

PALACKY UNIVERZITY OLOMOUČ

Faculty of Arts

Department of English and American Studies

Gothic Presence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Gotická přítomnost v díle *Obraz Doriana Graye*

Bachelor Thesis

Iva Svobodová

English Philology

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2016

I hereby declare and confirm with my signature that this bachelor's thesis is exclusively the result of my own autonomous work based on the literature, which is seen in the notes and bibliography used.

In Olomouc

**I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Ema Jelínková PhD.,
for her patient guidance, encouragement and advice.**

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Gothic as Genre	6
2.1 Gothic, Broad Term, Wide Connotations.....	6
2.2 Early Gothic Conformity which is to Shatter.....	7
2.3 Gothic Origins.....	8
2.4 Victorian Era; an Ideal Source for the Gothic.....	11
3. Oscar Wilde, Rise and Fall	15
3.1 Family Background.....	15
3.2 Education.....	15
3.3 The Aesthete.....	16
3.4 Double Life, Consequent Downfall.....	17
3.5 Major Works.....	18
4. The Picture of Dorian Gray, a Novel with Gothic Traits	20
4.1 Introduction.....	20
4.2 Preface as a Hint.....	21
4.3 Setting.....	22
4.4 Characters.....	25
4.4.1 Basil Hallward.....	25
4.4.2 Lord Henry Wotton.....	27
4.4.3 Dorian Gray.....	29
4.4.5 Sybil Vane.....	35
4.4.6 James Vane.....	35
4.5 Homosexual Undertones.....	36
4.6 The Presence of Horror and Terror.....	38
5. Conclusion	41
6. Summary	44
7. Bibliography	46
8. Annotation	49

1. Introduction

Oscar Wilde, the name which stirred Victorian society, belongs to a man who was everything but conventional. He represented a dandy, an aesthete, a master of conversation, a wit whose work still fascinates its readers. His work could be defined by the term aphorism which he so often used. The works treat serious things frivolously. But this thesis argues that Wilde also belongs to the authors of Gothic genre. The Gothic features are to be examined in his only novel, *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*.

The opening of this thesis is to define the term Gothic. The term does not fit a precise definition. In the domain of literature it enabled crossing boundaries between the acceptable and the tabooed, the civilised and the barbaric, and between the present and the past. The genre has retained its popularity ever since its emergence in 1764 when Horace Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*. The early works followed a convention. It featured a common setting of decaying castles, ruins and abbeys distancing the story into the past. There were stock characters as a powerful villain persecuting his victim. Commonly, the works used supernatural elements of various forms. Moreover, the gothic fiction frequently produced extreme feelings in the reader, namely the terror and horror. The chapter also focuses on the portrayal of the gothic in the Victorian era. The Victorian gothic breaks with the early conventions of the genre. The setting of the removed past is replaced with the English domestic setting. The attention is directed inwards, exploring the psyche of the characters. The triumph of Victorian era is juxtaposed with the dangers of science, imperialism and the regress to the lower state, similar to beast.

The next chapter covers Oscar Wilde's descent from fame to shame, dealing with the decisive aspects of his life. It begins with his prominent family background which is followed by his advances in education. During the studies at Oxford, he adopted his life-long appreciation of beauty which were emphasized by his professors: John Ruskin and more prominently by Walter Pater. After the studies, he settles in London where he came to be known as a leader of aesthetic movement. The publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890 provoked outrage and harsh reviews, being attacked for its immorality. However, the

successive comedies brought him a huge success which he did not enjoy long. The triumph followed fall when the secrecy of his double life was brought to light. Consequently Wilde, a married man, a father and above all a discovered homosexual was sentenced to two years of hard labour in Reading. Three years later after his release he dies a broken man in exile, in a cheap hotel in Paris. Yet his legacy is still alive bringing smile to one's lips and wrinkles to one's forehead.

The fourth chapter seeks to develop arguments which prove that the novel belongs to the Gothic genre. It is to analyse the features which the work shares with the early Gothic fiction as well as the features which are characteristic of the Victorian Gothic.

2. Gothic as a Genre

2.1 Broad Term, Wide Connotations

To classify a literary piece as Gothic raises the question what the term “Gothic” means. Variety seems to typify Gothic referring to domains such as art, architecture and literature. Throughout eighteenth century Gothic was given diverse connotations. At first, Gothic was negatively associated with Visigoths, a northern European tribe, which destroyed The Roman Empire in the fifth century. The event caused not only destruction of the nation, but also the end of “order, reason, refinement” and the victory of “savage, illiterate, irrational people.”¹

On the contrary, when England sought to distinguish its “national, political and cultural identity,” Goths were represented as “a freedom-loving, northern European tribe, who were posited as ancestors of an emerging Protestant, democratic tradition.”² The incorporation of “Gothicism” into “national identity” brought revival of “chivalry and romance” which acquired positive connotation since they designated “the nation’s history, the values of an indigenous heritage against an overly sophisticated, artificial European culture . . .”³ This new appreciation of Gothic came to be identified with medieval culture representing “the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to, or was opposed to or resisted to establishment of civilised valued and a well-regulated society.”⁴

In terms of literature, Gothic might be understood as a reaction against Augustan literature. The Augustan writers gave prominence to rationality and reason as opposed to “the wild and uncivilised⁵ Gothic style. Augustan style seek to apply rigid form governed by reason whereas the Gothic allowed excess and exaggeration . . . ,”⁶ becoming “a mode of writing capable of undermining cultural,

¹ Susan Chaplin, *Gothic Literature: Texts, Contexts, Connections* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2011) 9.

² Ibid. 31.

³ Ibid. 31-32.

⁴ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. (Harrow: Longman, 1996) 5.

⁵ Ibid. 5.

⁶ Ibid. 5.

historical and literary conceptualisations of past and present, civilisation and barbarism, old romance and new literary realism.”⁷

2.2 Early Gothic Conformity which is to shatter

The early Gothic fiction tends to follow a single pattern featuring fascination with past which is projected into a prototypical setting of haunted castles, ruins, abbeys. Rooms as dark passages, battlements are part of these medieval buildings helping to cause apprehension and anxiety. Such environment is typically dominated by a “Gothic villain” who evokes ambivalent feelings, being:

awe-inspiring, endlessly resourceful in pursuit of his often opaquely evil ends, and yet possessed of a mysterious attractiveness, he stalks from the pages of one Gothic novel to another; manipulating the doom of others while the knowledge of his own eventual fate surrounds him like the monastic habit and cowl which he so often wore.⁸

The villain becomes archetype who embodies evil taking various forms of vampires, werewolves, monsters, monk or a tyrannical father who hunts an innocent victim. The heroine represents the opposite stock character which possesses the contradictory qualities of being both sensitive and liable to faint from terrors, nevertheless she has the strength to endure dangers. Among other generic features the Gothic fiction portrays belong dark mysteries, the problems of lineage. Also, the importance is given to the supernatural element, together with the effect of suspense.⁹ Gothic literature is engaged with

recapture of history; a particular kind of literary style; a version of self-conscious un-realism; a mode of revealing the unconscious; connections with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed . . .¹⁰

⁷ Chaplin 2-3.

⁸ Punter 9-10.

⁹ Ibid. 1.

¹⁰ Ibid. 4.

Gothic can with the means of distancing the story from the present to the past uncover human desires which might be avoided in other genres. The genre can evoke strong feelings of suspense.

2.3 Gothic Origins

Gothic fiction typically designate authors who produced their works between 1760s and 1820s such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis . . .¹¹ Their works typify the revival of the medieval romance which features fantasy, setting in the past and delivers chivalric moral code.¹² Another genre which the Gothic fiction drew from is sentimental novel which put virtuous women of sensitive nature into difficult situations.¹³ However, the domestic English setting is replaced with that of “ruined abbeys, convents, caves, dark forests and rugged mountain landscapes [which] become the setting for persecutions . . . to elicit not only heightened emotion, but terror in the protagonist and the reader.”¹⁴

The birth of Gothic novel dates back to 1764 when Horace Walpole published *A Castle of Otranto*, which can be characterised as “the blending of old romance with conventions of the emerging eighteenth-century realist novel.”¹⁵ The novel adopted a subtitle “Gothic Story,” which shows that the author identifies the work with the term Gothic. Moreover, the fascination with Gothic tempted the rich to imitate the medieval gothic castles, the example of which represents Walpole’s Strawberry Hill.

However, the circumstances surrounding the publication illustrate the ambiguous attitude toward the genre. The author decided not to admit the authorship. Instead, he published his work as a novel from sixteenth century printed in Naples which was praised as a medieval novel. Nevertheless, once Walpole revealed his authorship the book suddenly became incompatible with its author, considered an inappropriate work of a gentleman. *Castle of Otranto* established a common part of Gothic fiction, the preface, where “the author or a

¹¹ Punter 7.

¹² Chaplin 13.

¹³ Ibid. 47.

¹⁴ Ibid. 48.

¹⁵ Ibid. 2.

fictitious “editor” . . . make certain claims in relation to the main body of the text.”¹⁶ They either “establish a certain authenticity or authority for the narrative,”¹⁷ or “they attempt to justify to the reader the author’s motivations for publishing a work of Gothic fiction.”¹⁸

The authors drew their inspiration from William Shakespeare, the “Gothic Bard,” whom Walpole sees as “a writer capable of marrying tragedy with comedic interludes, and the fantastical with psychological realism.”¹⁹ Variations of the ghost of Hamlet’s father commonly appear in Gothic works in order to identify the usurper. Ann Radcliffe, called “the Shakespeare of Romance,” uses the words of the ghost “I could a tale unfold” in the epigraph in the novel *A Sicilian Romance* to indicate the anticipated themes of “misrule, sexual and political corruption, and the restoration of a proper genealogy.”²⁰

Gothic fiction frequently uses two distinguished techniques to evoke extreme emotions of dread and anxiety, namely “terror” and “horror” which are commonly confused. Ann Radcliffe applied “terror” in her works, being the representative of the “terror” technique. The feeling of “terror” designates the anticipating encounter with the source of terror which is, however, not to be experienced. The “terror” is represented by glimpses of apparitions which disappear or by mysterious noises. On the contrary, the “horror” is characterised by a complete experience of the horrible. Radcliffe’s essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry” highlights a dominant moral position of “terror” with respect to “horror” which she considers to be inferior²¹, arguing “where terror expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life, horror contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.”²² The essay also deals with the relation between the sublime and “terror” which was depicted by Edmund Burke in his work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Radcliffe agrees with Burke’s claim: “To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any

¹⁶ Ibid. 188.

¹⁷ Ibid. 189.

¹⁸ Ibid. 189.

¹⁹ Ibid. 11.

²⁰ Ibid. 12-13.

²¹ Ibid. 45.

²² Nick Groom, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 77-78.

danger . . . a great deal of the apprehension vanishes.”²³ Burke ascribes the strongest emotions to the influence of “terror” stating:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the idea of pain or danger, that is to say, whatever in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible subjects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.²⁴

Nick Groom divides the sublime, “the limits of rationality”, into “seven types of obscurity”, distinguishing:

1. meteorological (mists, clouds, wind, rain, storm, tempest, smoke, darkness, shadows, gloom);

2. topographical (impenetrable forests, inaccessible mountains, chasms, gorges, deserts, blasted heaths, icefields, the boundless ocean);

3. architectural (towers, prisons, castles covered in gargoyles and crenellations, abbeys and priories, tombs, crypts, dungeons, ruins, graveyards, mazes, secret passages, locked doors);

4. material (masks, veils, disguises, billowing curtains, suits of armour, tapestries);

5. textual (riddles, rumours, folklore, unreadable manuscripts and inscriptions, ellipses, broken texts, fragments, clotted language, polysyllabism, obscure dialect, inserted narratives, stories-within-stories);

6. spiritual (religious mystery, allegory and symbolism, Roman catholic ritual, mysticism, freemasonry, magic and the occult, Satanism, witchcraft, summonings, damnation);

7. psychological (dreams, visions, hallucinations, drugs, sleep-walking, madness, split personalities, mistaken identities, doubles, derangement, ghostly presences, forgetfulness, death, hauntings).²⁵

The works do not necessarily employ all of these obscure features. In contrast with Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) applies the “horror”

²³ Quoted in Angela Wright, *Gothic Fiction* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 40.

²⁴ Quoted in Punter 39.

²⁵ Groom 77-78.

technique which is characterised by a complete experience of the horrible, exploring the

violent, brutal, and sensational. Fears are horribly realized: characters are raped, murdered, and tortured. Supernatural forces are externalized: *The Monk* includes an animated corpse, demonic doubles, madness, live burial, and the Devil is summoned using a book of witchcraft. Lewis reveals in excess and corruption- the aesthetics of decay in its most lurid physical, moral, and social forms- and perpetually eroticizes his narratives with a perverse sexuality of voyeurism and role-play.²⁶

It seems that diversity, so typical for Gothic fiction, was already present in the works of the first Gothic writers for they differed in their concept of the Gothic. For instance, Radcliffe stands in contrast to Walpole because she does not use any forms of supernatural in her works and if there is any indication of it, she gives a realistic explanation at the end of the novels. Lewis, on the other hand employs a horrible violence, the supernatural element, moreover he explicitly portray sexual perversion.

2.4 Victorian Era as an Ideal Source for the Gothic

Victorian era commonly designate the long period of reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 till her death in 1901 which saw the nation's significant achievements together with a consequent decline. Britain represented a supreme nation for which the growth seems to epitomize the epoch. The rapid development in areas of industry, trade and banking went hand in hand with the urban development marked by the growth of major cities, most notably London. Moreover, the size of the empire reached its peak during this age.

The spirit of the age was demonstrated at the Great Exhibition in 1851 which highlighted British supremacy portraying the nation as superpower which spread virtue. The high self-esteem of the nation evoked the sense of "Englishness." Prince Albert, the Queen's husband, stressed the purpose of the exhibition: "it should not merely be useful and ornamental; it should preach a high

²⁶ Groom 85.

moral lesson.”²⁷ Indeed, morality represented a prominent quality which was embedded in another term so common for Victorians, i.e. respectability, meaning:

sobriety, thrift, cleanliness of person and tidiness of home, good manners, respect for law, honesty in business affairs, and . . . chastity. Exercise of all these tended to content one's mind and, equally important, to invite the approbation of others. It was like living in a state of grace on earth.”²⁸

Respectability was strengthened by the highly-evaluated “seriousness.” “To be serious was to cherish Evangelical religious views; more generally, a serious person was puritanically opposed to the vanities and frivolities of life, devoid of humo[u]r, and intolerant of others’ frivolity and indulgences.”²⁹ Oscar Wilde mocked the Victorian seriousness in his comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* giving it a subtitle *A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*. The play also explores the application of sincerity which was also one of the Victorian virtues.

However, the prevailing optimism in the further development was threatened by a darker side underlying the progress. The English supremacy was questioned by Charles Darwin who introduced a groundbreaking theory of evolution in his work *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which “put mankind back into nature, implicitly denying the distinction which religion had traditionally set up between humanity and the animals.”³⁰ The work blurred the refined distinction between man and animal, claiming: “Man . . . still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.”³¹ This “confrontation of religion and natural science produced an atmosphere of secularism and scepticism.”³² However, Darwin awakened interest in science which was since then believed to explain everything.

In contrast, Victorian Gothic writers took interest in “forbidden or dangerous knowledge, . . . the circulation of blood, discoveries in electricity, the fashion for cranology (phrenology), the effects of drugs, and Darwinian evolution

²⁷ Quoted in Ronald Carter, and John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001) 255.

²⁸ Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas; a Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*. (New York: Norton, 1973) 175.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 175.

³⁰ Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890* (London: Longman, 1993) 131.

³¹ Quoted in Carter 256.

³² Altick 15.

all became Gothic—a particularly medical form of the Gothic.”³³ Stevenson examines the fears of degeneration into a primitive state in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Through science Jekyll manages to release his suppressed self, turning into a savage Hyde, depicted as “hardly human . . . troglodytic . . .”³⁴ Stevenson not only deals with the misuse of science, but more importantly he turns the attention inwards, exploring the evil aspects of humans through Jekyll’s monstrous double, Mr. Hyde. Also, the work discusses the issue of social status which the Victorians valued so highly. Jekyll struggles with morality which his position of a doctor imposed upon him. The dreadful atmosphere is intensified through the domestic setting of London which replaced the exotic setting from the past which used to be the typical place of terrors.

Although imperialism was understood as a mission of spreading Victorian virtue and morality, Victorian writers focused on the contradictions of that purpose. Joseph Conrad took a gloomy perspective of colonisation in his novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), seeing it as exploitation of the indigenous people. The narrator’s idea of imperialism opposes the supposedly noble intentions stating:

The conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.³⁵

The novella’s nightmarish scenes perhaps best characterizes the exclamation of the dying coloniser Kurtz: “The horror! The horror!”³⁶

Imperialism enabled mixing the races which was seen as a source of degeneration as well.³⁷ Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847) becomes wealthy after marrying a creole from Jamaica, Bertha Mason, whom Jane describes as “fearful and ghastly . . . the foul German spectre—the Vampyre.”³⁸ Apart from the fortune Rochester imported disease as well for his wife was mad. The death of Bertha comes as a relief “liberating . . . from the hellish burden of Empire that Rochester

³³ Groom 92.

³⁴ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: The Merry Men and Other Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1993) 13.

³⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1989) 31-32.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 111.

³⁷ Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 4.

³⁸ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 1994) 281.

has brought to England.”³⁹

Apparently, Victorian Gothic echoed the uncertainties surrounding the age. Man was no longer regarded superior species due to the primitive origin and the prevailing fear of degeneration. There was an interest in the human psyche which might have hidden evil aspects and its contrast to the importance of being moral. Imperialism no longer serves as civilising element, rather as a mode to exploit the natives who were considered inferior.

³⁹ Brantlinger 107.

3. Oscar Wilde, Rise and Fall

The last decades of Victorian era witnessed the rise and fall of Oscar Wilde, the man who lived up to his claim “I’ll be a poet, a writer, a dramatist. Somehow or other, I’ll be famous, and if not famous, notorious.”⁴⁰

3.1 Family Background

He was born in Dublin in 1854 to a respectable family of Sir William Wilde, highly esteemed doctor and Jane Wilde, Irish writer and nationalist. Their household would become the hub of Dublin intellectuals, holding parties in which young Oscar would practice conversation which he would later master.⁴¹ He came under the influence of the parents. His father exposed him to Irish folklore.⁴² On the other hand, his mother adopted radical attitude towards life stating “I should like to rage through life—this orthodox creeping is too tame for me—ah this rebellious nature of mine”⁴³, which Wilde would later embrace. Moreover, he shared his mother’s pleasure at inventing his real age.⁴⁴ Apparently, the mother’s impact would decide his future.

3.2 Education

Although Wilde’s opinion on education shows very little respect: “Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught,”⁴⁵ it became the environment in which he could excel. He attended Portora Royal School where his character demonstrated its indifference to physical activities, “I never liked to kick or be kicked,”⁴⁶ interest in fashion as he was wearing bright shirts and a deep pleasure for reading. His remarkable school achievements enabled him to enter Trinity

⁴⁰ Quoted in Hesketh Pearson, *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen&, 1947) 35.

⁴¹ R. Thurston Hopkins, *Oscar Wilde: A Study of the Man and His Work* (London: Lynwood &, 1913) 28.

⁴² Arthur Ransome, *Oscar Wilde: A Crit. Study*, 1st ed. (London: Methuen&, 1913) 27.

⁴³ Quoted in Richard Elmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1988) 8.

⁴⁴ Elmann 6.

⁴⁵ Oscar Wilde, *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems* (London: Campbell, 1991) 11.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Pearson 18.

College, Dublin. There he would expand his knowledge of Greek authors and culture as a student of Professor Mahaffy with whom he later travelled Greece. Also he already distinguished himself as a dandy who celebrated the unconventional.⁴⁷

After three years of considerable accomplishments in Classical studies at Trinity College, Wilde gains a scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford. There he identifies himself with the ideas of John Ruskin and more significantly with the views of Walter Pater. Both of the scholars were concerned with aesthetic theories emphasizing the importance of beauty, nevertheless it is Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* with its assertion "the love of art for art's own sake" which Wilde would adhere to.⁴⁸ Wilde established himself as an excellent host who could dominate conversation at parties.

His earlier trip to Greece gave him advantage in Newdigate Prize Poem as the topic was Ravenna, which he explored with Mahaffy. He completed his studies with a growing reputation.⁴⁹

3.3 The Aesthete

After the Oxford experience Wilde settles in London which he determined to astonish. His earlier association with aestheticism deepened when he came to be known as the voice of the Aesthetic Movement. The movement opposed the conventional approach to art and craft as well as to the behaviour and tendencies of majority building on the principles of Pre-Raphaelites who believed "that all the arts were intimately related to one another."⁵⁰ The representatives of the movement varied in their conception of the aestheticism including distinctive personalities as Swinburne, Pater, Whistler . . .⁵¹ Oscar Wilde symbolized the spirit of the movement refusing "Ruskin's moral purpose in art in favour of beauty of form, and . . . cultivated artificial (if witty) styles of speech and manner and eccentricity of dress."⁵² Moreover, because he lived according the aesthetic

⁴⁷ Elmann 32.

⁴⁸ Pearson 27-30.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 41.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 44.

⁵¹ Ibid. 43-44.

⁵² Roger Gower, *Past into Present: An Anthology of British and American Literature* (London: Longman, 1995) 222.

principles e.g. delighting in original colourful costumes, he was chosen to lecture on Art in America in 1882.⁵³ The instant success of his lectures was caused by Wilde's ability to charm the audience with his sparkling conversation skills which both amused and provoked the people. His performances attracted the public attention namely the magazine *Punch* which mocked his role as an aesthete. More importantly, the production of the play *Patience* attacked the aesthetic movement. Still, the saying: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."⁵⁴ shows he was glad that the public was interested in him.

3.4 Double Life, Consequent Downfall

Wilde won sympathies of the younger generation representing a model who highlighted beauty, was witty, expressed "love of paradox", being "a really genial and kindly nature, which seemed to be at variance with his egotism, self-assertion and love of notoriety."⁵⁵ His habits did not change since he left Oxford because he stayed hospitable, spending money on parties and friends slipping into debt. A turning point came when he married Constance Mary Lloyd in 1883 whose dowry allowed them to decorate their house in high style.⁵⁶ Although they had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan whom Wilde loved, his repute dragged him to the life of indulgence.

Wilde established several homosexual relationships such as with Robert Ross, but the relationship which turned out to be fatal was with Lord Alfred Douglas. The marquis of Queensberry, Douglas' father, damaged Wilde's reputation calling him homosexual resulting in a case in which Wilde was found guilty, being sentenced to two years of hard labour after which the public turned hostile. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was used against him at the court. Consequently, he spent six months at Wandsworth Prison then he was transferred to Reading Gaol.⁵⁷ There, suffering from being separated from his wife and children, Wilde looks back on his life in a letter to Alfred Douglas, *De Profundis*:

⁵³ Ransome 29.

⁵⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2001) 6.

⁵⁵ Pearson 57.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 114.

⁵⁷ Pearson 315-18.

The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. . . I ceased be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.⁵⁸

In spite of the hardship Wilde did not lose his principles: “I don’t regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does.”⁵⁹

When he was released in 1897, he was a devastated man. He emigrated to France adopting a new name, Sebastian Melmoth, but he could only live on his friends expenses never recovering from his imprisonment. After three years of desolate life Oscar Wilde died on November 30,1900.

3.5 Major Works

Wilde’s works classify him as a literary critic, novelist, poet and playwright. The notion of aestheticism characterises his prose by a “sense of the superiority of art to life and its lack of obligation to any standards of mimesis.”⁶⁰ The publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890 first in Lippincott’s Magazine and a year later in a book form marked a decisive point in Wilde’s career. The reviews criticized the work for corrupting influence, however, Wilde defends the work stating: “My story is an essay on decorative art. It reacts against the brutality of plain realism. It is poisonous if you like, but you cannot deny that it is also perfect, and perfection is what we artists aim at.”⁶¹ Wilde denied the presumed immorality of the book “Yes, there is a terrible moral in *Dorian Gray*—a moral which the prurient will not be able to find in it, but it will be revealed to all whose minds are healthy. Is this an artistic error? I fear it is. It is the only error

⁵⁸ Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1905) 22-23.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 64-65.

⁶⁰ The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 6th ed., Vol. 2. (New York: Norton, 1993) 1616.

⁶¹ Pearson 148.

in the book.”⁶² The Preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which first appeared separately, deals with the concept of independence of art and morality.⁶³

The plays which were produced between 1892 and 1895 won him public recognition. Contemporary drama did not suit him hence in 1891 he wrote *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which he called “one of those modern drawing-room plays with pink lampshades,”⁶⁴ was seen as triumph. His fame increased with the following plays: *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, reaching the peak with *The Importance of Being Earnest* which “ridicules everything that human beings take seriously: birth, baptism, love, marriage, death, burial, illegitimacy and respectability”⁶⁵ still the audience found the comedy extremely funny. Wilde’s delight in paradoxes might be observed in the subtitle of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*. After he left prison he produced a long poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Wilde is commonly recognized as a famous playwright who examined conventional matters of life in an unconventional manner. He was mocking the Victorian society, frequently using provocative and witty aphorisms. Often they concerned human nature: “It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.”⁶⁶ Of course, Wilde performs his role of an aesthete, “the expert at recording and judging sensations”⁶⁷ in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* interviewing the story with acute observations of beautiful things. Perhaps it is the provocative views on life which makes Wilde’s work enduring.

⁶² Pearson 148.

⁶³ The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 6th ed., Vol. 2. (New York: Norton, 1993) 1617.

⁶⁴ Pearson 221.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 259-260.

⁶⁶ Oscar Wilde, *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems* (London: Campbell, 1991) 428.

⁶⁷ Barzun 621.

4. The Picture of Dorian Gray, a Novel with Gothic Traits

4.1 Introduction

The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde's only novel, belongs to the works of fin de siècle, the last decade of nineteenth century which was defined by the term decadence. The expression denotes decline, embracing areas which the Victorians prided themselves on, namely morality, standards, also the areas of art, literature and in a broader sense a fall of the nation as such. The power of industrial progress together with imperialism turned out to be a threat which might destroy civilisation. The idea of the end of everything was strengthened by the fact that the century was coming to an end.⁶⁸ This view that ". . . all certainty is destroyed . . ."⁶⁹ is voiced in Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892).

Although Nordau pointed out to the dangers of destruction, the 1890s Gothic flourished with the exploration of the themes of disease and degeneration. On one hand, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* belongs to the Gothic degeneration novels, on the other hand the novel defies a simple classification. There has been discussions about the genre of the novel, trying to determine whether it is a parable, a decadent novel, a romance, or as the author claims, an essay on decorative art.⁷⁰ Mario Praz argues that

Wilde's prose style is essentially decorative; Wilde's point of view, in fact, is always scenic; he sees things as in stage-perspective; he is all the time arranging his characters, his landscapes, his events, and making them pose.⁷¹

The novel is dominated by aestheticism. Wilde puts emphasis on the beautiful, interrupting the work with lengthy descriptions of decorated interiors, accessories, flowers etc. The characters try to fit into this aestheticised world.

⁶⁸ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Cultural Triumph and Defeat, 1500 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000) 617.

⁶⁹ quoted in Chaplin 106.

⁷⁰ Nils Clausson, "Culture and Corruption": Paterian Self-Development versus Gothic Degeneration in Oscar Wilde's the Picture of Dorian Gray," *Papers on Language & Literature* 39, no. 4 (2003): 340-42, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=11963400&lang=cs&site=ehost-live>. Accessed April 5, 2016.

⁷¹ Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*. Translated by A. Davidson. (Birkenhead: OUP, 1960) 328.

They display full appreciation of art. The novel suggests that the art should stay independent. Once the artificiality and sensuality of art is applied to reality it brings fatal consequences. The novel therefore echoes “the controversy of art versus life.”⁷²

Nils Clausson proposes a challenging classification of the novel, classifying it as both a self-development novel related to Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean* which turns into a contradicting gothic degeneration novel.⁷³ The concept of self-development is proposed by lord Henry Wotton who believes that “the aim of life is self-development.”⁷⁴ The protagonist, an excessively handsome Dorian Gray adopts that concept, however, his actions lead him to regress.

Wilde examines the depths of the human psyche, its secret desires which were very much discussed at that time. He let Dorian embrace immorality and spread poisonous influence on others like a disease. However, through immorality Wilde delivers a highly moral tale.

4.2 Preface as a Hint

Commonly, prefaces serve as a presentation of the work. The author might explain its purpose, the process of writing the book etc. Oscar Wilde fills the preface with aphorisms centring on components of art. He discusses the roles of the artist, the material of art, the audience, and morality. The sense of aestheticism is manifested in the prominence given to beauty: “THE ARTIST is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim.”⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the artist from the novel, Basil, fails this condition, showing his personality on the canvas.

Wilde also defines the task of the artist who does not represent a judge of morality as: “The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything.”⁷⁶ Therefore the artist does not distinguish the

⁷² Ellmann 293.

⁷³ Nils Clausson 342.

⁷⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 18.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 3.

mode of art using both “vice and virtue [which] are . . . materials for an art.”⁷⁷ At the same time, Wilde denies the formative influence of books because “There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.”⁷⁸

Wilde indicates the possibility that the meaning of art might be hidden beneath a surface:

All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.⁷⁹

This suggests that it is the reader who detects the message, nevertheless, the art does not intend to impose its meaning on the audience, existing for its own sake. The preface ends with a statement: “All art is quite useless”⁸⁰, which Wilde explains:

Art is useless because its aim is simply to create a mood. It is not meant to instruct, or to influence action in any way. It is superbly sterile, and the note of its pleasure is sterility.⁸¹

Although the preface does not explicitly introduce the novel, in a figurative sense, it indicates the elements of the novel as the celebration of beauty through art and its underlying dangers.

4.3 Setting

Wilde sets his story into Victorian London, ascribing it features of a Gothic environment. London acquires negative attributes such as “grey”, “monstrous”, “horrid”, which gives ambivalent connotations to the strong status of the capital. *Dorian Gray* explores the double face of the city, the West End and East End, the contradictory sites of fortune and degeneration.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 3

⁷⁸ Ibid. 3

⁷⁹ Ibid. 3

⁸⁰ Ibid. 4.

⁸¹ Oscar Wilde, *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 95-96.

Dorian lives in a large house in the Grosvenor Square situated in the West End. Though not a Gothic castle, the large town house has Gothic components. Mainly, the true Gothic place in the house represents the former schoolroom. The first hint of its strangeness indicates its location, the top of the house. Secondly, the door is locked as if keeping its secret inside. Truly, the room served as a place where Dorian spent his lonely childhood and later as a study room. Now, nevertheless it is to serve a new purpose. It is not to hide Dorian as an innocent child anymore. Wilde seems to choose the room deliberately in order to contrast and perhaps mock the character it used to accommodate with its picture, the proof of degradation. The room has not change much over the past five years, during which it was locked yet there are marks of dilapidation:

A faded Flemish tapestry, a curtained picture, an old Italian *cassone*, and an almost empty bookcase - that was all that it seemed to contain, besides a chair and a table . . . the whole place was covered with dust, and that the carpet was in holes. A mouse ran scuffling behind the wainscoting. There was a damp odour of mildew.⁸²

The description reminds a classic Gothic room which not being used decays. It is the room connected with Dorian's whole life, firstly it witnessed his miserable childhood, later conceals the proof of his downfall. In any case, entering the room reminds Dorian either of past unhappiness or present degeneration.

There is another Gothic space in the house. Dorian uses a secret press in a library where he keeps his disguises. When he murders Basil, he puts there Basil's belongings as well. Gothic fictions commonly employs secret places as passages, or trapdoors, Dorian uses the press to hide his corruption.

Dorian Gray enjoys leaving the respectable West End in his quests of immorality which he can only find in the working class areas of the East End. There he gets forbidden pleasures while he denounces morality, going native.⁸³ Still, the Victorian morality code does not allow him, a gentleman from higher society, to mingle openly with the lower society. Therefore, he can only assimilate with the working class dirty habits in disguise, and more importantly at night. Wilde's description of the desolate places of East End are intensified as the author

⁸² Ibid. 123.

⁸³ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. Vol.2. (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 8.

focuses on the gloomy weather as well:

A cold rain began to fall, and the blurred street-lamps looked ghastly in the dripping mist. The public-houses were just closing, and dim men and women were clustering in broken groups round their doors. From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. In others, drunkards brawled and screamed.⁸⁴

Dorian observes “the sordid shame of the great city”⁸⁵, on one of his journeys to those parts. The dramatic sky is depicted as well, adding to the gloomy atmosphere:

The moon hung low in the sky like a yellow skull. From time to time a huge misshapen cloud stretched a long arm across and hid it. The gas-lamps grew fewer, and the streets more narrow and gloomy . . . like the black web of some sprawling spider.⁸⁶

Dorian, wearing a cap to cover his face, watches the environment as he is travelling in a hansom whose “side-windows . . . were clogged with a grey-flannel mist.”⁸⁷ It suggests his separation from the place, hiding it from his eyes. Also the sounds of a barking dog and a screaming of a sea-gull add to the horrible scene. Dorian believes that

Ugliness was the one reality. The coarse brawl, the loathsome den, the crude violence of distorted life, the very vileness of thief and outcast, were more vivid, in their intense impression than all the gracious shapes of art, the dreamy shadows of song.⁸⁸

The area truly belongs to the working class, as the den is located near docks in between two factories. The place seems not to be accessible for everyone because the chained door opens after Dorian gives “a peculiar knock.”⁸⁹ The house epitomizes decay where terrible orgies take place. Even the person who opens the door for Dorian displays symptoms of degeneration, being “squat misshapen figure that flattened itself into the shadow. . .”⁹⁰ Dorian enters a hall

⁸⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 146.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 146.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 146.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 146.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 147.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 148.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 148.

where he overcomes another obstacle which separates him from the opium, “a tattered green curtain that swayed and shook in the gusty wind . . .”⁹¹ Again, the wind adds a dramatic element to the setting.

Dorian crosses a dilapidated dancing-saloon and continues to ascend a staircase to a darkened chamber. The location at the top and the darkness once more hints a forbidden place. The smell of opium meets him on the way, as he sees “the grotesque things that lay in such fantastic postures on the ragged mattresses. The twisted limbs, the gaping mouths, the staring lustreless eyes fascinated him.”⁹² He is familiar with “what strange heavens they were suffering, and what dull hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy.”⁹³ The place serves Dorian at first merely to experience the working class underworld and find pleasure, later the only means to forget his sins and embrace new ones.

The setting seems to be a strong indicator of the Gothic in the novel. The abandoned room at the top of a large house which hides the changing picture resembles Gothic chambers which served as a concealment. There is another secret place in the house which hides Dorian’s disguise as well as Basil’s possessions.

The author also provides a vivid depiction of one of Dorian’s journeys to the East End. Wilde portrays a gloomy night atmosphere of dark streets and shabby houses. He intensifies the scene with grim weather and disturbing sounds of a barking dog and a screaming sea-gull. Dorian likes to sink in those places of ill-repute where he can get opium and enjoy the company from the bottom of society.

4.4 Characters

The stock characters from the early Gothic novels change their roles. They seem to be governed by beauty. Dorian Gray’s beauty becomes fatal not only to himself, but also to others.

⁹¹ Ibid. 148.

⁹² Ibid. 148.

⁹³ Ibid. 148-149.

4.4.1 Basil Hallward

Basil Hallward portrays a tragic character. A painter who appears to be living for the art only, finally finds the Ideal, Dorian Gray. Basil recognizes Dorian's influence immediately, admitting:

When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself . . . Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows.⁹⁴

Dorian suggests a new art to Basil, representing “the harmony of soul and body.”⁹⁵ It, nevertheless, proves to be fatal to Basil who confesses to Dorian:

. . . your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me, you were still present in my art . . . I only knew that I had seen perfection face to face, and that the world had become wonderful to my eyes—too wonderful, perhaps, for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them, no less than the peril of keeping them . . .⁹⁶

The confession implies Basil's secret passion for Dorian which he represses. Basil appears to be the embodiment of morality in the novel, insisting on believing in Dorian's outward and inward purity. Basil adopts the Victorian belief in physiognomy which claims that a personal character equals personal appearance. Hence, he rejects the rumours about Dorian's life:

Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed . . . 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.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid. 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 12.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 92.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 119.

Still, he gradually loses his ideal. It is partly Basil's own fault which can be found in the fourth line in Wilde's poem *Ballad of Reading Gaol*⁹⁸:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!⁹⁹

Basil spoils Dorian with praising his looks. He is aware of his doing but he cannot help it, anticipating the damaging consequence. Second, decisive impact on Dorian has the portrait itself. It is coloured with idolatry, revealing the sitter's beauty and the artist's admiration as he insists on claiming: "I have put too much of myself into it."¹⁰⁰ The personal element together with the realistic portrayal of Dorian force Basil to decide never to exhibit it. Still, Dorian with his "simple . . . nature"¹⁰¹ cannot live up to the portrayed ideal.

Basil's role proves to be hard to interpret. On one hand, he seems to personify "the good". He tries to protect Dorian from lord Henry Wotton, always contrasting his views. On the other hand, his compliments and the portrait initiate Dorian's downfall. Therefore, he might be seen both as a victim of art, dying for the artistic ideal or as an embodiment of evil.

4.4.2 Lord Henry Wotton

Henry Wotton poses a cynical upper-class dandy who fills Dorian's mind with dangerous ideas. Henry give the major importance to youth informing Dorian:

youth is the one thing worth having . . . Some day, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it, you will feel it terribly. . . Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. . . Time is

⁹⁸ Baker, Houston A. "A Tragedy of the Artist: The Picture of Dorian Gray," *Nineteenth-century Fiction* 24, no. 3 (1969) : 353, www.jstor.org/stable/2932864. Accessed February 17, 2016.

⁹⁹ Oscar Wilde, *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems* 660.

¹⁰⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 15.

jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly. . . Ah! realize your youth while you have it . . .¹⁰²

Henry tries to dominate Dorian, encouraging him to make use of his youth. He finds delight in practicing his corrupting influence. Henry convinces Dorian of uselessness of repressing his instincts:

The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars our lives. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. . . The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.¹⁰³

Henry voices the Victorian concerns for the hidden aspects of the mind. He believes that repressing the desires will produce even stronger longing. Consequently, Henry encourages Dorian to denounce the superimposed morality and “go native” instead. Henry even presents Dorian with a “yellow book” which “poisons” him. The book explores a young man’s search for pleasure, which inspires Dorian. Dorian, the artistic ideal, is thus corrupted. He becomes Henry’s psychological study. His

development is explicitly characterized as the result of an experiment that Lord Henry, the Gothic scientist in the role of decadent aesthete, performs on the young Dorian.¹⁰⁴

Lord Henry admits that

he had been always enthralled by the methods of science, but the ordinary subject-matter of science had seemed to him trivial and of no import. And so he had begun by vivisectioning himself, as he ended by vivisectioning others.¹⁰⁵

Henry mentions science which had been used or rather misused in the fin de siècle novels. Unlike Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde who form one person, Wilde uses two persons for the experiment. Moreover, Wilde

¹⁰² Ibid. 21.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Nils Clausson 352.

¹⁰⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 47.

changes the mode of transformation from science to art, and the location from laboratory to the artist's studio. Art replaces science, hence the dominant role that works of art and books play in Wilde's novel, especially the "poisonous" book that acts like Jekyll's mysterious agent.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, science takes a different form through which Henry can mould Dorian. Henry watches the results of his experiment, Dorian's growing indifference to his actions, for instance when he easily overcomes Sybil's death, not feeling responsible for her. In spite of Dorian's obvious guilt, Henry believes in physiognomy as Basil, assuring Dorian: "All crime is vulgar, just as all vulgarity is crime. It is not in you, Dorian, to commit a murder . . . Crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders."¹⁰⁷ Consequently, Henry has no idea that Dorian murdered Basil Hallward. He denies Dorian's indirect confession.

Henry surely personifies evil. He might be compared to devil, who "tempts Dorian in Basil's garden"¹⁰⁸ leading him to doom. However, he himself is not personally involved in Dorian's degeneration. He is giving his provocative ideas to Dorian through aphorisms, yet Basil believes that although he "never say[s] a moral thing, . . . [he] never do[es] a wrong thing"¹⁰⁹ either. Henry truly seems an adviser who "seeks to be merely the spectator of life."¹¹⁰

4.4.3 Dorian Gray

Gothic novels commonly feature a villain thus it is important to determine Dorian's role. Is Dorian the villain? Taking his origin into account, Dorian bears resemblance to a romantic hero. He was orphaned early in his childhood, a son of an aristocratic mother who eloped with a man from a lower class, a soldier. Because such a bond was unacceptable, Dorian's grandfather eliminated the man, his mother died soon after. Hence Dorian, born out of forbidden love, was raised by his unloving grandfather, rejected and confined to the attic room. Such a childhood is characterized by loneliness and misery which are intrinsic features of the romantic hero.

¹⁰⁶ Nils Clausson 353.

¹⁰⁷ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 168.

¹⁰⁸ Nils Clausson 352.

¹⁰⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 7.

¹¹⁰ Ellmann 300.

Still, Dorian does not appear to embody a typical romantic hero. On one hand, Dorian is associated with death throughout the novel. Henry thinks of him a “son of Love and Death”¹¹¹ he is curious about Dorian’s future. Basil talks of the fatality of physical and intellectual distinction. Dorian, however, does not share the properties of “fatal men of romanticism: mysterious origin, traces of burnt-out passions, suspicion of a ghastly guilt, melancholy habits, pale face, unforgettable eyes.”¹¹² Quite on the contrary, Dorian’s beauty radiate with innocence which is, however, to be stained. Dorian’s self-development under the influence of lord Henry leads him to degeneration.

At the beginning of the novel, Dorian is a naive youth who learns about his beauty for the first time from a full-size picture of himself. His joy of the discovered beauty turns into sorrow when he is told about the inevitable ageing and fading of beauty. The idea that “youth is the only thing worth having”¹¹³ comes from lord Henry Wotton who urges him to make use of it. Dorian, jealous of the picture, expresses a fatal wish to change the role with picture and remain young instead of it:

How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June . . . If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!¹¹⁴

His wish bears resemblance to the bargain with devil. Yet, the devil is absent from the pact. Wilde argues: a “young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth” became “an idea that is old in the history of literature, but to which I have given a new form.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, Wilde does not focus on the deal, not revealing whether the wish was granted or not. Dorian himself learns from the mystery from the changing canvas of the portrait.

¹¹¹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 32.

¹¹² Praz 79.

¹¹³ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 21.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 24.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in John M. L. Drew, “Introduction” to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2001) XIV.

From the moment of the wish, Dorian becomes the embodiment of art. He borrows the eternal beauty from the picture which is to serve a new purpose. It starts to show Dorian's conscience, reflecting his sins. The picture represents a supernatural element as it is linked with Dorian who claims that the painting forms a part of him. The first change appears after Dorian abandons Sybil. Dorian sees "the cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing."¹¹⁶ He is wondering whether it is possible or whether he is imagining it. Finally he comes to a conclusion:

It [the picture] had altered already, and would alter more. Its gold would wither into gray. Its red and white roses would die. For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin. The picture, changed or unchanged would be to him the visible emblem of conscience. He would resist temptation.¹¹⁷

Dorian thus makes himself believe that he can repress his desires. Nonetheless, he cannot free himself from the influence of Lord Henry. When he finds out that Sybil committed suicide, he feels indifferent:

So I have murdered Sybil Vane, . . . , murdered her as surely as if I had cut her throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden.¹¹⁸

Her death means merely another form of art to him which might be observed in the comment on her death: "It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play."¹¹⁹ Since that moment the picture bears Dorian's secret, therefore it must be hidden in the attic room, wrapped in

a satin coverlet . . . which perhaps often served as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself - something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty,

¹¹⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 73.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 74.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 80.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 81.

and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive.¹²⁰

The passage suggests that Dorian is determined to devote himself to the self-development which means “transgression of existing moral, religious, and especially legal codes.”¹²¹ He frequently visits the ill-repute places in the East End to satisfy his desires which hints deviant sexual behaviour. Since homosexuality was criminalized, Wilde employs a common gothic body, the double. The double reflects “an aspect of the protagonist’s often conflicted, unstable identity.”¹²² In this case, it is the picture which shows Dorian’s full debauchery while he can enjoy “the terrible pleasure of a double life”¹²³, retaining the outward innocence as a protection.

Dorian appears to grow into a Gothic villain. He becomes mysterious, his reputation is questioned as there are rumours concerning his person, “yet these whispered scandals only lent him, in the eyes of many, his strange and dangerous charm.”¹²⁴ However, Punter claims: “The vitality, the fire, the primitive barbaric energy of the Gothic hero are absent.”¹²⁵ Certainly, he does not appear to be the dominant Gothic villain who persecutes his victim. Although he is an aristocrat, who frequently in the role of a tyrant persecuted their wives or daughters, he does not exercise his power. Rather, “He becomes an echo of someone else’s music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him.”¹²⁶

Truly, Dorian seems to echo Henry’s desires to live the life to the fullest. His influence on men is corrupting. When Basil hears of what is being whispered about Dorian he comes and asks him directly:

Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? . . . You have filled them with a madness for pleasure. They have gone down into the depths. You led them there. Yes: you led them there, and yet you can smile, as you are smiling now. And there is worse behind . . . They say that you corrupt every one with whom you become intimate, and that it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house for shame

¹²⁰ Ibid. 95-96.

¹²¹ Claussion 354.

¹²² Chaplin 234.

¹²³ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 139.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 113.

¹²⁵ Punter Vol.2, 9.

¹²⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 18.

of some kind to follow after. I don't know whether it is so or not. How should I know? But it is said of you . . . I wonder do I know you? Before I could answer that, I should have to see your soul.¹²⁷

Dorian agrees to show Basil his soul, the changing picture. It fills Basil with dread when he realizes whom he worshipped:

An exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him. There was something in its expression that filled him with disgust and loathing . . . The horror, whatever it was, had not yet entirely spoiled that marvellous beauty. There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet on the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue, the noble curves had not yet completely passed away from chiselled nostrils and from plastic throat.¹²⁸

Although he witnesses Dorian's debauchery, he thinks that a prayer can save him. Dorian refuses such an idea, insisting "each of us has Heaven and Hell in him . . ." ¹²⁹ Suddenly he feels hatred for the painter who destroyed his life. Wilde depicts the horror scene in which Basil is murdered with a knife vividly. It captures the multiple violent stabbing and Basil's groan. The murder represents the most monstrous act of Dorian's. The murder adds horrible visage to the picture which since then shows blood on Dorian's hands.

Dorian must destroy the only evidence of the murder, Basil's body. Because Dorian is unable to decompose the body as he cannot even look at the it, he blackmails a friend of his, Alan Campbell to do the experiment. Alan's experiment represents the Victorian fears of the misuse of science. Though he destroys Basil's body, the acquaintance with Dorian proves fatal for he later commits suicide.

Since the murder, Dorian cannot free himself from the haunting picture. Before the murder he often watched the picture with curiosity, comparing its degeneration with his own beauty. But now he is concerned about:

. . . conscience [which] could raise such fearful phantoms, and give them visible form,

¹²⁷ Ibid. 119-121.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 123.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 125.

and make them move before one! What sort of life would his be if, day and night, shadows of his crime were to peer at him from silent corners, to mock him from secret places, to whisper in his ear as he sat at the feast, to wake him with icy fingers as he lay asleep! As the thought crept through his brain, he grew pale with terror, and the air seemed to him to have become suddenly colder. Oh! in what a wild hour of madness he had killed his friend! How ghastly the mere memory of the scene! He saw it all again. Each hideous detail came back to him with added horror. Out of the black cave of time, terrible and swathed in scarlet, rose the image of his sin.¹³⁰

The only means to ease his conscience is through opium. Opium belonged to a wide-spread and popular article which was used either for pleasure or to cure illness.¹³¹ Dorian displays the physical symptoms of his addiction: “The hideous hunger for opium began to gnaw at him. His throat burned, and his delicate hands twitched nervously together.”¹³² But Dorian needs the opium, above all, to ease his mind, on which Wilde comments:

To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul! . . . His soul, certainly, was sick to death. Was it true that the senses could cure it? Innocent blood had been spilt. What could atone for that? Ah! for that there was no atonement; but though forgiveness was impossible, forgetfulness was possible still, and he was determined to forget, to stamp the thing out, to crush it as one could crush the adder that had stung one.¹³³

Dorian’s senses deceive him. He imagines seeing Basil. He is filled with terror that someone might get access to the attic room and see his corruption. It is the reason why he does not leave his house for long time.

Dorian is aware of his “descent into the Victorian underworld of criminality, drugs, and sexual depravity . . .”¹³⁴ By exploring the working class sphere, Dorian becomes degenerate as well. He seeks to find justification for his evil character in his ancestry which reflects “[G]othic obsession with family secrets and hereditary doom.”¹³⁵ He likes to watch the portraits of his ancestors,

¹³⁰ Ibid. 158.

¹³¹ Sharon Ruston, “Representations of drugs in 19th-century literature,” *British Library*, <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/representations-of-drugs-in-19th-century-literature>. Accessed March 26, 2016.

¹³² Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 146.

¹³³ Ibid. 146.

¹³⁴ Clausson 357.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Clausson 359.

wondering: “Had some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own?”¹³⁶ Dorian’s degeneration is probably both “intrinsic and acquired”¹³⁷ through the book which Henry gave him.

Tired of all the misery the picture brought upon him, Dorian wishes to kill the representation of his conscience:

He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it . . . As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter’s work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it. There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms.¹³⁸

When Dorian attempts to kill the portrait, it undergoes its final metamorphosis. It returns to its original beauty and innocence whereas Dorian dies with the knife in his heart. He, too, undergoes metamorphosis, turning into an old man: “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage.”¹³⁹ Throughout the novel Dorian personified a work of art, however, the attempt to kill his dreadful guilt gives the portrait back its grace. “By unintentional suicide, Dorian becomes aestheticism’s first martyr.”¹⁴⁰ Dorian dies so that the portrait might regain its detachment from its model in order to exist for its own sake.

The gothic (but still moralising) conclusion remains in tension with the attempts to aestheticise and make decorative the gothic mode. Thus, the desire to make Dorian gothically “poisonous” interferes with the desire to make it aesthetically “perfect.”¹⁴¹

The ending juxtaposes beauty and ugliness. Dorian’s death delivers moral message. His decline into criminality does not promise any further self-development. Both Dr Jekyll and Dorian Gray must die. They are involved in

¹³⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 114.

¹³⁷ Clausson 360.

¹³⁸ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 176-177.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 177.

¹⁴⁰ Ellmann 297.

¹⁴¹ Richard Haslam, "'Melmoth' (OW): Gothic Modes in the Picture of Dorian Gray," *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 3 (2004): 310, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=15279664&lang=cs&site=ehost-live>. Accessed March 31, 2016.

scientific experiments through which they enter criminal world. Wilde shares the pessimism of the fin de siècle novels in which criminality cannot flourish.¹⁴²

4.4.4 Sybil Vane

Sybil Vane shares some marginal features of Gothic heroines. She is only seventeen, not knowing anything about reality. Playing various female roles in Shakespeare's plays became her reality. Wilde juxtaposes a sensitive, virtuous actress with a dirty working-class theatre which is another example of decay. Moreover, Wilde mocks Shakespeare, "The Bard", who is the supposed cause of the theatre's five bankruptcies.

Sybil is another tragic character, as she lives for the art only which draws parallel with Basil. Once she encounters Dorian who evokes true feelings in her, she loses her talent realizing the artificiality of her roles. It again proves fatal as Dorian loves merely the artist in her, therefore when she performs poorly Juliet, he breaks her heart, crying: "You have killed my love."¹⁴³ Consequently, she is unable to bear such a reality and commits suicide, taking poison. It results from her excessive sensibility which was a prominent feature of Gothic novel heroines who often fainted. In contrast, Sybil does not have the strength to survive the bitter reality.

4.4.5 James Vane

James Vane, a sixteen-year-old sailor represents masculinity in the novel. Although he is rather rough, he has tender feelings for his sister Sybil. He disapproves of Sybil's career in theatre. Moreover, he feels protective when he learns of Sybil's lover, Dorian. James feels distrust in Dorian for his father was of aristocratic origin as well and he and Sybil are his illegitimate children. Therefore James is concerned about Sybil, when leaving to Australia, he makes a promise to his mother: ". . . if this man wrongs my sister, I will find out who he is, track him down, and kill him like a dog. I swear it."¹⁴⁴ After Sybil's death, he is seeking

¹⁴² Clausson 362.

¹⁴³ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 70.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 58.

Dorian for eighteen years. He finally finds Dorian on his way from a den. Wilde provides a gloomy setting for their encounter, intensifying the horror:

Callous, concentrated on evil, with stained mind, and soul hungry for rebellion, Dorian Gray hastened on, quickening his step as he went, but as he darted aside into a dim archway, that had served him often as a short cut to the ill-famed place where he was going, he felt suddenly seized from behind, and before he had time to defend himself he was thrust back against the wall, with a brutal hand round his throat. He struggled madly for life, and by a terrible effort wrenched the tightening fingers away. In a second he heard the click of a revolver, and saw the gleam of a polished barrel pointing straight at his head . . .¹⁴⁵

James appears to be an embodiment of morality when he wishes to defend Sybil's honour, nevertheless, Dorian's youthful appearance deceives him. Later when he finds out that Dorian is "Prince Charming"¹⁴⁶ and tracks him, he is accidentally shot. His death is not only death of an avenger and relief for Dorian. In addition, Dorian feels certain when telling lord Henry it is also "a bad omen . . . I feel as if something horrible were going to happen to some of us. To myself perhaps . . ."¹⁴⁷ Omens belong to Gothic features and James's death truly prefigures Dorian's own death.

4.5 Homosexuality; a Taboo Acceptable in Gothic Fiction

Gothic genre frequently discusses taboo subjects. One of the topics which might be regarded inappropriate in other genres but which is an intrinsic element of Gothic fiction are "the erotic, particularly illegitimate or transgressive sexuality, and is full of same-sex desire, perversion, obsession, voyeurism and sexual violence."¹⁴⁸ Therefore employing homosexuality into Gothic fiction in Victorian era is not perhaps viewed as innovative, however, it threatened the strong Victorian idea of masculinity.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is widely considered homosexual which is partly due to the author's own sexuality as the work does not contain overtly

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 150.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 45.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 160.

¹⁴⁸ John Bowen, "Gothic motifs," *British Library*, <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs>. Accessed March 30, 2016.

homosexual scenes. Rather it features homosexual undertones. Oscar Wilde introduces a world of governed by aestheticism in which Basil, Dorian and Henry “challenge Victorian standard of “true male” identity.”¹⁴⁹ The characters place high value on their mutual friendships which suggest homoerotic desires. Dorian becomes the object of desire for Both Basil and Henry. They express their desire in different manner.

Basil projects his homoerotic desire for Dorian on to the canvas. It suggests the reason why he decides not to exhibit the portrait, explaining the reason to Henry:

. . . every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion . . .¹⁵⁰ I am afraid that I have shown in the secret of my own soul . . . But the world might guess it, and I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope.¹⁵¹

Obviously, the passage implies Basil’s homosexuality which must be kept hidden. Basil represses his homosexual identity. His feelings are not returned for Dorian realizes that Basil only taught him to be vain.

On the other hand, lord Henry’s desire is even more explicit when he describes Dorian: “He is some brainless beautiful creature . . . made out of ivory and roseleaves.”¹⁵² Henry tries to evoke Dorian’s homosexual desire by liberating himself from “monstrous laws”¹⁵³ which allude to criminalization of homosexuality. Between the two rivals Dorian prefers to spend his time with Henry who uncovers the secrets of life. Under his influence, Dorian suddenly understands things from his childhood. It might refer to homosexual desires.

Dorian is searching for his pleasures in the working class areas of East End. However, whether Dorian practices homosexuality there or not is not stated in the text. The author supports this claim declaring: “What Dorian Gray’s sins are no one knows.”¹⁵⁴ Still, the text hints Dorian’s homosexuality in relation to the consequences of his friendship with young men. Again, there is no overt reference

¹⁴⁹ Ed Cohen, 1987. “Writing Gone Wilde: Homoerotic Desire in the Closet of Representation,” *PMLA* 102, no. 5 (1987) 806, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462309>. Accessed March 23,2016.

¹⁵⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 8.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 12.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁵⁴ Oscar Wilde, *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde* 82.

in the text, only the mention that he surrounds himself with young men for whom the friendship proves fatal. Also, blackmailing Allan Campbell hints the possible relationship between the two men.

The characters do not express their homosexuality openly, yet there are indications of it. Basil colours his portrait of Dorian with his secret which hints homosexual desire. Henry conveys his desire verbally, openly admiring Dorian. Dorian's fatal influence on young men also suggests homosexual activities. While he drags them to the bottom, he himself retains the innocent appearance. The homosexuality hinted in the text does not offer any hope, rather it is portrayed as something forbidden to be doomed.

4.6 The Presence of Horror and Terror

The Picture of Dorian Gray include a feature very common to Gothic genre, passages which inspire both horror and terror. The extreme feelings are connected with Dorian. Dorian either spreads terror or he is himself filled with it. He produces terror in Basil on their first encounter which prefigures Basil's death. On other occasion, Dorian fears that Basil might see the changing picture. He is also filled with terror when his conscience haunts him as he awaits Alan:

He took long stealthy strides. His hands were curiously cold. The suspense became unbearable. Time seemed to him to be crawling with feet of lead, while he by monstrous winds was being swept towards the jagged edge of some black cleft of precipice. He knew what was waiting for him there; saw it, indeed, and, shuddering, crushed with dank hands his burning lids as though he would have robbed the very brain of sight and driven the eyeballs back into their cave . . . horrible thoughts, time being dead, raced nimbly on in front, and dragged a hideous future from its grave, and showed it to him.¹⁵⁵

Thus, Dorian worries about the future in which the conscience would dominate him. He also faints from terror when he catches a glimpse of James Vane who seeks for revenge. It suggests Dorian's weakness, excessive sensitivity characteristic of Gothic heroines.

The horror scenes are related to death. The first one portrays the murder of Basil in which Dorian is mercilessly stabbing his friend:

¹⁵⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 132-133.

He rushed at him and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table and stabbing again and again. There was a stifled groan and the horrible sound of someone choking with blood. Three times the outstretched arms shot up convulsively, waving grotesque, stiff-fingered hands in the air. He stabbed him twice more, but the man did not move. Something began to trickle on the floor.¹⁵⁶

The second horror scene portrays Dorian close to death. It combines both horror and terror as Dorian is “paralysed with terror”¹⁵⁷ of his death when James Vane wishes to shoot him. The last horror scene is indeed the last scene of the novel which reveals Dorian's hidden personality projected onto the decayed body. Dorian, in the end, personifies the portrait of his soul. Wilde uses both horror and terror in his novel in order to evoke strong feelings in the reader.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 126.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 151.

5. Conclusion

Oscar Wilde blends in his novel traditional Gothic features with the fin de siècle features and on top of these he adds his own “Wildean” features.

The novel was published in 1890, a period called fin de siècle when the Victorian era of success was being questioned. Accordingly, the work undermines the worries surrounding the age. It uses a common theme of degeneration which was proposed by Charles Darwin. Darwin challenged the established belief in human superiority when he argued that the men might regress back into a lower state. Also, the novel deals with a use of science which was both popular and feared. Third element which typifies the fin siècle novels, the setting, shifts from the distant past of exotic lands to the contemporary London. Hence London is the place of a prosperous West End but also of the decaying working class area of the East End. Consequently, the work might be regarded as a typical example of the degeneration fin de siècle Gothic novels.

Yet Wilde refused to closely follow a convention. Wilde, epitomizing the leader of the aestheticism, explores the controversy between art and life. He uses the preface of the novel to define art. According to him, the artist creates beautiful things for which he might use any mode he wishes, be it vice or virtue. He also believes that the art communicates double meaning, both clear and symbolic. Finally, he comes to conclusion that “all art is useless.”¹⁵⁸ The conclusion suggests that the art’s purpose is not to influence human lives as it should exist for its own sake. But the novel goes against this requirement. It emphasizes the superiority of aestheticism to life, therefore the life of the characters must adapt to it. The artificiality of their conduct clashes with reality. They give a supreme importance to beauty which has fatal consequences.

Traditionally, a Gothic work features a villain but Wilde moulds a unique one, Dorian Gray. He shares some of the traits intrinsic to the Gothic villains. He possesses a beauty, he transgresses the law, his sins culminate in a violent murder. Yet Wilde created a protagonist highly sensitive, a naive youth of innocent appearance led to debauchery. His gradual degeneration could be seen as both hereditary and acquired. He becomes the personification of art when he sells his

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 4.

soul for the eternal beauty. It alludes to the bargain with the devil, however, the devil is absent from the pact. Wilde introduces a supernatural element, the full-size picture of the protagonist, whose beauty is gradually growing bestial, reflecting Dorian's sins. Therefore, it must be locked in a dilapidated attic room which represents another Gothic space. Accordingly, Dorian can lead a life in search of pleasure, retaining innocent appearance. His double, the picture, becomes the representation of his conscience, growing hideous instead of him.

Dorian's degeneration is initiated by Lord Henry Wotton, a figurative scientist in the role of a dandy who encourages Dorian's self-development. Henry resembles a liberating element as he urges Dorian to denounce morality and go native. Only then does Dorian resemble a Gothic villain. His development leads him to the working class area of opium dens where he assimilates with the lower classes. Becoming degenerate himself, he spreads his corrupting influence on young men like a disease. His most barbaric act, which he commits, is the murder of the painter, Basil. It was supposed to liberate him from the moralizing influence of Basil, instead, it places a burden on his conscience. The picture, stained with blood, haunts Dorian who is ever since dominated by terror. Afterwards, opium becomes the only means to ease the conscience. The last scene of horror portrays Dorian stabbing the ugly picture, dying with a knife in his heart.

The end sums the deeply pessimistic tone of the novel. The pessimism defines the characters' homoerotic desires which must stay hidden. Gothic fiction is an appropriate mode to examine same sex desires, yet the Victorian criminalization of homosexuality forbade the explicit use of it. Dorian stays in the centre of the homosexual desire for both Basil and Henry. Basil dares to project his desire on the canvas, otherwise he represses his feelings. Henry puts his admiration into words, flattering Dorian and trying to evoke homosexuality in him. Dorian's homosexual activities are suggested in his visits to the East End and also in the fatality which his friendship brings to young men.

Moreover, Wilde does not see any hope of progress in a man who entered a criminal world through an unsuccessful development, therefore Dorian dies. In the final desperate act of destroying the picture both he and the picture undergo the final metamorphosis. The moral message is delivered as Dorian turns into an ugly corpse whereas the picture is restored with its grace.

The novel appears to represent a Gothic novel of aestheticism. It serves as a warning against the fusion of art and life. The art must preserve its independence. Hence the characters who confuses their lives with art must die. Sybil dies when her artistic life clashes with bitter reality. Moreover, Basil dies for his artistic ideal. Lastly, Dorian who became the embodiment of art when he borrowed the eternal youth, gives it back to the picture and turns horrible himself in the end.

6. Summary

Cílem této bakalářské práce byla analýza gotických prvků v díle *Obraz Doriana Graye*.

V úvodní části se snažím nastínit hlavní znaky gotického románu. Jeho různorodost tento úkol znesnadňuje. Co dílo, to unikát. Raná díla ovšem vykazují obdobné rysy. Jako první autor gotického žánru se udává Horace Walpole. Ve svém románu *Otrantský zámek* položil základy gotického žánru. V prvních gotických dílech lze tedy vyzorovat společná dějiště, jako jsou chátrající hrady nebo například kláštery. Tato místa v sobě skrývají temná zákoutí a sklepení nahánějící hrůzu. Postavy také kopírují stejnou šablonu. Tradičně budí největší pozornost gotický padouch. Ten vzbuzuje zároveň přitažlivost i odpor. Jeho obětí bývá mladá, nevinná dívka, která často omdlévá. Důležitý prvek představuje vyobrazení nadpřirozena. Gotický žánr se snaží vyvolat ve čtenáři silné pocity hrůzy a nebo také odporu. Stává se vhodným místem pro diskusi tabuizovaných témat, místem kde se stírá hranice mezi přítomností a minulostí a boří hranici mezi primitivním a vyspělým.

Dále se zaměřuji na podobu některých gotických románů Viktoriánského období. Zde se žánr velmi odklání od svých počátků. Obecně se díla snaží odkrýt temnější stranu úspěchu dané éry, ať už je to Darwinovo zpochybnění obecně uznávané nadřazenosti člověka, nedůvěra v imperialismus nebo rizika zneužití vědy.

Ve čtvrté kapitole se dostávám k samotné identifikaci gotických prvků v díle *Obraz Doriana Graye*. Je zřejmé, že román spadá do schématu gotických děl konce 19. století. Oscar Wilde vykresluje viktoriánský Londýn jako místo střetu prosperujícího West Endu a upadajícího East Endu dělnické třídy. Aby mohl prozkoumat oba rozdílné světy, vytvořil autor protagonistu dvou tváří, Doriana Graye. Dorian se podobá gotickým padouchům. Je krásný, porušuje zákon a jeho hříchy vyústí v násilnou vraždu. Zároveň se odlišuje. Jako nevinný naivní mladík je přiveden na scesti. V rozhodující moment vysloví faustovské přání, které mu má darovat věčné mládí výměnou za jeho duši. Této výměny se přímo účastní Dorianův portrét, jehož krása je Dorianovi propůjčena. Dorian poté ztělesňuje umění, kdežto portrét se stává Dorianovým dvojníkem, zrcadlícím jeho hříchy.

Dorian může žít nezřízený život. Toto propojení obrazu s hlavní postavou představuje nadpřirozený element, který je silným znakem gotického románu.

Konec, kdy Dorian probodne svůj portrét a sám umírá s nožem v srdci, podtrhuje pesimisticky laděný tón románu. Závěr zdůrazňuje jeden z motivů díla, a to rozpor mezi uměním a životem. Wilde, který byl sám estetikem, připisuje estetismu nejvyšší postavení převládající nad životem samotným. Může sloužit jako varování před pokusem o spojení umění se životem. Umění by mělo zůstat nezávislé. Postavy snažící se spojit svoji realitu s uměním umírají. Sybilla Vaneová umírá, když pozná, že herectví bylo jen iluzí reality, ve které žila. Basil umírá pro svůj zkažený ideál. Dorianova smrt v sobě nese morální ponaučení. Dorian se promění v podobu své duše, v mrtvolu ohyzdného starce, zatímco obrazu je navrácen jeho původní vzhled. Obraz, oproštěn od svého úkolu, přebírá zpět svoji roli uměleckého díla.

Závěrem své práce usuzuji, že *Obraz Doriana Graye* není jednolitým dílem, nýbrž že je dílem mnoha děl, která v sobě mísí jak prvky tradičního gotického románu, tak znaky děl konce 19.století a nepochybně má v sobě kus autora samotného.

Bibliography

Altick, Richard D. *Victorian People and Ideas; a Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*. New York: Norton, 1973.

Baker, Houston A. "A Tragedy of the Artist: The Picture of Dorian Gray," *Nineteenth-century Fiction* 24, no. 3 (1969): 349-355, www.jstor.org/stable/2932864. Accessed February 17, 2016,

Barzun, Jacques. *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Cultural Triumph and Defeat, 1500 to the Present*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Bowen, John. "Gothic motifs," *British Library*. <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs>. Accessed March 30, 2016.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin, 1994.

Carter, Ronald, and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2001.

Chaplin, Susan. *Gothic Literature: Texts, Contexts, Connections*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2011.

Clausson Nils. "Culture and Corruption": Paterian Self-Development versus Gothic Degeneration in Oscar Wilde's the Picture of Dorian Gray." *Papers on Language & Literature* 39, no. 4 (2003): 339-364. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=11963400&lang=cs&site=ehost-live>. Accessed April 5, 2016.

Cohen, Ed. "Writing Gone Wilde: Homoerotic Desire in the Closet of Representation." *Pmla* 102,no.5(1987):801-813.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/462309>. Accessed March 23,2016.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* .London, England: Penguin Books, 1989.

Elmann, Richard. *Oscar Wilde by Richard Ellmann*. London: Penguin Books, 1988.

GILMOUR, Robin. *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890*. London: Longman, 1993.

Gower, Roger. *Past into Present: An Anthology of British and American Literature*. London: Longman, 1995.

Groom, Nick. *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Richard Haslam. "Melmoth" (OW): Gothic Modes in the Picture of Dorian Gray." *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 3 (2004): 303-314.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=15279664&lang=cs&site=ehost-live>. Accessed March 31, 2016.

Hopkins, R. Thurston. *Oscar Wilde: A Study of the Man and His Work*. London: Lynwood &, 1913.

Pearson, Hesketh. *The Life of Oscar Wilde*. 3rd ed. London: Methuen &, 1947.

Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. Translated by Angus Davidson. Birkenhead: OUP, 1960.

Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Harrow: Longman, 1996.

Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Harrow: Longman, 1996.

Ransome, Arthur. *Oscar Wilde: A Crit. Study*. 1st ed. London: Methuen&, 1913.

Robert Louis Stevenson. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: The Merry Men and Other Stories*. Ware: Wordsworth, 1993.

Ruston Sharon. "Representations of drugs in 19th-century literature," *British Library*.

<http://www.bl.uk/romantics-andvictorians/articles/representations-of-drugs-in-19th-century-literature>. Accessed March 26, 2016.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. 6th ed. Vol. 2. New York: Norton, 1993.

Wilde, Oscar. *De Profundis*. 2nd ed. London: Methuen, 1905.

Wilde, Oscar. *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems*. London: Campbell, 1991.

Wilde, Oscar. *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2001.

Wright, Angela. *Gothic Fiction*. Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

7. Annotation

This thesis is to examine the Gothic traits in Oscar Wilde's only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It focuses on the analysis of the setting of Victorian London. An emphasis is put on the concept of a gradual downfall of the protagonist which is caused by corrupting influence of his initial choice of values and a curse he put on himself because of it. The work is also going to deal with the way Oscar Wilde handles supernatural element represented by a mysterious connection between an innocent appearance and a changing picture reflecting a sinister soul. Moreover, attention is paid to the homosexual undertones. Last but not least, the thesis is to point out the role of art in the novel.