the tendencies embodied in the immediacy and disinterest theses to extremes. It may be that the history of aesthetics from the Eighteenth Century to the mid-Twentieth is largely the history of pushing those two tendencies to extremes. It does not follow that those tendencies must be so pushed [15].

Consider Warhol's Brillo Boxes. Danto is right to maintain that the eighteenth-century theorist of taste would not know how to regard it as an artwork. But this is because the eighteenth-century theorist of taste lives in the Eighteenth Century, and so would be unable to situate that work in its twentieth-century art-historical context, and not because the kind of theory he holds forbids him from situating a work in its art-historical context. When Hume, for instance, observes that artists address their works to particular, historically-situated audiences, and that a critic therefore "must place himself in the same situation as the audience" to whom a work is addressed [16], he is allowing that artworks are cultural products, and that the properties that works have as the cultural products they are are among the "ingredients of the composition" that a critic must grasp if she is to feel the proper sentiment. Nor does there seem to be anything in the celebrated conceptuality of Brillo Boxes, nor of any other conceptual work, that ought to give the eighteenth-century theorist pause. Francis Hutcheson asserts that mathematical and scientific theorems are objects of taste [17]. Alexander Gerard asserts that scientific discoveries and philosophical theories are objects of taste [13]. Neither argues for his assertion. Both regard it as commonplace that objects of intellect may be objects of taste as readily as objects of sight and hearing may be. Why should the present-day aesthetic theorist think otherwise? If an object is conceptual in nature, grasping its nature will require intellectual work. If grasping an object's conceptual nature requires situating it art-historically, then the intellectual work required to grasp its nature will include situating it art-historically. But - as Hume and Reid held grasping the nature of an object preparatory to aesthetically judging it is one thing; aesthetically judging the object once grasped is another.

Though Danto has been the most influential and persistent critic of formalism, his criticisms are no more decisive than those advanced by Kendall Walton in his essay "Categories of Art." Walton's anti-formalist argument hinges on two main theses, one psychological and one philosophical. According to the psychological thesis, which aesthetic properties we perceive a work as having depends on which category we perceive the work as belonging to. Perceived as belonging to the category of painting, Picasso's Guernica will be perceived as "violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing" [29]. But perceived as belonging to the category of "guernicas" - where guernicas are works with "surfaces with the colors and shapes of Picasso's *Guernica*, but the surfaces are molded to protrude from the wall like relief maps of different kinds of terrain" - Picasso's Guernica will be perceived not as violent and dynamic, but as "cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring" [29]. That Picasso's Guernica can be perceived both as violent and dynamic and as not violent and not dynamic might be thought to imply that there is no fact of the matter whether it is violent and dynamic. But this implication holds only on the assumption that there is no fact of the matter which category Picasso's Guernica actually belongs to, and this assumption appears to be false given that Picasso intended that Guernica be a painting and did not intend that it be a Guernica, and that the category of paintings was well-established in the society in which Picasso painted it while the category of guernicas was not. Hence the philosophical thesis, according to which the aesthetic properties a work actually has are those it is perceived as having when perceived as belonging to the category (or categories) it actually belongs to. Since the properties of having been intended to be a painting and having been created in a society in which painting is well-established category are artistically relevant though not graspable merely by seeing (or hearing) the work, it seems that artistic formalism cannot be true. "I do not deny," Walton concludes, "that paintings and sonatas are to be judged solely on what can be seen or heard in them - when they are perceived correctly. But examining a work with the senses can by itself reveal neither how it is correct to perceive it, nor how to perceive it that way" [29].

But if we cannot judge which aesthetic properties paintings and sonatas have without consulting the intentions and the societies of the artists who created them, what of the aesthetic properties of natural items? With respect to them it may appear as if there is nothing to consult except the way they look and sound, so that an aesthetic formalism about nature must be true. Allen Carlson, a central figure in the burgeoning field of the aesthetics of nature, argues against this appearance. Carlson observes that Walton's psychological thesis readily transfers from works of art to natural items: that we perceive Shetland ponies as cute and charming and Clydesdales as lumbering surely owes to our perceiving them as belonging to the category of horses [8]. He also maintains that the philosophical thesis transfers: whales actually have the

aesthetic properties we perceive them as having when we perceive them as mammals, and do not actually have any contrasting aesthetic properties we might perceive them to have when we perceive them as fish. If we ask what determines which category or categories natural items actually belong to, the answer, according to Carlson, is their natural histories as discovered by natural science [8]. Inasmuch as a natural item's natural history will tend not to be graspable by merely seeing or hearing it, formalism is no truer of natural items than it is of works of art.

The claim that Walton's psychological thesis transfers to natural items has been widely accepted. The claim that Walton's philosophical thesis transfers to natural items has proven more controversial. Carlson is surely right that aesthetic judgments about natural items are prone to be mistaken insofar as they result from perceptions of those items as belonging to categories to which they do not belong, and, insofar as determining which categories natural items actually belong to requires scientific investigation, this point seems sufficient to undercut the plausibility of any very strong formalism about nature [30]. Carlson, however, also wishes to establish that aesthetic judgments about natural items have whatever objectivity aesthetic judgments about works of art do [8], and it is controversial whether Walton's philosophical claim transfers sufficiently to support such a claim [30]. One difficulty, raised by Malcolm Budd [6], and Robert Stecker [29], is that since there are many categories in which a given natural item may correctly be perceived, it is unclear which correct category is the one in which the item is perceived as having the aesthetic properties it actually has. Perceived as belonging to the category of Shetland ponies, a large Shetland pony may be perceived as lumbering; perceived as belonging to the category of horses, the same pony may be perceived as cute and charming but certainly not lumbering. If the Shetland pony were a work of art, we might appeal to the intentions (or society) of its creator to determine which correct category is the one that fixes its aesthetic character. But as natural items are not human creations they can give us no basis for deciding between equally correct but aesthetically contrasting categorizations. It follows, according to Budd, “the aesthetic appreciation of nature is endowed with a freedom denied to the appreciation of art” [6], though this is perhaps merely another way of saying that the aesthetic appreciation of art is endowed with an objectivity denied to the appreciation of nature.

1.2.Characteristic of literary epoch in which Oscar Wilde lived.

Nineteenth century English literature is remarkable both for high artistic achievement and for variety. The greatest literary movement of its earlier period was that of romanticism. It was born in the atmosphere of the violent economic and political turmoil that marked the last decades of the 18th and the first decades of the 19th century. The outburst of political activity brought on by

the Great French Revolution of 1789, the bitter wars with Napoleon's France that ravaged Europe for almost 25 years were the dominant political forces at work. The hardships of the industrial and agrarian revolution whose joint effect was a gradual change of all aspects of social life in England made the situation rife with class hatred [12].

In using the term "romantic" no effort is made here to treat all the romantics of England as belonging to the same literary school. Romanticism is here regarded as a very complex and certainly far from unified endeavour to give a new answer to the problems of revolution and reaction, of past history and present-day politics, of the materialistic philosophy dominant in the age of Enlightenment and the idealistic trends in-early nineteenth century European thought. It is in the nature of the answer given to all these urgent questions that the romantics differ from each other. And it is precisely that difference, no less than the points of likeness between them, that should be given serious consideration [15].

As distinct from the romantic writers of Germany or of France, their English contemporaries did not call themselves romanticists, and some of them were at pains to disprove public opinion calling them so. Nevertheless they all made part of a movement eloquent of the spirit of the age, with its ingrained sense of incessant historical change, of the interdependence of man and the Universe, of the world as ruled by semi-intelligible powers surpassing individual will [27].

The formalistic aesthetic note that rang in the poetry, prose and critical essays of Swinburne was still more clearly pronounced in the work of Walter Pater. A disciple of John Ruskin, he resolutely detached the latter's cult of beauty from moral and social purpose. He says: "Let us understand by poetry all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form as distinct from its matter." Aestheticism goes hand in hand with extreme subjectivism and agnosticism in the whole of Pater's literary output. In his history of Renaissance painters, in the collection of critical essays Appreciations Pater definitely says he does not see his way to any manner of objective interpretation [30]. A critic can only answer one question: "What is this song or picture to me?" This reduces the function of a critic to an impressionistic description of his own sensations in connection with art. Impressionism also characterises Pater's fiction (Marius the Epicurean). [29].

Pater profoundly worked on the literary theory of the poet and critic Arthur Symons, of the painter and prose writer Audrey Beardsley and even more so on that of Oscar Wilde, who in the words of a later historian, "pushed his master's sober and academic doctrine to an excessive and cynical display". Not only did he support Pater's idea on the divorce between art and morality Ч he went so far as to maintain that perfect art was perfectly consistent with perfect immorality. This is the subject of the essay Pen, Pencil and Poison. In his own art, however (fairy-tales, plays, novels, poetry), Wilde was very often a moralist. In The Happy Prince and Other Stories

in his novel The Picture of Dorian Gray, in dramas like The Ideal Husband the moral is that of altruism, kindness and honesty. This contradiction between theory and practice is partly the result of Wilde's desire to shock bourgeois public opinion, to take Mrs. Grundy's breath away with the sharpness of his paradoxes. These were really Wilde's way of protest against the vulgarity and flatness of official ways of thinking. Paradoxes find their way into all his dramas and novels alike and are mostly a simple and effective argument against the pretentious futility of received opinion. Wilde's work was certainly not so immoral as Wilde's theory proclaimed. Thus, in The Picture of Dorian Gray, despite the emphatic statement of the preface, the conclusion the author arrives at is that immorality mars beauty at least in a society that is not yet ready to give full scope to persons who seek for ' unfettered expression of their ego, regardless of other people's sentiments. Wilde's most passionate plea for humanity is his Ballad of Reading Goal. [20].

1.2.1 Victorian age.

The Victorian period formally begins in 1837 (the year Victoria became Queen) and ends in 1901 (the year of her death). As a matter of expediency, these dates are sometimes modified slightly. 1830 is usually considered the end of the Romantic period in Britain, and thus makes a convenient starting date for Victorianism. Similarly, since Queen Victoria's death occurred so soon in the beginning of a new century, the end of the previous century provides a useful closing date for the period. The common perception of the period is the Victorians are "prudish, hypocritical, stuffy, and narrow-minded" [25]. This perception is (as most periodic generalizations are) not universally accurate, and it is thus a grievous error to jump to the conclusion that a writer or artist fits that description merely because he or she wrote during the mid to late 19th century. However, it is also true that this description applies to some large segments of Victorian English society, particularly amongst the middle-class, which at the time was increasing both in number and power. Many members of this middle-class aspired to join the ranks of the nobles, and felt that acting "properly," according to the conventions and values of the time, was an important step in that direction. Another important aspect of this period is the large-scale expansion of British imperial power. By 1830, the British empire had, of course, existed for centuries, and had already experienced many boons and setbacks. Perhaps the most significant blow to its power occurred in the late 18th century with the successful revolt of its 13 American colonies, an event which would eventually result in the formation of the United States as we now know it. During the 19th century, the British empire extensively expanded its colonial presence in many parts of Africa, in India, in the middle-east and in other parts of

Asia. This process has had many long-term effects, including the increased use of the English language outside of Europe and increased trade between Europe and distant regions. It also, of course, produced some long-standing animosity in colonized regions [35].

It is important to realize from the outset that the Victorian period is quite long. Victoria's reign lasted over 63 years, longer than any other British monarch. The Victorian era lasted roughly twice as long as the Romantic period. Keeping in mind that even the relatively short Romantic period saw a wide variety of distinguishing characteristics, it is logical that much longer Victorian period includes even more variety. Below are a few of the noteworthy characteristics which appear often enough to be worth mentioning, but certainly do not encompass the entirety of the period [11].

- The drive for social advancement frequently appears in literature. This drive may take many forms. It may be primarily financial, as in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. It may involve marrying above one's station, as in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. It may also be intellectual or education-based. Typically, any such attempt to improve one's social standing must be accompanied by "proper" behavior (thus helping to provide the period with its stereotype) [21].
- The period saw the rise of a highly idealized notion of what is "English" or what constitutes an "Englishman." This notion is obviously tied very closely to the period's models for proper behavior, and is also tied very closely to England's imperial enterprises. Many colonists and politicians saw it as their political (and sometimes religious) duty to "help" or "civilize" native populations in colonized regions. It was thus important to have a model which provides a set of standards and codes of conduct, and the idealized notion of what is "English" often provided this model [21].
- Later Victorian writing saw the seeds of rebellion against such idealized notions and stereotypical codes of conduct. These "proper" behaviors often served as subjects of satire; Oscar Wilde's plays are an excellent example. The later years of the Victorian period also saw the rise of aestheticism, the "art for art's sake" movement, which directly contradicted the social and political goals of much earlier Victorian literature. One of the fascinating ways of approaching the Victorian period is to examine the influence of these later developments on the Modernist period which follows [11].

1.2.2 Oscar Wilde's life.

Oscar Wilde was born in 1854 and led a normal childhood. After high school, Wilde attended Oxford College and received a B.A. in 1878. During this time, he wrote Vera and The

Importance of Being Earnest. In addition, "for two years Wilde had dressed in outlandish outfits, courted famous people and built his public image" [29]. Doing so earned Wilde a job with Richard D' Oyly, a producer. His task was to advertise opera in America. While in America, Wilde not only found a producer for Vera, but also wrote The Duchess of Padua for the American actress, Mary Anderson [29].

Upon his return to England in 1883, Wilde began lecturing on his experiences in America. This is how he came to meet Constance Lloyd, whom he later married on May 29, 1884. The couple had two children together. However, the marriage began to have problems after Wilde met Canadian, Robert Ross, which "began his involvement in the disordered, destructive homosexual lifestyle so luridly suggested in The Picture of Dorian Gray and catalogued in his sensational trials" [29]. Robert Ross forced Wilde to confront the homosexual tendencies that he had been trying desperately to suppress. A whole new world opened for Wilde, and his only resource in which to channel this new energy was through his literary works.

In 1888, Oscar Wilde published a set of fairy tales, The Happy Prince and Other Tales and "The Young King." These stories, "revealed another approach to moral situations and human relationships" [29]. The fairy tales were perhaps the first time Wilde introduced homosexual undertones into his works. For example, in the story The Happy Prince, a male bird and a statue of a Prince fall in love. Although it could be argued that the love between the Prince and the bird was only that of friends, most likely Wilde is expressing his own feelings of homosexuality through the bird and the Prince's relationship. For example, when the bird is preparing to leave for Egypt, the Prince says to him, "you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you" [35]. It appears that the bird and the Prince have a relationship more sexual than friendship alone.

Wilde's "insidious" undertones appear yet again in the story of The Selfish Giant. In the story, "he (the Giant) had been to visit his friend, the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After seven years were over, he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle" [1]. The fact that the ogre and the Giant were living together for seven years sounds like a romantic relationship, which ends when the two lose interest in each other. Perhaps this is a parallel between Wilde and Robert Ross' relationship. When Robert Ross stayed with Wilde, he began Wilde's homosexual affair, forcing Wilde to face the homosexual tendencies he so desperately tried to suppress. Therefore, the Giant is symbolic of Ross; the ogre is symbolic of Wilde [1].

Wilde had been able to pour some of his homosexuality into these stories, but he was left unsatisfied. He still yearned to tell the world his dark secret. However, he knew that the repercussions would be unbearable. For this reason, Wilde began to write his novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, which discreetly expressed the homosexuality he was struggling to hide. Bu

writing this novel, Wilde would be able to live vicariously through the characters, who were undoubtedly structured to resemble fragments of Wilde's inner self. As Wilde explained, "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks of me: Dorian what I would like to be- in other ages perhaps". Wilde went on later to say that Hallward represents suffering and a sacrificed artist; Lord Henry symbolizes a mature philosopher and wit; Dorian is equivalent to a youthful aesthete-about-town, all aspects of Wilde's own self [29].

Before one reads The Picture of Dorian Gray, he or she should know about Bosie, Wilde's long time boyfriend. Although The Picture of Dorian Gray first appeared in 1890 in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, it forged on to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even though the novel was published before Wilde met Bosie, knowing about the two is crucial to understanding the parallel between the novel and Wilde's own life.

In 1891, Wilde met Alfred "Bosie" Douglass, son of the Marquis of Queensberry, for the first time. Bosie's good looks and boyish charms captivated Wilde and forced him yet again to give into the homosexual temptations he felt. Bosie had a lust for a more dangerous living and seduced Wilde to make use of the call boys that Bosie himself enjoyed. This began the gradual decline of Wilde's career, marriage and personal life [12].

The year 1895 brought forth the crippling blow to Wilde's life. The Marquis discovered the affair that Bosie was having with Wilde, and stormed into Wilde's club, leaving a card that read, "To Oscar Wilde posing somdomite sic" [12]. Bosie hated his father and therefore used his influence over Wilde to convince him to sue the Marquis for libel. Oscar didn't stand a chance. The Marquis hired the best lawyers money could buy and used Wilde's homosexuality, which was illegal at the time, against him. Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labor. This torturous relationship between Bosie and Wilde is reflected superbly in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray [12].

1.2.3 Oscar Wilde’s aestheticism.

Though Oscar Wilde is the incarnation of the aestheticism schools, we can’t afford to ignore the other artists of the aesthetes. It is imperative that we should give a general introduction to aestheticism in the following paragraphs.Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that studies the principles of beauty especially in art. Aestheticism is the collection of all the fruits of aesthetics. The word ‘aesthetic’ was first found in Aesthetica, appearing as a Latin word, which is the name of two books written by Alexander Baumgarten, 1714 - 1762” [26]. Baumgarten believes beauty can be defined as aesthetic, but when it is related to art, the most important part of Baumgarten’s translation of beauty is that beauty is not abstract but can be felt by people through their senses.

This translation is the same as the Greek word “aisthesis”, the original meaning of which is the power of uniting mentally the impressions conveyed by the five physical senses. And in the middle of the 19th century, aesthetic is understood as “the beautiful”, which is generally related to art. In 1880, the word “aesthete” was used in a wide range, but contained a derogatory sense. Both the principle and the practice of the aesthetic movement led by Walter Pater were criticized at that time. But the British decadent writers were deeply influenced by Walter Pater. The artists and writers of the aesthetic movement held the view that sensuous pleasure should be provided by arts, not moral or sentimental messages. As a consequence, they did not accept John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold’s utilitarian conception of art as something moral or useful. Instead, they believed that art did not have any didactic purpose; it needed only be beautiful. The aesthetes developed the cult of beauty, which they considered the basic factor in art. In Britain, Oscar Wilde is famous as one of the best representatives of the aesthetes. He believes that art represents nothing but itself, and that art has its own life just as thoughts do [8].

Oscar Wilde’s aestheticism can be seen in the preface, themes, plots, conflicts, the symbolic meaning of the characters, the symbolic meaning of the picture and the languages of The Picture of Dorian Gray, which is the focus of the following paragraphs [19].

Part 2

Aestheticism and Morality in Oscar Wilde's novel „The Picture of Dorian Gray"

2.1. Brief account of the plot of the novel.

In the stately London home of his aunt, Lady Brandon, the well-known artist Basil Hallward meets Dorian Gray. Dorian is a cultured, wealthy, and impossibly beautiful young man who immediately captures Basil's artistic imagination. Dorian sits for several portraits, and Basil often depicts him as an ancient Greek hero or a mythological figure. When the novel opens, the artist is completing his first portrait of Dorian as he truly is, but, as he admits to his friend Lord Henry Wotton, the painting disappoints him because it reveals too much of his feeling for his subject. Lord Henry, a famous wit who enjoys scandalizing his friends by celebrating youth, beauty, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure, disagrees, claiming that the portrait is Basil's masterpiece. Dorian arrives at the studio, and Basil reluctantly introduces him to Lord Henry, who he fears will have a damaging influence on the impressionable, young Dorian [28].

Basil's fears are well founded; before the end of their first conversation, Lord Henry upsets Dorian with a speech about the transient nature of beauty and youth. Worried that these, his most impressive characteristics, are fading day by day, Dorian curses his portrait, which he believes will one day remind him of the beauty he will have lost. In a fit of distress, he pledges his soul if only the painting could bear the burden of age and infamy, allowing him to stay forever young. After Dorian's outbursts, Lord Henry reaffirms his desire to own the portrait; however, Basil insists the portrait belongs to Dorian [12].

Over the next few weeks, Lord Henry's influence over Dorian grows stronger. The youth becomes a disciple of the "new Hedonism" and proposes to live a life dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure. He falls in love with Sibyl Vane, a young actress who performs in a theater in London's slums. He adores her acting; she, in turn, refers to him as "Prince Charming" and refuses to heed the warnings of her brother, James Vane, that Dorian is no good for her. Overcome by her emotions for Dorian, Sibyl decides that she can no longer act, wondering how she can pretend to love on the stage now that she has experienced the real thing. Dorian, who loves Sibyl because of her ability to act, cruelly breaks his engagement with her. After doing so, he returns home to notice that his face in Basil's portrait of him has changed: it now sneers. Frightened that his wish for his likeness in the painting to bear the ill effects of his behavior has come true and that his sins will be recorded on the canvas, he resolves to make amends with Sibyl the next day. The following afternoon, however, Lord Henry brings news that Sibyl has killed herself. At Lord Henry's urging, Dorian decides to consider her death a sort of artistic triumph - she personified tragedy - and to put the matter behind him. Meanwhile, Dorian hides

his portrait in a remote upper room of his house, where no one other than he can watch its transformation [13].

Lord Henry gives Dorian a book that describes the wicked exploits of a nineteenth-century Frenchman; it becomes Dorian's bible as he sinks ever deeper into a life of sin and corruption. He lives a life devoted to garnering new experiences and sensations with no regard for conventional standards of morality or the consequences of his actions. Eighteen years pass. Dorian's reputation suffers in circles of polite London society, where rumors spread regarding his scandalous exploits. His peers nevertheless continue to accept him because he remains young and beautiful. The figure in the painting, however, grows increasingly wizened and hideous. On a dark, foggy night, Basil Hallward arrives at Dorian's home to confront him about the rumors that plague his reputation. The two argue, and Dorian eventually offers Basil a look at his (Dorian's) soul. He shows Basil the now-hideous portrait, and Hallward, horrified, begs him to repent. Dorian claims it is too late for penance and kills Basil in a fit of rage [17].

In order to dispose of the body, Dorian employs the help of an estranged friend, a doctor, whom he blackmails. The night after the murder, Dorian makes his way to an opium den, where he encounters James Vane, who attempts to avenge Sibyl's death. Dorian escapes to his country estate. While entertaining guests, he notices James Vane peering in through a window, and he becomes wracked by fear and guilt. When a hunting party accidentally shoots and kills Vane, Dorian feels safe again. He resolves to amend his life but cannot muster the courage to confess his crimes, and the painting now reveals his supposed desire to repent for what it is - hypocrisy. In a fury, Dorian picks up the knife he used to stab Basil Hallward and attempts to destroy the painting. There is a crash, and his servants enter to find the portrait, unharmed, showing Dorian Gray as a beautiful young man. On the floor lies the body of their master - an old man, horribly wrinkled and disfigured, with a knife plunged into his heart [17].

2.2. The main characters of the novel.

Dorian Gray

At the opening of the novel, Dorian Gray exists as something of an ideal: he is the archetype of male youth and beauty. As such, he captures the imagination of Basil Hallward, a painter, and Lord Henry Wotton, a nobleman who imagines fashioning the impressionable Dorian into an unremitting pleasure-seeker. Dorian is exceptionally vain and becomes convinced, in the course of a brief conversation with Lord Henry, that his most salient characteristics - his youth and physical attractiveness - are ever waning. The thought of waking one day without these attributes sends Dorian into a tailspin: he curses his fate and pledges his

soul if only he could live without bearing the physical burdens of aging and sinning. He longs to be as youthful and lovely as the masterpiece that Basil has painted of him, and he wishes that the portrait could age in his stead. His vulnerability and insecurity in these moments make him excellent clay for Lord Henry's willing hands [22].

Dorian soon leaves Basil's studio for Lord Henry's parlor, where he adopts the tenets of "the new Hedonism" and resolves to live his life as a pleasure-seeker with no regard for conventional morality. His relationship with Sibyl Vane tests his commitment to this philosophy: his love of the young actress nearly leads him to dispense with Lord Henry's teachings, but his love proves to be as shallow as he is. When he breaks Sibyl's heart and drives her to suicide, Dorian notices the first change in his portrait - evidence that his portrait is showing the effects of age and experience while his body remains ever youthful. Dorian experiences a moment of crisis, as he weighs his guilt about his treatment of Sibyl against the freedom from worry that Lord Henry's philosophy has promised. When Dorian decides to view Sibyl's death as the achievement of an artistic ideal rather than a needless tragedy for which he is responsible, he starts down the steep and slippery slope of his own demise [23].

As Dorian's sins grow worse over the years, his likeness in Basil's portrait grows more hideous. Dorian seems to lack a conscience, but the desire to repent that he eventually feels illustrates that he is indeed human. Despite the beautiful things with which he surrounds himself, he is unable to distract himself from the dissipation of his soul. His murder of Basil marks the beginning of his end: although in the past he has been able to sweep infamies from his mind, he cannot shake the thought that he has killed his friend. Dorian's guilt tortures him relentlessly until he is forced to do away with his portrait. In the end, Dorian seems punished by his ability to be influenced: if the new social order celebrates individualism, as Lord Henry claims, Dorian falters because he fails to establish and live by his own moral code [31].

Lord Henry

He is a man possessed of "wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories." He is a charming talker, a famous wit, and a brilliant intellect. Given the seductive way in which he leads conversation, it is little wonder that Dorian falls under his spell so completely. Lord Henry's theories are radical; they aim to shock and purposefully attempt to topple established, untested, or conventional notions of truth. In the end, however, they prove naïve, and Lord Henry himself fails to realize the implications of most of what he says [32].

Lord Henry is a relatively static character - he does not undergo a significant change in the course of the narrative. He is as coolly composed, unshakable, and possessed of the same dry wit in the final pages of the novel as he is upon his introduction. Because he does not change while Dorian and Basil clearly do, his philosophy seems amusing and enticing in the first half of the

book, but improbable and shallow in the second. Lord Henry muses in Chapter Nineteen, for instance, that there are no immoral books; he claims that " the books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame." But since the decadent book that Lord Henry lends Dorian facilitates Dorian's downfall, it is difficult to accept what Lord Henry says as true [34].

Although Lord Henry is a self-proclaimed hedonist who advocates the equal pursuit of both moral and immoral experience, he lives a rather staid life. He participates in polite London society and attends parties and the theater, but he does not indulge in sordid behavior. Unlike Dorian, he does not lead innocent youths to suicide or travel incognito to the city's most despised and desperate quarters. Lord Henry thus has little notion of the practical effects of his philosophy. His claim that Dorian could never commit a murder because "crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders" demonstrates the limitations of his understanding of the human soul. It is not surprising, then, that he fails to appreciate the profound meaning of Dorian's downfall [34].

Basil Hallward

He is a talented, though somewhat conventionally minded, painter. His love for Dorian Gray changes the way he sees art; indeed, it defines a new school of expression for him. Basil's portrait of Dorian marks a new phase of his career. Before he created this masterwork, he spent his time painting Dorian in the veils of antiquity - dressed as an ancient soldier or as various romantic figures from mythology. Once he has painted Dorian as he truly is, however, he fears that he has put too much of himself into the work. He worries that his love, which he himself describes as "idolatry," is too apparent, and that it betrays too much of himself. Though he later changes his mind to believe that art is always more abstract than one thinks and that the painting thus betrays nothing except form and color, his emotional investment in Dorian remains constant. He seeks to protect Dorian, voicing his objection to Lord Henry's injurious influence over Dorian and defending Dorian even after their relationship has clearly dissolved. Basil's commitment to Dorian, which ultimately proves fatal, reveals the genuineness of his love for his favorite subject and his concern for the safety and salvation of Dorian's soul [11].

Sibyl Vane

A poor, beautiful, and talented actress with whom Dorian falls in love. Sibyl's love for Dorian compromises her ability to act, as her experience of true love in life makes her realize the falseness of affecting emotions onstage [32].

James Vane

Sibyl's brother, a sailor bound for Australia. James cares deeply for his sister and worries about her relationship with Dorian. Distrustful of his mother's motives, he believes that Mrs.

Vane's interest in Dorian's wealth disables her from properly protecting Sibyl. As a result, James is hesitant to leave his sister [32].

Mrs. Vane

Sibyl and James's mother. Mrs. Vane is a faded actress who has consigned herself and her daughter to a tawdry theater company, the owner of which has helped her to pay her debts. She conceives of Dorian Gray as a wonderful alliance for her daughter because of his wealth; this ulterior motive, however, clouds her judgment and leaves Sibyl vulnerable [11].

Alan Campbell- Once an intimate friend, Alan Campbell is one of many promising young men who have severed ties with Dorian because of Dorian's sullied reputation [11].

Lady Agatha- Lord Henry's aunt. Lady Agatha is active in charity work in the London slums [33].

Lord Fermor - Lord Henry's irascible uncle. Lord Fermor tells Henry the story of Dorian's parentage [33].

Duchess of Monmouth - A pretty, bored young noblewoman who flirts with Dorian at his country estate [33].

Victoria Wotton - Lord Henry's wife. Victoria appears only once in the novel, greeting Dorian as he waits for Lord Henry. She is described as an untidy, foolishly romantic woman with "a perfect mania for going to church." [30].

Victor - Dorian's servant. Although Victor is a trustworthy servant, Dorian becomes suspicious of him and sends him out on needless errands to ensure that he does not attempt to steal a glance at Dorian's portrait [30].

Mrs. Leaf - Dorian Gray's housekeeper. Mrs. Leaf is a bustling older woman who takes her work seriously [30].

2.3. Analysis to the chapters of the novel.

Analysis: Chapter One - Two

The Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray is a collection of epigrams that aptly sums up the philosophical tenets of the artistic and philosophical movement known as aestheticism. Aestheticism, which found its footing in Europe in the early nineteenth century, proposed that art need not serve moral, political, or otherwise didactic ends. Whereas the romantic movement of the early and mid-nineteenth century viewed art as a product of the human creative impulse that could be used to learn more about humankind and the world, the aesthetic movement denied that art must necessarily be an instructive force in order to be valuable. Instead, the aestheticists believed, art should be valuable in and of itself - art for art's sake. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Walter Pater, an English essayist and critic, suggested that life itself should be lived in

the spirit of art. His views, especially those presented in a collection of essays called The Renaissance, had a profound impact on the English poets of the 1890s, most notably Oscar Wilde [19].

Aestheticism flourished partly as a reaction against the materialism of the burgeoning middle class, assumed to be composed of philistines (individuals ignorant of art) who responded to art in a generally unrefined manner. In this climate, the artist could assert him- or herself as a remarkable and rarefied being, one leading the search for beauty in an age marked by shameful class inequality, social hypocrisy, and bourgeois complacency. No one latched onto this attitude more boldly, or with more flair, than Oscar Wilde. His determination to live a life of beauty and to mold his life into a work of art is reflected in the beliefs and actions of several characters in Wilde's only novel [19].

The Picture of Dorian Gray has often been compared to the famous German legend of Faust, immortalized in Christopher Marlowe's sixteenth-century play Doctor Faustus and in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's nineteenth-century poem Faust. The legend tells of a learned doctor who sells his soul to the devil in return for knowledge and magical abilities. Although Dorian Gray never contracts with the devil, his sacrifice is similar: he trades his soul for the luxury of eternal youth. For its overtones of supernaturalism, its refusal to satisfy popular morality, and its portrayal of homoerotic culture, The Picture of Dorian Gray was met with harsh criticism. Many considered the novel dangerously subversive, one offended critic calling it "a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction." [26].

The fear of a bad - or good - influence is, in fact, one of the novel's primary concerns. As a work that sets forth a philosophy of aestheticism, the novel questions the degree and kind of influence a work of art can have over an individual. Furthermore, since the novel conceives of art as including a well-lived life, it is also interested in the kind of influence one person can have over another. After all, the artful Lord Henry himself has as profound an effect upon Dorian's life as Basil's painting does [26].

While Lord Henry exercises influence over other characters primarily through his skillful use of language, it is Dorian's beauty that seduces the characters with whom he associates. Basil, a serious artist and rather dull moralist, admits that Dorian has had some subtle influence over him; it is this influence that Basil is certain that his painting reveals. Ultimately, however, Lord Henry's brilliant speech is a much more influential force than aesthetic beauty. His witty and biting epigrams threaten to seduce not only the impressionable young Dorian but the reader as well. Lord Henry's ironic speech cuts through social convention and hypocrisy to reveal unexpected, unpleasant truths [28].

The characters whose lifestyles Lord Henry criticizes resist his extreme theories. Basil's resistance to Lord Henry's argument that scandal is a function of class typifies the reactions of the characters whom Lord Henry criticizes; after all, their position and comfort depend upon the hypocrisies he tends to expose. To some degree, every character in the novel is seduced by Lord Henry's philosophies, Dorian Gray more so than anyone else. In these opening chapters, Dorian emerges as an incredibly impressionable young man, someone who Basil fears is open to the "influence" of Lord Henry, which will "spoil" him. Basil's fear is well founded, as before the end of his first conversation with Lord Henry, Dorian is "dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him." [28].

Analysis: Chapters Three - Four

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a curious mixture of different genres. It displays Wilde's incomparable talent for social comedy and satire, even as it veers toward the formula for Gothic literature. Gothic fiction, which was tremendously popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, focused on tales of romance, cruelty, and horror. By the end of the nineteenth century, the formula had changed considerably, but these basic tenets remained intact. Dorian's mysterious and melodramatic heritage alludes to conventions of the Gothic novel: his wicked grandfather, his parents' cursed elopement, his father's murder, and his mother's early death represent a type of moody romance popular among Gothic authors. As the critic Donald Lawler points out, Dorian's ancestry is identical to that of the main characters in three of Wilde's short stories [28].

The first two chapters of the novel show Lord Henry's powers of seduction, but in Chapters Three and Four Lord Henry himself is seduced. Strictly speaking, it is not a person who draws Lord Henry in, but the possibility of having a profound effect on a person, namely Dorian: there was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. To project his soul onto Dorian and seize his spirit just as Dorian has seized Basil's imagination becomes Lord Henry's greatest desire. In Lord Henry's mind, life and art are not only connected but interchangeable. By molding Dorian into "a marvellous type" of boy, Lord Henry believes that he is countering the effects of "an age so limited and vulgar" as his own. He imagines that he will take his place among such masters as the great Italian artist Michelangelo, with whom he shares the imperative to create something of beauty. The fact that Lord Henry considers the life of another human being a viable medium for artistic expression indicates "the new manner in art" that Wilde so tirelessly advocated. Indeed, many readers might find Lord Henry heartless, given his willingness to watch Dorian's development with practically no thought of consequence. After all, Dorian's beauty is all that matters to him, and it was no matter how it all ended, or was destined to end. This behavior merely links Lord Henry to the tenets of aestheticism, whereby

beauty is of primary importance, and vice and virtue - as Wilde states in the novel's preface - are nothing more than "materials for an art." [27].

If the opening chapters position the three main characters in a triangular relationship, wherein Lord Henry and Basil vie for Dorian's soul and affections, Lord Henry quickly wins at the end of Chapter Three. In Dorian's declaration that he will miss his appointment with Basil in order to hear Lord Henry speak, we see that Lord Henry's hopes to dominate and influence the young man have more or less been fulfilled. Dorian gives his affections over largely because of Lord Henry's conversational skill; he asks Lord Henry to "promise to talk to me all the time." Indeed, Lord Henry is a great talker, a wonderful philosopher of "the new Hedonism," but, unlike Dorian, he acts on nothing that would damage his respectable reputation or life. [27].

Analysis: Chapters Five - Six

Critical reception of The Picture of Dorian Gray was mixed, with many readers condemning the novel as decadent or unmanly. The relationship between Lord Henry and Dorian, as well the one of Basil and Dorian, is clearly homoerotic, and must have shocked readers who valued Victorian respectability. Although Wilde stops short of stating that Basil and Lord Henry have sexual feelings for Dorian, the language he uses to describe their devotion to Dorian is unmistakably the language of deep, romantic intimacy. Wilde's language of irony facilitates dodging direct statements; in one scene, for example, although the ostensible topic of conversation is Dorian as a subject for portraits, the exchange between Basil and Lord Henry betrays the romantic nature of Basil's feelings [28].

Men do have relationships with women in the novel - Dorian falls in love with Sibyl and Lord Henry himself is married - but the novel's heterosexual relationships prove to be rather superficial and short-lived. If the novel is homoerotic, it is also misogynistic. Victoria Wotton, like most of the women in the novel, is depicted with no real depth: she is briefly (and not kindly) introduced, never to be heard from again. The most significant female character in the novel is Sibyl, who seems to fulfill Lord Henry's observation that "women are a decorative sex." There is precious little substance to Sibyl's character, as becomes clear in following chapters when she so easily gives up her greatest talent in order to pursue a relationship with Dorian. In this section, as she strolls through the park with James, she emerges as a rather foolishly romantic young woman. She is perfectly content to fall in love with a stranger whom she knows only by the fairy-tale name with which she has christened him. Indeed, Sibyl is little more than a placeholder in a prefabricated romance. This sentiment confirms Lord Henry's ego-driven philosophy of women as ornaments as well as the male-centered focus of Wilde's narrative gaze: men - particularly their relationships and the influence they bring to bear upon one another - matter most in The Picture of Dorian Gray. [31].

More important than Lord Henry's philosophy of the role of women, however, is his insistence on the necessity of individualism. As a mode of thinking, individualism took center stage during the nineteenth century. It was first celebrated by the Romantics, who, in the early 1800s, decided that free and spontaneous expression of the self was the true source of art and literature. The Romantics rejected the eighteenth-century sensibility that sought to imitate and reproduce the classical models of ancient Greece and Rome, which were perceived as too stylized to allow for the expression of anything genuine or relevant. Holding the self as the center of creation, Romanticism inevitably emphasized personal freedom, sensory experience, and the special status of the artist. By the time Wilde wrote The Picture of Dorian Gray, however, the romantic belief that man could realize these things in himself by returning to nature had largely faded. Indeed, Wilde's novel marks an interesting shift in the changing philosophy of the times. For although the residue of the Romantic movement can be seen in Dorian's story - Lord Henry advocates that nothing should hinder the freedom of the artistic individual's development - the means by which that development occurs in the story is noticeably different. In the world of The Picture of Dorian Gray, art is to be made by submerging oneself in society rather than escaping from it [31].

Analysis: Chapters Seven - Eight

Dorian's romance with Sibyl represents the possibility that he will not accept Lord Henry's philosophy and will instead learn to prize human beings and emotions over art. His love for her allows him to resist Lord Henry's seductive words, noting to Lord Henry. But just as Lord Henry appreciates Dorian as a work of art rather than as a human being, what Dorian values most about Sibyl is her talent as an actress - her ability to portray an ideal, not her true self. The extent of Lord Henry's influence is painfully clear as Dorian heartlessly snubs Sibyl, who claims that her real love for him prohibits her from acting out such emotions onstage. Surely, to modern readers, Sibyl's devotion to Dorian - not to mention her grief over losing him - seems a bit melodramatic. She is a rather thinly drawn character, but she serves two important functions. First, she forces us to question what precisely art is and when its effects are good. Second, she shows the pernicious consequences of a philosophy that places beauty and self-pleasure above consideration for others. Sibyl's tragic fate enables us to be as critical of Wilde's philosophies as he himself was at the end of his life [34].

Sibyl's claim that Dorian gives her something higher, something of which all art is but a reflection stands in undeniable contrast to Lord Henry's philosophy, in which art is the highest experience and life imitates art rather than vice versa. Indeed, time and again, Lord Henry delights in ignoring the significance of human emotions. Even though Sibyl's conception of art as a reflection of grand emotions counters Lord Henry's (and Wilde's) philosophy of art, it

resonates throughout the remainder of the novel. Indeed, Sibyl's philosophy is echoed in the very portrait of Dorian, since it is a reflection of Dorian's true self [34].

The answer to the narrator's question as to whether the changing portrait "would … teach Dorian to loathe his own soul" is yes, as Dorian grows increasingly uncomfortable over the course of the novel with what the disfigured portrait signifies about himself. As the novel progresses and the painting continues to register the effects of time and dissipation, we see the degree to which Dorian is undone by the sins that his portrait reflects and the degree to which he suffers for allowing the painting to act as a visible emblem of conscience. The aging of Dorian's likeness in the portrait ultimately contradicts some of Lord Henry's - and Wilde's -beliefs about art: the painting does not exist in a moral vacuum. Instead, the painting both shows the deleterious effects of sin and gives Dorian a sense of freedom from morality; it thus influences and is influenced by morality [35].

Analysis: Chapters Nine - Ten

Sibyl's death compels Dorian to make the conscious decision to embrace Lord Henry's philosophy of selfishness and hedonism wholeheartedly. The contrast between Dorian's and Basil's reactions to Sibyl's death demonstrates the degree to which Lord Henry has changed Dorian. Dorian dismisses the need for grief in words that echo Lord Henry's: Sibyl need not be mourned, he proclaims, for she has "passed into the sphere of art." In other words, Dorian thinks of Sibyl's death as he would the death of a character in a novel or painting, and chooses not to be affected emotionally by her passing. This attitude reveals one way in which the novel blurs the distinction between life and art. Dorian himself passes "into the sphere of art" when his portrait reflects the physical manifestations of age and sin. While it is usually paintings that never age and people who do, it is the other way around with Dorian, as he has become more like a work of art than a human [32].

Basil's declaration of his obsession with Dorian is in many ways a defense and justification of homosexual love. In 1895, five years after Dorian Gray was published, Wilde was famously convicted of sodomy for his romantic relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. Wilde defended homosexual love as an emotion experienced by some of the world's greatest men. He insisted that it had its roots in ancient Greece and was, therefore, fundamental to the development of Western thought and culture. In his trial, when asked to describe the "love that dare not speak its name," Wilde explained it as such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it [33].

This testimony is strikingly similar to Dorian's reflection upon the kind of affection that Basil shows him:

It was really love - it had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses, and that dies when the senses tire. It was such love as Michael Angelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself [34].

Basil translates these highly emotional and physical feelings into his art; his act of painting is an expression of his love for Dorian. This romantic devotion to Dorian becomes clear when he admits his reason for not wanting to exhibit the painting: he fears that people will see his "idolatry." [32].

Dorian reflects, for a moment, that with this love Basil might have saved him from Lord Henry's influence, but he soon resigns himself to living a life dictated by the pursuit of passion. He devours the mysterious "yellow book" that Lord Henry gives him, which acts almost as a guide for the journey on which he is to travel. Like the protagonist of that novel, Dorian spirals into a world of self-gratification and exotic sensations. Although Wilde, in letters, identified the novel as imaginary, it is based in part on the nineteenth-century French novel À Rebours ("Against the Grain" or "Against Nature"), by Joris-Karl Huysmans, in which a decadent and wealthy Frenchman indulges himself in a host of bizarre sensory experiences. The yellow book has profound influence on Dorian; one might argue that it leads to his downfall. This downfall occurs not because the book itself is immoral (one need only recall the Preface's insistence that "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book") but because Dorian allows the book to dominate and determine his actions so completely. It becomes, for Dorian, a doctrine as limiting and stultifying as the common Victorian morals from which he seeks escape. After all, Lord Henry is a great fan of the yellow book, but, to his mind, it is no greater or more important than any other work of notable art. He does not let it dominate his life or determine his actions, which, in turn, allows him to retain the respectability that Dorian soon loses [28].

Analysis: Chapters Eleven - Twelve

In the eighteen years that pass over the course of these two chapters, Dorian undergoes a profound psychological and behavioral transformation, though he remains the same physically. Although his behavior is, in part, a function of the Gothic nature of Wilde's tale - his mysterious, potentially dangerous behavior contributes to the novel's darkness - Dorian does not simply devolve into a villain. Though he exhibits inhuman behavior as he carelessly tosses aside his protégés (and his sins are only to become worse), he never completely sheds his conscience. This divide further manifests itself in that when Dorian looks at the painting of his dissipated self, he sometimes loathes it and himself, while at other times he is overwhelmed by that pride of

individualism that is half the fascination of sin, and smiles with secret pleasure at the misshapen shadow that had to bear the burden that should have been his own. This tension points to the conflicted nature of Dorian's character [28].

We might consider Dorian's search for artistic and intellectual enlightenment - much of which is catalogued in Chapter Eleven - an attempt to find refuge from the struggle between mindless egotism and gnawing guilt. Indeed, Dorian lives a life marked by fear and suspicion. He finds it difficult to leave London, giving up the country villa he shares with Lord Henry for fear that someone will stumble upon the dreaded portrait in his absence. One can argue that Dorian turns to the study of perfumes, jewels, musical instruments, and tapestries as a source of comfort [28].

Certainly Dorian's greatest reason for indulging in the studies that Wilde describes at length is his disenchantment with the age in which he lives. Commonly referred to as the fin-de-siècle (French for "end of the century") period, the 1890s in England and Europe were marked by a world-weary sensibility that sought to free humanity from "the asceticism that deadens the senses." In art, this so-called asceticism referred primarily to artistic styles known as naturalism and realism, both of which aimed at reproducing the world as it is and ascribed a moral purpose to art. Dorian, taking the teachings of Lord Henry and the mysterious yellow book as scripture, believes that hedonism is the means by which he will rise above the harsh, uncomely puritanism of his age. This philosophy counters "any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience," which echoes the Preface's insistence that artists should not make distinctions between virtue and vice. According to this line of thinking, an experience is valuable in and of itself, regardless of its moral implications. Certainly, as Dorian lives his life under the rubric of aesthetic philosophy, he comes to appreciate the seductive beauty of the darker side of life, feeling a curious delight in the thought that Art, like Nature, has her monsters, things of bestial shape and with hideous voices [34].

A possible seed of Dorian's undoing might be his intellectual development. Dorian is supposedly the personification of a type - a perfect blend of the scholar and the socialite - who lives his life, as Lord Henry dictates, as an individualist. Indeed, we are told that no theory of life seemed to him to be of any importance compared with life itself. But, paradoxically, even the tenets of Dorian's new Hedonism prove constricting. It appears that he may have allowed himself to be too strongly influenced by Lord Henry and the yellow book, and that the philosophy of hedonism, meant to spare its followers from the conformities of dulling Victorian morality, may have simply become another, equally limiting doctrine.

Analysis: Chapters Thirteen - Fourteen

Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen take a decided turn for the macabre: the murder of Basil and the gruesome way it is reflected in the portrait - “as though the canvas had sweated blood” - root the novel firmly in the Gothic tradition, where darkness and supernatural horrors reign. In this setting, it becomes a challenge for Wilde to keep his hero from becoming a flat archetype of menacing evil. Much to his credit, he manages to keep Dorian a somewhat sympathetic character, even as he commits an unspeakable crime and blackmails a once dear friend to help him cover it up. Dorian remains worthy of sympathy because we see clearly the failure of his struggle to rise above a troubled conscience. With a murder added to his growing list of sins, Dorian wants nothing more than to be able to shrug off his guilt: he perceives Basil’s corpse as a “thing” sitting in a chair and tries to lose himself in the lines of a French poet. The most telling evidence of Dorian’s guilt can be seen as he sits waiting for the arrival of Alan Campbell; Dorian draws and soon remarks that “every face that he drew seemed to have a fantastic likeness to Basil Hallward.” This scene resonates with the Chapter Nine scene in which Dorian asks the artist to draw a picture of Sibyl Vane so that he may better remember her: in both instances, the hedonistic Dorian betrays his gnawing conscience [28].

Throughout the novel, Basil acts as a sort of moral ballast, reminding Lord Henry and Dorian of the price that must be paid for their pleasure seeking. In these chapters, he provides a fascinating counterpoint to the philosophy by which Dorian lives. Refusing to believe that the dissipation of a soul can occur without notice, he claims that “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.” The introduction of such an opposing view discloses Wilde’s love of contradiction. In his essay “The Truth of Masks,” Wilde wrote that “[a] Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true.” Indeed, the truth of The Picture of Dorian Gray, if one is to be found, emerges from oppositions. After all, as Dorian reflects while gazing upon his ruined portrait, art depends as much upon horror as it does upon “marvellous beauty,” just as one’s being is always the synthesis of a “Heaven and Hell.” [34].

Like the other secondary characters in the novel, Alan Campbell is introduced and rather quickly ignored. His appearance, however, plays a vital role in establishing the darkening mood of the novel. The macabre experiments that he is accustomed to conducting as a chemist provide him with the knowledge that Dorian finds so necessary. Furthermore, the secrets that surround his personal life contribute to the air of mystery that surrounds Dorian. It is significant that the reader never learns the details of the circumstances by which Dorian blackmails Campbell. Given Wilde’s increasingly indiscreet lifestyle and the increasingly hostile social attitudes toward homosexuality that flourished at the end of the nineteenth century, the reader can assume

that Campbell's transgression is of a sexual nature. In 1885, the British Parliament passed the Labouchere Amendment, which widened prohibitions against male homosexual acts to include not only sodomy (which was punishable by death until 1861) but also gross indecency (meaning oral sex), an offense that carried a two-year prison term. Oscar Wilde himself was eventually found guilty of the latter offense. This new law was commonly known as the Blackmailer's Charter. Thus, Alan Campbell, a seemingly inconsequential character, serves as an important indicator of the social prejudices and punishments in Wilde's time [32].

Analysis: Chapters Fifteen - Sixteen

When Lord Henry alludes to the "fin de siècle*"* (or "end of the century") in Chapter Fifteen, he refers more to the sensibilities that flourished in the 1890s than the chronological time period. In this decade, many people in continental Europe and England felt an unshakable sense of discontent. The values that once seemed to structure life and give it meaning were apparently lost. Two main reasons for this disenchantment were linked to the public functions of art and morality, which, in Victorian England, seemed inextricably connected. Art, it was thought, should function as a moral barometer; to the minds of many, this dictum left room for only the most restrictive morals and the most unimaginative art. The term "fin de siècle" therefore came to describe a mode of thinking that sought to escape this disenchantment and restore beauty to art and reshape (and broaden) public understandings of morality [28].

In a way, though Dorian lives a life very much in tune with fin-de-siècle thinking, he rejects Victorian morals in favor of self-determined ethics based on pleasure and experience, and he retains - and is tortured by - a very Victorian mind-set. Indeed, by viewing the painting of himself as "the most magical of mirrors," Dorian disavows the tenets of aestheticism that demand that art be completely freed of its connection to morality. The picture becomes the gauge by which Dorian measures his downfall and serves as a constant reminder of the sins that plague his conscience. If we understand Dorian as a victim of this Victorian circumstance, we can read his drastic course of action in a more sympathetic light. Indeed, by Chapter Sixteen, he is a man desperate to forget the sins for which he believes he can never be forgiven. As he sinks into the sordidness of the London docks and their opium dens, he reflects:

Ugliness was the one reality. The coarse brawl, the loathsome den, the crude violence of disordered life, the very vileness of thief and outcast, were more vivid, in their intense actuality of impression, than all the gracious shapes of Art, the dreamy shadows of Song.

Here, Dorian's thoughts echo French poets like Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud, who believed that the description of intense experience was the key to true beauty, even (or perhaps especially) when the experience itself was something sordid, ugly, or grotesque. Indeed,

in this trip to the opium den, Dorian intends to do nothing less than cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul [28].

Of course, what Dorian finds in the opium den has a far less curative effect than he hopes. The presence of Adrian Singleton, a young man whose downfall and subsequent drug addiction is at least partially Dorian's fault, pains Dorian's conscience and makes it impossible for him to escape from himself. The reintroduction of James Vane makes this idea of escape quite literal. The avenging brother is, admittedly, a rather weak (albeit convenient) plot device that Wilde added to his 1891 revision of the novel. If Dorian fears and wishes to escape from himself, we can consider James the physical incarnation of that fear: James exists to precipitate the troubled Dorian's final breakdown [33].

Analysis: Chapters Seventeen - Eighteen

Lord Henry's belief, uttered after the fatal hunting accident, that "destiny does not send us heralds. She is too wise or too cruel for that," contrasts with Dorian's experience. In many ways, Basil's portrait of Dorian illustrates how destiny shapes Dorian's life, for while Dorian himself remains immune to the effects of time, his ever-deteriorating likeness in the portrait is indeed an undeniable herald of his ultimate downfall. The picture interrupts the pleasant reality of Dorian's life to remind him of his soul's dissipation. Although the aestheticists believed that art existed for its own sake, Dorian's experience demonstrates the limitations of that view. The painting becomes almost immediately a physical manifestation of conscience; it shows Dorian what is right and what is wrong in a very literal sense, and he frequently inspects the painting after committing an immoral or unethical act to see exactly how his conscience interprets that act. Ultimately, then, and in contrast to Lord Henry's philosophies, The Picture of Dorian Gray emphasizes the relationship between art and morality [28].

In addition to complicating the reader's understanding of art, which, as the novel draws to its close, becomes complex and somewhat paradoxical, Wilde demonstrates his characteristic flair for comedy and biting social satire. In Chapter Seventeen, Dorian's conversation with the Duchess of Monmouth and Lord Henry testifies to one of the skills that made Wilde the most celebrated playwright of his day. His brilliantly witty dialogue is responsible for his status as one of the most effective practitioners of the comedy of manners. A comedy of manners revolves around the complex and sophisticated behavior of the social elite, among whom one's character is determined more by appearance than by moral behavior. Certainly, by this definition, Lord Henry becomes something of a hero in the novel, as, even by his own admission, he cares much more for the beautiful than for the good [33].

Given the increasing seriousness of Dorian's plight and the ever-darkening state of his mind, the bulk of Chapter Seventeen serves as comic relief, as the dialogue between the duchess

and Lord Henry is light and full of witticisms. Their exchange points to the relatively shallow nature of their society, in which love and morality amount to an appreciation of surfaces: as another lady of society reminds Dorian in Chapter Fifteen, "you are made to be good - you look so good." Here, morality is a function not of action or belief but of mere appearances [33].

Lord Henry's dismissive conception of England as a land founded on beer, the Bible, and repressive, unimaginative virtues serves as biting commentary of traditional, middle-class English morality. According to Lord Henry, a population whose tastes run to malt liquor and whose morality is determined by Christian dogma is doomed to produce little of artistic value. His sentiments align with the aesthetics' desire to free themselves (and art) from the bonds of conventional morality and sensibilities. Sympathetic as Wilde himself was to Lord Henry's opinions, he provides here a vital counterpoint to these opinions: the duchess's criticism that Lord Henry values beauty too highly begs us to ask the same question of Dorian and the aesthetic philosophy that dominates his life [34].

Analysis: Chapters Nineteen - Twenty

The contrast between Lord Henry and Dorian in Chapter Nineteen is instructive. When the novel begins, Lord Henry appears as a figure of worldly wisdom who seduces the naïve Dorian with fawning compliments and a celebration of selfishness and hedonism. Now that Dorian has actually lived the philosophy that Lord Henry so eloquently champions, however, he stands as proof of the limitations - indeed, even the misguided notions - of that philosophy. In the novel's final pages, Dorian is world-weary and borne down by the weight of his sins, while Lord Henry seems almost childishly naïve as he repeats his long-held but poorly informed beliefs. When Dorian all but confesses to Basil's murder, Lord Henry flippantly dismisses him, since his worldview holds that crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders. Only Lord Henry, who has never actually done any of the things he has inspired Dorian to do, could have the luxury of this thought. By keeping himself free from sin, even as he argues the virtues of sinning, Lord Henry lacks the terrible awareness of guilt and its debilitating effects. While the street preacher's rhetorical question about earthly gain at the cost of spiritual loss haunts Dorian, it holds no real meaning for Lord Henry [28].

At this stage, however, not even truthful self-awareness is enough to save Dorian. In his final moments, he attempts to repent the murder of Basil, the suicides of Sibyl Vane and Alan Campbell, and his countless other sins by refraining from seducing and ruining a naïve village girl. The discrepancy between the enormity of his crimes and this minor act of contrition is too great. Furthermore, he realizes that he does not want to confess his sins but rather have them simply go away. The portrait reflects this hypocrisy and drives him to his final, desperate act. He decides it is better to destroy the last evidence of his sin - the painting of his soul - than face up

to his own depravity. The depravity he seeks to destroy is, in essence, himself; therefore, by killing it, he kills himself [28].

The end of the novel suggests a number of possible interpretations of Dorian's death. It may be his punishment for living the life of a hedonist, and for prizing beauty too highly, in which case the novel would be a criticism of the philosophy of aestheticism. But it is just as possible that Dorian is suffering for having violated the creeds of aestheticism. In other words, one can argue that Dorian's belief that his portrait reflects the state of his soul violates the principles of aestheticism, since, within that philosophy, art has no moral component. This reading is more in keeping with Wilde's personal philosophies and with the events of his life. In fact, elements of The Picture of Dorian Gray have an almost prophetic ring to them. Like Basil Hallward, Wilde would meet a tragic end brought about by his unrestrained worship of a beautiful young man. Additionally, like Alan Campbell, whom Dorian blackmails with vague threats of exposed secrets, Wilde would be punished for sexual indiscretions. Given the public nature of Wilde's trial and entire life - he was, in many ways, the first celebrity personality - it is impossible to ignore these parallels while reading The Picture of Dorian Gray. In De Profundis, Wilde's long letter to his lover, written from prison, he admits the limitations of the modes of thought and living that structured his life: [32].

The philosophy that The Picture of Dorian Gray proposes can be extremely seductive and liberating. But Wilde's words here reveal that society, conscience, or more likely both together ultimately make living that philosophy extremely difficult and even painful [20].

Part 3

The Conflict Between Aestheticism and Morality in Oscar Wilde's Novel „The Picture of Dorian Gray".

3.1. Oscar Wilde's morality in the novel „The Picture of Dorian Gray".

Oscar Wilde prefaces his novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, with a reflection on art, the artist, and the utility of both. After careful scrutiny, he concludes: "All art is quite useless" [34]. In this one sentence, Wilde encapsulates the complete principles of the Aesthetic Movement popular in Victorian England. That is to say, real art takes no part in molding the social or moral identities of society, nor should it. Art should be beautiful and pleasure its observer, but to imply further-reaching influence would be a mistake. The explosion of aesthetic philosophy in *fin-de-siècle* English society, as exemplified by Oscar Wilde, was not confined to merely art, however. Rather, the proponents of this philosophy extended it to life itself. Here, aestheticism advocated whatever behavior was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one's life, in the tradition of hedonism. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it. Influences on others, if existent, are trivial at best. Many have read The Picture of Dorian Gray as a novelized sponsor for just this sort of aesthetic lifestyle. However, this story of the rise and fall of Dorian Gray might instead represent an allegory about morality meant to critique, rather than endorse, the obeying of one's impulses as thoughtlessly and dutifully as aestheticism dictates [27].

In the novel, Lord Henry Wotton trumpets the aesthetic philosophy with an elegance and bravado that persuade Dorian to trust in the principles he espouses; the reader is often similarly captivated. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the novel as a patent recommendation of aestheticism. To the aesthete, there is no distinction between moral and immoral acts, only between those that increase or decrease one's happiness; yet, Dorian Gray refutes this idea, presenting a strong case for the inherent immorality of purely aesthetic lives. Dorian Gray personifies the aesthetic lifestyle in action, pursuing personal gratification with abandon. Yet, while he enjoys these indulgences, his behavior ultimately kills him and others, and he dies unhappier than ever. Rather than an advocate for pure aestheticism, then, *Dorian Gray* is a cautionary tale in which Wilde illustrates the dangers of the aesthetic philosophy when not practiced with prudence. Aestheticism, argues Wilde, too often aligns itself with immorality, resulting in a precarious philosophy that must be practiced deliberately [22].

Dorian Gray is often read as an explicit proclamation of the worthiness of living life in accordance with aesthetic values. This is due in part to the flourishing Aesthetic Movement of

Victorian England at the time of the novel's publication, as well as Oscar Wilde's association with the movement itself [3]. The Aesthetic Movement, which coincided with the Industrial Revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, emphasized the artistic aspect of a man's work in producing a variety of goods, from furniture to machines to literature [3]. Oscar Wilde, however, proposed that the principles of the Aesthetic Movement extend beyond the production of mere commodities. In Joseph Pearce's biography, The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde, Pearce recalls Wilde's own perspective on the popular movement. Speaking of aestheticism, Wilde is quoted:

It is indeed to become a part of the people's life. I mean a man who works with his hands; and not with his hands merely, but with his head and his heart. The evil that machinery is doing is not merely in the consequence of its work but in the fact that it makes men themselves machines also. Whereas, we wish them to be artists, that is to say men [25].

In his exposition of aestheticism, Wilde applies the philosophy in a more universal sense, stressing the positive influences of aestheticism in one's life beyond mere craftsmanship. Just as the machines that mass-produce materials with the intervention of human thought are labeled "evil," Wilde similarly condemns men who act as metaphorical machines, programmed to behave in accordance with society's ideas of propriety rather than allowing themselves to act freely and achieve the greatest amount of happiness. Wilde's eloquent advocacy of an aesthetic lifestyle is paralleled in his depiction of Lord Henry in Dorian Gray. Lord Henry lectured to the impressionable Dorian, "We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. . . . Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden itself" [35]. Wilde, through Lord Henry, laments the stifling nature of his contemporary Victorian society and how the supposed morality it boasts necessitates self-denial and rejection of life's most beautiful aspects. Lord Henry warns that without an enthusiastic embrace of aestheticism, one will perpetually anguish with the desire of precisely what he must deny himself, all for the sake of propriety. This philosophy espoused by Wilde and Lord Henry often leads, not surprisingly, to the conclusion that Dorian Gray is a declaration of Wilde's, promoting the adoption of purely aesthetic lives without qualification. This, however, is too shallow of an interpretation.

Opponents of a purely aesthetic lifestyle will certainly cite what they consider an inevitability: one's desires and impulses, though when acted upon result in a more pleasurable life, will at times be undeniably immoral. It is at these times that the virtues of the wholly aesthetic life become questionable. The ruination of Dorian Gray, the embodiment of unbridled aestheticism, illustrates the immorality of such a lifestyle and gravely demonstrates its consequences. Wilde uses Dorian Gray not as an advertisement for aestheticism, but rather, he

uses Dorian's life to warn against aestheticism's hostility toward morality when uncontrolled. Wilde himself admits, in a letter to the St. James's Gazette, that Dorian Gray "is a story with a moral. And the moral is this: All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment" [34]. Aestheticism does well to condemn the renunciation of desires, but it is an excessive obedience to these desires that is subversively dangerous. Therefore, in the practice of Wilde's aestheticism, forethought and constraint are necessities, yet too often lacking, and without them, one is doomed to suffer the same fate as Dorian Gray.

The character of Dorian Gray and the story of his profound degeneration provide a case study examining the viability of purely aesthetic lives. Dorian lives according to what Lord Henry professes without hesitation, and what Lord Henry inspires Dorian, through persuasive rhetoric, is an attitude indifferent to consequence and altogether amoral. As Wilde writes, Dorian's newfound position is "never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they may be" [33]. Under Lord Henry's mentorship, Dorian, once the epitome of wide-eyed youth, behaves with no regard for the ramifications of his actions, diligently pursuing instant gratification without thought of its implications, whether they be "sweet or bitter."

Dorian's relationship with the actress Sibyl Vane plainly illustrates this marked change in personality. Dorian pursues Sibyl from first sights, intent on acquiring her before he ever attempts to truly know her. Indeed, Dorian's love for Sibyl is overtly superficial, as evidenced by Dorian's own description of his infatuation with Sibyl: "I loved you because you were marvelous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art" [32]. Dorian is not attracted to Sibyl's character of personality, but rather her acting talent and enthralling performances; this is what enchants the aesthetically inclined Dorian. When Sibyl leaves the stage, then, she no longer serves a purpose in Dorian's aesthetic life, and thus, Dorian abandons her unceremoniously. Dorian does not regret informing Sybil that, "Without your art, you are nothing" [32]. The tragedy of Sybil's later suicide, brought about by utter despair at her desertion, is lost on Dorian, who instead enjoys the dramatic intrigue of the occasion. For Dorian, whose uncontrolled aestheticism rejects the concept of morality, the immorality of his actions goes unrecognized. In fact, Dorian declares excitedly, "It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded" [32]. Here, the adverse consequences of aestheticism surface in Dorian's life. In his pursuit of his own pleasures, a distinctly narcissistic

attitude emerges, and the incompatibility of morality and unconditional aestheticism becomes all the more apparent.

The emergence of narcissism in Dorian and its correlation with his newly adopted aesthetic philosophy is integral to Wilde's novel as it emphasizes the frequent hostility between aestheticism and morality that Wilde cautions against. Dorian Gray exposes the immorality of self-absorption, as Dorian's portrait becomes more disfigured with each one of Dorian's selfish acts. This self-absorption, then, appears to be an inevitable consequence of aestheticism. Only a more deliberate practice of aestheticism may harness this egotism and avoid the immorality Dorian embodies. Interestingly, in his essay "Come See About Me: Enchantment of the Double in The Picture of Dorian Gray," Christopher Craft recognizes a mirroring of the Greek myth of Narcissus in the life of Dorian Gray. According to mythology, Narcissus, upon catching a glimpse of his reflection in a pool, becomes so enraptured by it that he stood and admired it endlessly, unmoving for the rest of his life. As Craft notes, this self-absorption "is a commitment that, like Dorian's, graduates fully until death" [9]. Narcissus becomes so infatuated with himself that the rest of world effectively ceases to exist or affect him and, as Craft argues, "it is into precisely this silent delirium that Dorian unwittingly steps" when he allows Lord Henry's aesthetic philosophy to so dominate him [9]. Dorian enjoys a life of eternal youth, with only his portrait aging in parallel with Dorian's immorality; so, as Dorian sinks into the depths of narcissism, he maintains his external beauty, and his portrait degenerates instead. Eventually, as in the myth of Narcissus, such egotism has its consequences. When Dorian, disgusted with the decrepit picture of the supposedly "real" him, destroys it in a fit of anger, Dorian too is destroyed. Wilde writes that after Dorian's death, "it was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was" [33]. In the end, as a testament to the purely aesthetic life, the only legacy Dorian leaves behind - everything that identifies him as who he was - is his superficial jewelry.

There is an argument, then, made by Wilde for a new aestheticism, approached with more constraint than Dorian employs. This argument is based not only in the moral obligation of the individual, but with the betterment of all of society in mind. Matthew Arnold, in his essay "Culture and Anarchy," provides reasoning against the ethos of Lord Henry's aestheticism and an unconditional application of it. Arnold focuses on its detrimental effects on society and the possibility for societal improvement when aesthetic tendencies are properly controlled. There appears to be agreement, then, between Wilde and Arnold; Wilde' novel provides a failed example of the purely aesthetic life, and when scaled to a larger society, a similar result is understandably expected. As Arnold views his contemporary society, it is arranged hierarchically, dividing the aristocrats, the middle-class, and the working-class, all of which,

Arnold laments, are inclined to live hedonistically, pursuing pleasure and only what is comfortable and easy. Dorian Gray embodies just his defect in Arnold's society. Arnold argues, however, that "there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self with a bend for seeing things as they are for simply concerning themselves with reason and the will of God, and doing their best to make these prevail; - for the pursuit, in a word, of perfection" [1]. Arnold is optimistic that some may pursue beyond the immediately pleasurable and act to perfect themselves both morally and intellectually. This pursuit of perfection, however, is likely an arduous and uncomfortable task, and is therefore incompatible with pure aestheticism. Some concessions must be made for the absolute aesthete, then, for such transcendence occur.

Dorian Gray, for much of Wilde's novel, fails to embody Arnold's ideal, as in his hedonistic life he is seen "creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise in the foulest dens in London," despite being once too honorable for such debauchery [34]. Dorian exemplifies a regression in social intellect from his beginnings rather than the kind of transcendence hoped for by Arnold. Dorian displays no such pursuit of intellectual perfection as he is slowly corrupted and in turn corrupts others, luring them with him into the slums and opium dens of London. Arnold refers to those able to transcend social classes in society as "aliens," hinting at their rarity to the point of foreignness and to their almost mythical quality The mere existence of these aliens, however, provides hope that the utter hedonists of society may learn to harness their damaging tendencies, and in doing so, better the intellectual and moral state of humankind.

Wilde, too, recognizes this ability to control the hedonistic temptations associated with aestheticism, as demonstrated by the last stages of Dorian's life. Mitsuharu Matsuoka, in his essay "Aestheticism and Social Anxiety in The Picture of Dorian Gray," notes that, as Dorian's death approaches, "Dorian ultimately reacts against his lifestyle, choking on his New Hedonism," at which point "a great sense of doom hangs over Dorian" [18]. Indeed, Dorian appears to realize the consequences of his unbridled aestheticism; however, he is much too far gone to salvage. Dorian reveals his epiphany to Lord Henry: "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it" [28]. Unfortunately for Dorian, this realization comes too late to save his soul from its degradation, long-nurtured by a purely aesthetic life, and he is destroyed. The realization itself, however, is indicative of Wilde's argument woven throughout Dorian Gray. Despite Wilde's publicly advocating the principles of aestheticism, Dorian's demise illustrates Wilde's recognition that aestheticism needs to be properly controlled. While the pursuit of beauty and happiness in life is always Wilde's ideal, he also implies that the consequences of

one's actions must be thought out and the impact of one's decisions, beyond oneself, must also be carefully considered before acting on any impulse.

3.2. Thems of „The Picture of Dorian Gray".

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

When The Picture of Dorian Gray was first published in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in 1890, it was decried as immoral. In revising the text the following year, Wilde included a preface, which serves as a useful explanation of his philosophy of art. The purpose of art, according to this series of epigrams, is to have no purpose. In order to understand this claim fully, one needs to consider the moral climate of Wilde's time and the Victorian sensibility regarding art and morality. The Victorians believed that art could be used as a tool for social education and moral enlightenment, as illustrated in works by writers such as Charles Dickens and George Gissing. The aestheticism movement, of which Wilde was a major proponent, sought to free art from this responsibility. The aestheticists were motivated as much by a contempt for bourgeois morality - a sensibility embodied in *Dorian Gray* by Lord Henry, whose every word seems designed to shock the ethical certainties of the burgeoning middle class - as they were by the belief that art need not possess any other purpose than being beautiful [32].

If this philosophy informed Wilde's life, we must then consider whether his only novel bears it out. The two works of art that dominate the novel - Basil's painting and the mysterious yellow book that Lord Henry gives Dorian - are presented in the vein more of Victorian sensibilities than of aesthetic ones. That is, both the portrait and the French novel serve a purpose: the first acts as a type of mysterious mirror that shows Dorian the physical dissipation his own body has been spared, while the second acts as something of a road map, leading the young man farther along the path toward infamy. While we know nothing of the circumstances of the yellow book's composition, Basil's state of mind while painting Dorian's portrait is clear. Later in the novel, he advocates that all art be "unconscious, ideal, and remote." His portrait of Dorian, however, is anything but. Thus, Basil's initial refusal to exhibit the work results from his belief that it betrays his idolization of his subject. Of course, one might consider that these breaches of aesthetic philosophy mold The Picture of Dorian Gray into something of a cautionary tale: these are the prices that must be paid for insisting that art reveals the artist or a moral lesson. But this warning is, in itself, a moral lesson, which perhaps betrays the impossibility of Wilde's project. If, as Dorian observes late in the novel, the imagination orders the chaos of life and invests it with meaning, then art, as the fruit of the imagination, cannot help

but mean something. Wilde may have succeeded in freeing his art from the confines of Victorian morality, but he has replaced it with a doctrine that is, in its own way, just as restrictive [33].

The first principle of aestheticism, the philosophy of art by which Oscar Wilde lived, is that art serves no other purpose than to offer beauty. Throughout The Picture of Dorian Gray, beauty reigns. It is a means to revitalize the wearied senses, as indicated by the effect that Basil's painting has on the cynical Lord Henry. It is also a means of escaping the brutalities of the world: Dorian distances himself, not to mention his consciousness, from the horrors of his actions by devoting himself to the study of beautiful things - music, jewels, rare tapestries. In a society that prizes beauty so highly, youth and physical attractiveness become valuable commodities. Lord Henry reminds Dorian of as much upon their first meeting, when he laments that Dorian will soon enough lose his most precious attributes. In Chapter Seventeen, the Duchess of Monmouth suggests to Lord Henry that he places too much value on these things; indeed, Dorian's eventual demise confirms her suspicions. For although beauty and youth remain of utmost importance at the end of the novel - the portrait is, after all, returned to its original form - the novel suggests that the price one must pay for them is exceedingly high. Indeed, Dorian gives nothing less than his soul [33].

It is no surprise that a society that prizes beauty above all else is a society founded on a love of surfaces. What matters most to Dorian, Lord Henry, and the polite company they keep is not whether a man is good at heart but rather whether he is handsome. As Dorian evolves into the realization of a type, the perfect blend of scholar and socialite, he experiences the freedom to abandon his morals without censure. Indeed, even though, as Basil warns, society's elite question his name and reputation, Dorian is never ostracized. On the contrary, despite his "mode of life," he remains at the heart of the London social scene because of the "innocence" and "purity of his face." As Lady Narborough notes to Dorian, there is little (if any) distinction between ethics and appearance: "you are made to be good - you look so good" [34].

The painting and the yellow book have a profound effect on Dorian, influencing him to predominantly immoral behavior over the course of nearly two decades. Reflecting on Dorian's power over Basil and deciding that he would like to seduce Dorian in much the same way, Lord Henry points out that there is "something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence." Falling under the sway of such influence is, perhaps, unavoidable, but the novel ultimately censures the sacrifice of one's self to another. Basil's idolatry of Dorian leads to his murder, and Dorian's devotion to Lord Henry's hedonism and the yellow book precipitate his own downfall. It is little wonder, in a novel that prizes individualism - the uncompromised expression of self - that the sacrifice of one's self, whether it be to another person or to a work of art, leads to one's destruction. [32].

The Mortality of Beauty and Youth

The trouble starts when Henry warns Dorian that his extraordinary beauty and youth will fade, and tells him to make the most of it. Dorian's beauty is such that people are astonished by it and all of his advantages seem to come from it, even if he has got an interesting personality and wealth. With Henry's words ringing in his ears, Dorian immediately views Basil's portrait of him in a new light. Rather than immortalize him, the picture suddenly seems to mock him for not being immortal - the picture won't change, but Dorian himself will. Dorian then becomes aware of time, and aware of his own beauty as a thing that will fade. Before Dorian's realization, when his beauty seemed to him simply a part of him, he was only vaguely aware of it. But once he realizes that it is not something he can hold on to, that it will be taken from him by time, he wants desperately to keep it. In this way, mortality doesn't just destroy beauty and youth, it makes them things to treasure and obsess over because eventually they will be destroyed [32].

Throughout the novel, beauty and death are linked. Dorian loves Sybil because he gets to watch her die onstage in all her passion and then, miraculously, be alive backstage. Her art makes her immortal each and every night. Sybil's actual death by suicide is tragic, but it also gives her a kind of eternal beauty because she was never allowed to age. Dorian, meanwhile, is similarly saved from aging by the supernatural transformation of his portrait, but while his appearance is now beyond mortality this freedom seems to drive Dorian to try to experience every kind of excess, to not care about consequences, to destroy lovers and friends through his influence and callousness. In this way that novel suggests that while mortality will always destroy beauty and youth, that beauty and youth in fact need to be destroyed - that immortal youth beauty, such as is preserved in art, is in fact monstrous in the real world. And, in fact, as Dorian's soul shrivels and he begins to seek and admire ugliness, his own beautiful face comes to seem to him just a hateful reminder of the innocence he has lost [33].

Surfaces, Objects and Appearances

Beauty is skin-deep in Dorian's circle of friends. He is welcomed and adored because of his beautiful appearance and even when his sins ruin lives, he always has a certain power because of his attractiveness. Dorian is at his peak when he is unaware of his own beauty, but when conscious of it, his life becomes about surface and appearance. His taste for fashion grows; he loves tapestries and jewels, very flat, decorative objects [34].

The novel of course revolves around the portrait of Dorian but this is just one of the damaging surfaces that Wilde depicts. Characters' identities and fates are entirely decided by their outward appearance. The owner of Sybil Vane's theater is reduced to a collection of Jewish features and hideous mannerisms, as is his theater reduced to its shabby decor, and in turn it is all redeemed by the beautiful face of Sybil, who herself is putting on a costume. Veils of societal

roles and costumes are worn by everybody in the novel and are made more fatal by the way the characters describe and stereotype each other, never letting each other escape from their narrow identities and appearances. To Lord Henry, even knowing Dorian's sinful behavior, he remains the beautiful boy that he met in Basil's studio because appearance always wins out [34].

Art and the Imitation of Life

The novel opens with a theory of the purpose of art, which Wilde reasons out until he reaches that "all art is quite useless". Whether or not this is some kind of warning from the narrator, we as readers don't know, but what follows certainly seems to illustrate his point. It presents art in many forms and the danger of it when it is taken too literally or believed too deeply. It starts with a painting, which alters the perspectives that look on it and seems to alter itself. Once Basil has attributed to the painting the power of capturing the spirit of Dorian Gray, and once Dorian has attributed to it the power to host and represent his own soul, the painting has a dangerous life of its own. Dorian's romance with the actress Sybil Vane is composed of the romantic characters she played and the drama of each nightly performance. To see the girl die on stage and then find her backstage alive and beautiful is a supernatural kind of existence that cannot last. The danger of seeing life only through the lens of art is that one must stay at a distance or risk ruining the illusion, just like a mirage. This is Dorian's trouble, and Basil's trouble, through these examples we learn that the closer one comes to art, the closer one comes to some kind of death or destruction [24].

The set up of Dorian's world in society and in his own home is full of pictures, stills and images through which we see life frozen or removed. Whether portraits, tapestries, or scenes, these images build up and up in the novel until Dorian's climactic act of stabbing his own painting. It is the ever-present pressure of art - of being a piece of living art himself, and of seeing real life mirrored in the portrait - that destroys Dorian. In addition, as we read the novel, we are aware of the power of the narrator, to embody the characters omnisciently, and to implant repetitions of their particular vocabulary, imitating the influence that Lord Henry's memorable phrases have on Dorian's mind. As a piece of art itself, the novel invites us to question its form and purpose, as the argument of the preface suggests [33].

Influence

The power of one to affect another is a theme that pervades The Picture of Dorian Gray. At first, Basil is influenced by his sitter Dorian. On a personal level, he is confused and changed by his romantic feelings, but Dorian's influence is more far-reaching, actually seeming to change his ability for painting, change the painting itself in an almost supernatural way. Influence here describes an almost chemical change that one can assign to feelings and the perception of a

painting. The same curse befalls Sybil Vane, when she is so influenced by Dorian, and by love, that she is transformed and can no longer act. In fact the whole course of events can be viewed as a series of domino-like influences. When the narrator recounts the series of bad relationships, where Dorian has led an innocent friend astray, the influences spread through the country, knowing no bounds [34].

Influence is also shown in the novel as a persuasive power. It is a less magical effect, of attractive ideas and styles worming their way into others' vocabulary. Lord Henry's philosophies and paradoxes have a hypnotic power on some people, and cause Dorian to seek knowledge and believe in these theories enough that he lives by them. Henry's suggestion that the soul and the senses can mutually cure each other for example arises in Dorian's mind and, out of context, misguides him into thinking that opium could soothe his soul [34].

Women and Men

Lord Henry's philosophies frequently criticize women and marriage, and the era of Dorian Gray's London society and indeed Oscar Wilde's, becomes vivid to us in his dialogue. He says that women are a "decorative sex", and that there are always only a few worth talking to. We see his marriage with Lady Victoria Wotton as a very separate affair, both parties leading distinct lives and meeting the other occasionally. When Victoria dies, Henry expresses sadness and misses her company. Though his description of sadness is far from a romantic declaration, it does seem that a lot of the women provide the male characters with essential and distracting company, and actually, it is the hostesses that at times enable the lifestyles of connection and fashion that men like Henry and Dorian boast of. Ladies like Lady Narborough and the Duchess are the connectors. Henry says of the Duchess Gladys that her clever tongue gets on his nerves, which is comically hypocritical. And she has the same disregard of her husband as the men have for women when she falls in love with Dorian. In this way, she is used to illuminate the actions and paradoxes of the men's world [33].

With women taking somewhat of a back seat in Dorian's tale, the romantic energy between the men takes centre stage. Though there are no explicitly homosexual relationships, there are definitely homoerotic ones, and words like admiration and fascination begin to acquire a double meaning. In a world where beauty is the ideal and knowledge is attractive, the older gentlemen's longing for Dorian and his admiration of them adds another layer of taboo to the secrecy of the characters' private lives [33].

3.3. Symbolization in „The Picture of Dorian Gray".

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The picture of Dorian Gray, “the most magical of mirrors,” shows Dorian the physical burdens of age and sin from which he has been spared. For a time, Dorian sets his conscience aside and lives his life according to a single goal: achieving pleasure. His painted image, however, asserts itself as his conscience and hounds him with the knowledge of his crimes: there he sees the cruelty he showed to Sibyl Vane and the blood he spilled killing Basil Hallward [32].

The homoerotic bonds between men play a large role in structuring the novel. Basil’s painting depends upon his adoration of Dorian’s beauty; similarly, Lord Henry is overcome with the desire to seduce Dorian and mold him into the realization of a type. This camaraderie between men fits into Wilde’s larger aesthetic values, for it returns him to antiquity, where an appreciation of youth and beauty was not only fundamental to culture but was also expressed as a physical relationship between men. As a homosexual living in an intolerant society, Wilde asserted this philosophy partially in an attempt to justify his own lifestyle. For Wilde, homosexuality was not a sordid vice but rather a sign of refined culture. As he claimed rather romantically during his trial for “gross indecency” between men, the affection between an older and younger man places one in the tradition of Plato, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare [34].

The portrait is the main symbol at work here. It's a kind of living allegory, a visible interpretation of Dorian's soul. Basically, the picture represents Dorian's inner self, which becomes uglier with each passing hour and with every crime he commits. It is the image of Dorian's true nature and, as his soul becomes increasingly corrupt, its evil shows up on the surface of the canvas. It seems that Dorian is not completely free of the picture's influence: as it becomes uglier and uglier, Dorian pretty much loses it. It becomes a kind of conscience, and it reminds Dorian constantly of the evil at the heart of his nature [33].

The Color White

Interestingly, Dorian’s trajectory from figure of innocence to figure of degradation can be charted by Wilde’s use of the color white. White usually connotes innocence and blankness, as it does when Dorian is first introduced. It is, in fact, “the white purity” of Dorian’s boyhood that Lord Henry finds so captivating. Basil invokes whiteness when he learns that Dorian has sacrificed his innocence, and, as the artist stares in horror at the ruined portrait, he quotes a biblical verse from the Book of Isaiah: “Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as white as snow.” But the days of Dorian’s innocence are over. It is a quality he now eschews, and, tellingly, when he orders flowers, he demands “as few white ones as possible.” When the color appears again, in the form of James Vane’s face - “like a white handkerchief” - peering in through a window, it has been transformed from the color of innocence to the color of death. It is

this threatening pall that makes Dorian long, at the novel's end, for his "rose-white boyhood," but the hope is in vain, and he proves unable to wash away the stains of his sins [33].

The Opium Dens

The opium dens, located in a remote and derelict section of London, represent the sordid state of Dorian's mind. He flees to them at a crucial moment. After killing Basil, Dorian seeks to forget the awfulness of his crimes by losing consciousness in a drug-induced stupor. Although he has a canister of opium in his home, he leaves the safety of his neat and proper parlor to travel to the dark dens that reflect the degradation of his soul [22].

James Vane

James Vane is less a believable character than an embodiment of Dorian's tortured conscience. As Sibyl's brother, he is a rather flat caricature of the avenging relative. Still, Wilde saw him as essential to the story, adding his character during his revision of 1891. Appearing at the dock and later at Dorian's country estate, James has an almost spectral quality. Like the ghost of Jacob Marley in Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol, who warns Scrooge of the sins he will have to face, James appears with his face "like a white handkerchief" to goad Dorian into accepting responsibility for the crimes he has committed [28].

The Yellow Book

Lord Henry gives Dorian a copy of the yellow book as a gift. Although he never gives the title, Wilde describes the book as a French novel that charts the outrageous experiences of its pleasure-seeking protagonist (we can fairly assume that the book in question is Joris-Karl Huysman's decadent nineteenth-century novel À Rebours, translated as "Against the Grain" or "Against Nature"). The book becomes like holy scripture to Dorian, who buys nearly a dozen copies and bases his life and actions on it. The book represents the profound and damaging influence that art can have over an individual and serves as a warning to those who would surrender themselves so completely to such an influence [24].

This is a thinly veiled reference to J.K. Huysmans' À Rebours ("Against Nature"), an incredibly important novel of the Decadent period. In both the original text and Wilde's summary of it, its incredibly wealthy protagonist devotes his life to seeking as many aesthetic sensations as he can, regardless of what society says. He is a representation of what Dorian could become - a robotic being with no true emotions and no true relationships - looking for only the next new sensation. Upon reading it, Dorian sees aspects of his own life reflected back at him in this character's life. However, Wilde made some notable changes (like the explicit mention of the protagonist's lost beauty, which just makes Dorian even more scared that he'll lose his looks) to make it more fitting to his novel [28].

Most importantly, the yellow book represents the "poisonous" influence Lord Henry has on Dorian; Henry gives the book to Dorian as a kind of experiment, and it works horrifyingly well. Its hedonistic, decadent message makes it a kind of guide book for Dorian, who lives his whole life in pursuit of its ideals. Ultimately, as we're reminded, it's Lord Henry's fault for poisoning Dorian with the book, which comes to stand in for all of Henry's extravagant, selfish, dangerously seductive philosophical ideas [28].

3.4. Inspiration of modern people (The influence of Oscar Wilde's morality and aestheticism on modern people).

With the rapid development of science and technology, on one hand people's material living standard has been improved to a great extent, but on the other hand people's spiritual living standard has not been cultivated at the same level. Some statistics and reports show that more and more people's spiritual factors are not in the state of balance and stability. Thus their spiritual ecological systems do not run in the right orbit [27].

In The Picture of Dorian Gray, Dorian Gray indulged himself in the pursuit of keeping up appearances such as handsome appearance, fine clothes and good postures, but he did not cared about his internal goodness at all. To some extent, Dorian's life style in the novel alludes to the life style of some modern people. Individualism, utilitarianism, money worship, and consumerism prevail in some places among some people. Some people would probably become dishonest and greedy for more profit. Empty promises, deception and immoral conducts intensify the conflicts between one person and another. Although the modern people can pick up their mobile phones to call a person at any time, the spiritual distance between one person to another is becoming farther and farther. At present, the cases of committing suicide, taking drugs, divorce, melancholia, extramarital relationship has become more and more obvious. Nowadays so many people are the reproductions of Dorian Gray. It is not difficult for us to make a conclusion that such bad things result from the abnormal spiritual ecological system [20].

Dorian Gray's ending up in committing suicide strike fear into our hearts. In order to live longer and happier, we must and have to be fully aware of what we did and what we will do. We must try our best to make our spiritual ecological system run in the right orbit and maintain the balance and stability of the spiritual factors [27]. We should appreciate all that our friends did for us and in turn, we are supposed to help our friends when they need our help. We are expected to love our lovers sincerely. The internal goodness like noble soul, polite behaviors and good character is indispensable to each excellent citizen. We should always think about what we can contribute to our family, to the people around us and to the society.

At the same time, the government is expected to make its any effort to improve people's spiritual ecological system; the journalists and the public media are supposed to play their part in this issue: they should keep the citizens well-informed of the potential harm of the abnormal spiritual ecological system; we should be fully aware of what is a real and normal human being. Each human being must and have to own the ability to love his lovers, to love his friends and to love each person around him, gain the correct aesthetic ethic to live a normal life, and obtain the necessary ability to develop our own desire in the right orbit. Only does a person's spiritual ecological system runs in order, he can live normally and make contributions to others, to the society [20].

Conclusions

Aestheticism is a Victorian literary movement that was begun in the late 19th century in opposition to the dominance of scientific thinking and defiance of the widespread indifference and hostility to any art that was not useful or did not reach moral values. Followers of the movement believed that art should not be mixed with social, political, or moral teaching. Aestheticism had its roots in France, but it gained widespread importance in England in the last half of the nineteenth century, where it helped change the Victorian practice of including moral lessons in literature. For many 20th century authors, the ideas of aestheticism - the view of the autonomy of a work of art, the emphasis on craft and artistry, and the concept of a text as an end in itself - become essential to their writing. Oscar Wilde was one of the best-known „aesthetes" of the late 19th century.

In conclusion, Oscar Wilde makes great contribution to the world literature by inheriting and developing aesthetic views in his literary theories and literary creation. It was his conviction that art transcends life; life was the imitation of art; there was no relation between art and morality; art and artists had no obligation other than to strive for beauty. This thoughts were also typical for his brilliant novel The Picture of Dorian Gray.

It is known that there is always a reason of the movements or trends in any field. Oscar Wilde's aestheticism and morality are results from the combined effects of the social, economic, literary and morality factors.

To Oscar Wilde using aestheticism was like a cure for the social evils and literal degradation, he particularly regards art as a sacred symbol of beauty. He attached great importance to his aestheticism. Through his life, he had written many works of art to practice aestheticism.

Oscar Wilde's philosophy of art was well expressed in his novel The Picture of Dorian Gray. He presented his ideas clearly in the preface in the work and produces the book based on his literary theory.

Wilde wrote his book in a symbolic way. He used symbols and conflicts to materialize the themes and demonstrate the relationship between art and life, between aestheticism and morality. Art in this aesthete's opinion, is just for art's sake. The conclusion is that: art transcendes life. The language used in the novel including vivid descriptions and witty dialogues gives distinction to Oscar Wilde as a master of creating art that is beauty.

In a word, The picture of Dorian Gray is a masterpiece of Oscar Wilde's aestheticism.

However, we can draw some inspiration from the spirit of „art for art' sake". We developed some good qualities of Oscar Wilde's aestheticism, which teaches us the importance to pursue , truth and kindness.

The main aim of the thesis was to find the conflict between aestheticism and morality through Oscar Wilde's best known novel. It was realised by the detailed analyses of the main characters and chapters of the novel.

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Резюме

Естетизм, це тенденція в англійській літературі, яка сформувалася наприкінці 19 століття. Особливість естетизму полягала у тому, що він, перебуваючи поза рамками пересічної моралі, діяв лише у сфері мистецтва та літератури, де "дозволене" і "недозволене" диктувалося волею митця і підлягало тільки суду естетичних законів. Художники і письменники естетичного руху вважали, що мистецтва повинні доставляти нам вишукане чуттєве задоволення, а зовсім не передавати повчальні або сентиментальні послання. Коріння естетизму йдуть у романтизм, сам же він з'явився реакцією на вікторіанську епоху, тим самим передбачаючи модернізм. Естетизм виявив переваги художньої вигадки, уяви і майстерності художника перед копією життя. Творчі здобутки митців цього напряму мали значний вплив на розвиток мистецтва XX століття. Найяскравішим представником естетизму став Оскар Уайльд, який вважав, що мистецтво живе своїм життям незалежно від дійсності і тому перебуває в опозиції до свого часу, що життя наслідує мистецтво, а не навпаки.

Отже, Оскар Уайльд зробив великий внесок в світову літературу зі своїми літературними теоріями і літературною творчістю. Він вважав, що мистецтво перевершує життя; життя імітація мистецтва; немає ніякого зв'язку між мистецтвом і мораллю; мистецтво і художник немає ніяких зобов’язків, окрім того як прагнути до прекрасного.

Естетські крайності О. Уайльда, безсумнівно, впадають в око, але очевидний і непримиренний протест, заснований на твердій позиції художника, що враховує історію мистецтва, умови його розвитку й реальний стан. Позиція Оскара Уайльда очевидна: він проти приземленості, "наслідування правді", міщанських прописів і порожньої риторики. Словом, проти всього того, що, претендуючи на місце в мистецтві, мистецтвом не є. Ця особливість позиції й поглядів О. Уайльда знайшла вираження в його романі "Портрет Доріана Грея".

Ми можемо зробити висновки, що естетизм Оскара Уайльда вчить нас важливості дотримувати доброти і правди.

Основна мета даної роботи полягала в тому, щоб знайти конфлікт між естетизмом і мораллю через найвідоміший роман Оскара Уайльда. Це вдалося з допомогою детальних аналізів головних героїв і глав роману.

Nyilatkozat

Alulírott, Kóré Dóra angol nyelv és irodalom szakos hallgató, kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán, a Nyelvészeti Tanszéken készítettem, angoltanári diploma megszerzése végett.

Kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatot más szakon korábban nem védtem meg, saját munkám eredménye, és csak a hivatkozott forrásokat (szakirodalom, eszközök stb.) használtam fel. Tudomásul veszem, hogy dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola könyvtárában a kölcsönözhető könyvek között helyezik el.