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**OBRAZ, ZRCADLO DUŠE: FILMOVÁ  
ADAPTACE ROMÁNU OSCARA WILDA  
OBRAZ DORIANA GRAYE**

**A PORTRAIT, A REFLECTION OF THE SOUL:  
FILM ADAPTATION OF THE PICTURE OF  
DORIAN GRAY BY OSCAR WILDE**

**Bakalářská práce:** 12-FP-KAJ-034

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## Čestné prohlášení

**Název práce:** Obraz, zrcadlo duše: filmová adaptace románu Oscara Wilda  
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**Jméno a příjmení autora:** Petra Šeberová  
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## **Poděkování**

Děkuji panu Mgr. Filipu Hanzelkovi za cenné rady a vstřícnou pomoc při zpracování bakalářské práce a také děkuji rodině a blízkým za podporu.

**Anotace:**

Bakalářská práce s názvem *Obraz, zrcadlo duše: filmová adaptace románu Oscara Wilda Obraz Doriana Graye* se zabývá románem *Obraz Doriana Graye*, napsaným Oscarem Wildem, a jeho filmovou adaptací z roku 2009 nazvanou *Dorian Gray* a režírovanou Oliverem Parkerem. Cílem práce je porovnat filmové zpracování a původní román a ukázat, že jsou mezi nimi značné rozdíly zvláště s ohledem na explicitnost a zjednodušení děje, pozitivnější vyobrazení hlavní postavy a zjednodušení idejí Estetického hnutí.

Klíčová slova: Oscar Wilde, Dorian Gray, román, film, adaptace, portrét, obraz, Estetismus, krása

**Annotation:**

The Bachelor thesis *A Portrait, a Reflection of the Soul: Film Adaptation of The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde* deals with a novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* written by Oscar Wilde and its film adaptation from the year 2009 called *Dorian Gray* and directed by Oliver Parker. The aim of the thesis is to compare the 2009 film to the original novel and show that there are substantial differences between the novel and the film especially as regards explicitness and simplification of the story, more positive portrayal of the protagonist and simplification of the ideas of the Aesthetic movement.

Key words: Oscar Wilde, Dorian Gray, novel, film, adaptation, picture, Aestheticism, beauty

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## 1. Introduction

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the only published novel by the British writer Oscar Wilde. It belongs to the most famous Victorian novels, therefore it is a popular source of adaptations and it is obvious that many film-makers want to base their films on this exact story.

Film adaptations of books are very popular in our culture, nearly all classical literary works were adapted to the screen. Maybe it is because of the fact that the stories that are well known had been introduced to the audience earlier, so their reaction to the adaptation may be predicted. "Literary texts provide a vein of raw material which is already tested: stories which work and are popular, as well as offering the 'respectability' conferred by the notion of 'literature' in itself, as well as the cache of certain writers" (FIU 2012). The biggest contribution of adaptations is that they remind us of the original story. "Adaptations keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise" (Hutcheon, 2006, 176). There are many adaptations of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the Bachelor thesis will focus on the latest of them, *Dorian Gray* from the year 2009 directed by Oliver Parker.

The aim of the thesis is to compare the 2009 film *Dorian Gray* to the original novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde. The method that will be used is the fidelity criticism which means that the comparison will be based on the film's fidelity to the original novel. The fidelity criticism is plenteously used by film critics so this thesis will also use this method. "The idea of 'fidelity' to a prior text is often what drives any directly comparative method of study" (Hutcheon, 1). The subjects of the analysis are the fidelity to the philosophy of the Aestheticism and the differences in the narrative structure and the description of the characters between the film and the novel.

In order to analyse these differences the second chapter deals with the L'art pour l'art movement, which is closely connected with the writers of the Aestheticism. Firstly it describes the movement in general concerning its origin, brief history and its main motifs. Then it focuses on its philosophy connected to Oscar Wilde, mainly the idea of self-development and the struggle between moral pathos and sensual pleasure. Consecutively it analyses the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and discovers the aesthetic thoughts in its characters and plot. Finally this chapter discusses the question whether the novel belongs to the works of Aestheticism and if the film *Dorian Gray* adheres to the ideas of this movement.

The third chapter deals with the issue of adaptation. Firstly it describes adaptation in general, than it focuses only on the novel to film adaptation. The basic and the most important facts about adaptations are mentioned there, those points being paid particular attention to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This chapter works as a theoretic model for the following chapter.

The fourth chapter applies the information from the previous one on the film adaptation *Dorian Gray*. The first subchapters analyse the film in terms of the narrative structure and the plot. The analysis will show that there are substantial differences between the novel and the film especially as regards explicitness, simplification and the more positive portrayal of the protagonist. These differences were caused by what I propose to call the "Hollywoodisation" of the story. The term Hollywoodisation indicates that the story was changed in order to create a film that would get a commercial success not only on the director's home British scene, but also on the mainstream American one. The film can thus be seen as a Hollywoodised version of the source novel. The second subchapter analyses the film in terms of the description of the characters of the novel. It focuses on each character separately and investigates the differences between the descriptions of the characters in the novel



and in the film.

On these three chapters this Bachelor thesis will attempt to demonstrate that **the Hollywoodisation of the story and the characters in the film caused a reduction of the main motifs and simplification of the Aesthetic philosophy of the original novel.**

## 2. L'art pour l'art, Aestheticism

### 2.1. Generally about Aestheticism

L'art pour l'art, or art for art's sake is a slogan, used by writers associated with Aestheticism. The slogan means that a work of art should exist only for an amusement of people, to bring beauty and passion to their lives. „In judging the work of art, the critic should reject moral, social, political, religious, and other nonaesthetic standards as irrelevant" (Preminger, Brogan 1993). Art should be independent. 'In practice it usually meant that art should avoid social, political, and moral themes and concentrate instead on creating beauty, so it really meant 'art for the sake of beauty and its elevating effects'" (Landow 2007).

Aestheticism is a 19th-century movement that believed in art as an end in itself. It was created as a reaction to the values of Victorian industrial age and its alienating social philosophies. „Aesthetic Movement may be understood as a further phase of Romanticism in reaction against philistine bourgeois values of practical efficiency and morality" (Baldick 2008). Victorian England saw great expansion of wealth, power and culture. It was a time of the prosperity of the British empire and industrial innovations. Along with the huge success there were **problems in politics and social sphere, because new tendencies started to appear**. "In ideology, politics, and society, the Victorians created astonishing innovation and change: democracy, feminism, unionization of workers, socialism, Marxism, and other modern movements took form. In fact, this age of Darwin, Marx, and Freud appears to be not only the first that experienced modern problems but also the first that attempted modern solutions. Victorian, in other words, can be taken to mean parent of the modern - and like most powerful parents, it provoked a powerful reaction against itself" (Landow 2009). The Aesthetic movement was a reaction to the **middle class morality and strict puritan code** of living in the nineteenth century (The

Victorian Age 2003, 929-930). But Aestheticism was not only a reaction to the condition of society, but it was also a reaction to the literature of Victorian age, "which is described by words such as 'prudish', 'repressed', and 'old fashioned'" (Landow 2009). Aestheticism was in opposition to this manner of an art with moral and strict meaning.

It was an isolated phenomenon, "Aestheticism was related to other movements such as symbolism or decadence represented in France, or decadentismo represented in Italy, and may be considered the British version of the same style. The British decadent writers were much influenced by the Oxford professor Walter Pater and his essays published during 1867–68, in which he stated that life had to be lived intensely, with an ideal of beauty and an emphasis on self-development. The artists and writers of Aesthetic style tended to profess that the Arts should provide refined **sensuous pleasure**, rather than convey moral or sentimental messages. The Aesthetes developed a cult of beauty, which they considered the basic factor of art. Life should copy Art, they asserted"(Wikipedia 2012). Oscar Wilde was one of the main protagonist of this movement. „It was Pater and his most notorious follower, Oscar Wilde, who did the most to popularize the Aesthetic attitude in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Reacting implicitly against Victorian moralism" (Childers, Hentzi 1995).

Walter Pater, and also Oscar Wilde, were influenced by Epicurus and his philosophy. Epicurus was a Greek philosopher active during the Hellenistic period who found pleasure to be the highest good and claimed that everything should be orientated to achieving pleasure. "Most of the philosopher's beliefs about art, the soul, and education are adapted to nineteenth-century Decadent ideals in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*,"(Terpening 2004) which "is devoted to an education that feeds the soul by teaching the student ideas of sense-perception and wholeness, how to

develop one's soul, to free itself from habit and theoretical abstraction and begin with a passionate apprehension of one's own responses to experience" (Childers, Hentzi 1995).

## **2.2. The idea of self-development**

The process of developing one's soul, which is crucial for Pater and also for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is called self-development. In the analysis of the term, it is discovered that self- means of oneself or itself, and development means the act, process of growing larger or more advanced (Merriam Webster 2012). To the Aesthetes, to be more advanced means to be more individualized and independent and to live passionately according to one's wishes. As Lord Henry Wotton says in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: „The aim of life is self-development, to realize one's nature perfectly" (Wilde 2000, 20). However, the self-development can be fully completed only in a society which allows it. Wilde wrote in his *Soul of Man*: It is important "that society should be constructed on such a basis that man has been forced into a groove in which he cannot freely develop what is wonderful, and fascinating, and delightful in him-in which, in fact, he misses the true pleasure and joy of living". Wilde believes that society gave us so many restrictions that we cannot develop ourselves fully and independently, especially not in an Victorian industrial age.

The theme of self-development is seen mainly in the opening chapters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where Lord Henry advises Dorian how to live a true life, how to be independent of orders and prohibitions of society. "We can clearly see a theme of self-development, which gives us Pater's acknowledged influence on Wilde, posited mainly by Lord Henry in the early chapters" (Clausson 2003, 342 ). Henry says: "The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion-these are the two things that govern us (Wilde 2000, 90,185).

But people should not be ruled by society, they should focus on their own lives. "To be good is to be in harmony with one's self. Discord is to be forced to be in harmony with others. One's own life – that is the important thing. Besides, Individualism has really the higher aim"(Wilde 2000, 76). People should focus on themselves and find a way to be their true selves. "To realize one's nature perfectly that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self"(Wilde 2000, 88). The word duty is completely acceptable here, according to Merriam Webster it means obligatory tasks, conduct, service, or functions that arise from one's position. Henry believes in the values of hedonism and individualism, he feels that he is in a position of a holder of these values, so for him the self-development is really a duty.

### **2.3. Sensual pleasure versus moral pathos**

In the stories of Oscar Wilde can be found two basic elements, ideas of living. These are the two possible ways to live a life, the first is the way of passion and pleasure and the second one is the way of moral values. "For Wilde, identity consists of two main elements, sensual pleasure and moral pathos, and in his moral universe these two elements are usually set in opposition to one another"(Carroll 2005, 290). According to Merriam Webster dictionary, pleasure means desire, inclination, a state of gratification, a source of delight or joy. Moral means of relating to principles of right and wrong in behaviour. Pathos means an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion. Both of them can be found in Wilde's works. "The most overt and explicit manifestations of Wilde's polar thematic structure appear in his fairy tales-stories that have medieval characters and settings and that are saturated with the spirit and mood of medieval religious experience. In the fairy tales, Christian pathos usually triumphs over egoistic cruelty and sensual pleasure. The Happy Prince and the swallow that serve as his messenger sacrifice

themselves for love and pity, and God sanctifies their sacrifice. The Selfish Giant repents of his selfishness, embraces the Christ Child, and is taken to heaven” (Carroll 2005, 290).

Morgan Scott Peck talked about these two tendencies in a human being in his most famous book *The Road Less Traveled*. M. Scott Peck was an American psychiatrist, living between 1936 and 2005. He stated that it is natural for all humans to want to put away morality and responsibility, but it is not a good way of living. According to Peck, in order to be a full, complete human being, people have to have discipline, which is crucial for our psychological health. He is not against sensual and passionate experiences, but he claims that morality and responsibility always comes first and people should be able to take responsibility for their own actions, therefore their passions should not be in conflict with their morality, but in harmoniousness. Basically it means that people can feel free to enjoy their sensual desires, but only if it is not against their moral beliefs (Peck 2003, 10-15).

### **2.3.1. Sensual pleasure and moral pathos in the description of the characters of *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

Basil Hallward is a representative character of what is called moral pathos. He believes in God, or at least at something "higher and transcendental". Basil is devoted to Dorian as the embodiment of purely sensual beauty, but he also believes in the "soul"; he believes that is, in the "continuity of moral identity-in the bonds we have with others that form part of our own inner selves", he argues that one would have to pay "a terrible price" for "living merely for one's self," a price in "remorse, in suffering, in [. . .] well, in the consciousness of degradation" (Wilde 2000, 64), (Carroll 2005, 295). Basil is an example of balance between pleasure and morality. He does not reject pleasure, he sublimates his desires into his art, his painting, in his behaviour, he shows the awareness of moral values and he does not hurt anybody

during satisfying his needs. He is sure of the existence of soul and of the possibility of salvation. He believes that if people act meekly and respectfully and regret truly their sins, they will receive absolution from God. When he sees the corrupted painting, he feels the horror of moral corruption, so he begs Dorian to change, to ask God for forgiveness, because he believes that it is not too late for Dorian to become a better person. But Dorian only laughs at Basil and kills him.

The representative of the idea of sensual pleasure and Aestheticism is in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the character of Lord Henry Wotton. He has many speeches about the importance of beauty and youth, he is the one who teaches Dorian to live a life of endless passion and no remorse. Henry also rejects the ideal of one and true love: "The people who love only once in their lives are really the shallow people. What they call their loyalty, and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy of custom or their lack of imagination. Faithfulness is to the emotional life what consistency is to the life of the intellect- imply a confession of failure"(Wilde 2000, 43). Besides not believing in true love, Henry does not believe in the importance of objective moral values in society either. "Henry's beliefs are based on the assumption that the self is not only multiple, but at war with itself and driven by forces beyond its control; and that morality is arbitrary and relative. This moral position leads to a withdrawal from human engagement, the pursuit of pleasure (both sensual and intellectual) as a distraction from disillusionment, and the manipulation of others for one's own enjoyment and edification. Henry wants only to turn reality into art by transforming everyday human events into aesthetically distanced drama"(Liebman 1991, 299). Henry is not aware of the danger that lurks in his words and philosophy. His influence on Dorian is huge and Dorian starts to live a life of a true aesthete of which Henry is only talking about.

Lord Henry influences Dorian by his seductive speeches, but that is not enough

for him. He also gives Dorian a mysterious yellow book as a gift. It describes a life of a young man, who lives only for the experience of pleasure. Dorian begins to live according to the stories of the main protagonist. He is completely influenced by Henry's words and his yellow book that he is not able to see the true consequences of his behaving. Dorian gets this yellow book some time after Sibyl's death, right after he decides to hide the painting in the attic. He describes that this book fascinates and influences him that the adventures and experiences of the protagonist are somewhat as a model for his own life and during Dorian's life it becomes Bible to him. But all this happens after his „decision" to live fully, passionately and without remorse, which he made after Sibyl had killed herself and confirmed it by the act of hiding the painting. He realizes that he can do whatever he wants and nobody will see it, because the painting will bear all of his sins. So the book influenced him a lot, but after he decided to live a life of passion. The decision was his alone and the book just inspired his actions.

### **2.3.2. Sensual pleasure and moral pathos in the plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be found both motives, sensual pleasure as well as moral pathos. The plot of the novel can be interpreted on the basis of a conflict between these two elements. It can be illustrated on Gustav Freytag's Triangle, which he proposed as a method of analysing a plot. This method is based on Aristotle's concept of unity of action introduced in his book *Poetics*. Aristotle claims that a plot (mythus) is the most important feature of a story and has to have three main parts: the beginning, the middle and the end. The middle consists of three parts: peripeteia, pathos and anagnorisis. Peripeteia is a point of reversal, a turning point in the character's fortune. Pathos is a point of suffering, an act which causes doom or pain. Anagnorisis is a realization of the character's true position in life, he



realizes here if he is destined to happiness or unhappiness. Freytag adjusted this theory and created his own narrative structure. It consists of five parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution (Aristotle 1997, 18, Freytag 1944, 51).

In the exposition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the main characters are presented, Basil Hallward as a man of moral values, Lord Henry Wotton as a man of hedonism and Aestheticism and Dorian Gray as a young and innocent boy. In the rising action Dorian becomes influenced by Henry's opinions and his seductive comments on the importance of youth and living a passionate life and does not pay any attention to Basil's warnings. The rising action is when Dorian delivers a wish, a contract with the Devil himself that he would stay young and handsome forever. In the climax Dorian separates from Sibyl and the morning after he feels bad about what happened, he is determined to go to Sibyl and apologize to her. Before he does so, he learns about Sibyl's suicide and lets Henry to calm him, so he feels absolutely no regret or remorse and decides to live a life without qualms and regards, because it is the painting that will be punished, not he himself. The yellow book becomes his manual how to live only for passion. In the falling action Dorian kills Basil, so the only defender of a moral life is now dead. In the resolution, when Dorian is all alone, because all of his friends had left him, Dorian realizes what he had done with his life, is ashamed of it and wants to change, wants to become a good man. He goes to see the portrait, he wants to know if his decision made a change in it. After learning that nothing is better in the painting, only worse, he suddenly sees all the bad things he had done, he realizes that his wish to be better was only a selfish intention and is not able to bear it any longer so he stabs the painting and dies.

After accepting Henry's aesthetic philosophy, Dorian begins to live a life of a true Aesthete. He enjoys life in every possible way and cares only about the shallow

golden cover of his acts and experiences, he wants only to wring the pleasure from everything. He has no interest in consequences and moral values in his behaving. Henry is telling to Dorian: "Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations" (Wilde 2000, 46). Dorian listens to Henry and lives a life with aesthetic purposes. The fact that Dorian lets himself be completely absorbed by the idea of living only for passion, pleasure and nothing else brings him to his end. Besides Dorian, the other victims of his behaviour are Sibyl Vane and Basil Hallward.

#### **2.4. The Picture of Dorian Gray and its fidelity to the L'art pour l'art movement**

One thing can be questioned in the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its worldwide known categorization as a work of art belonging to the Aesthetic movement. The biggest motto of the Aestheticism is that the art should serve no other purpose than bringing beauty. But in the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, there are two works of art, both important to the story, which are presented as something more than just beautiful things. These are Basil's painting and the yellow book. The book becomes a sort of a manual to Dorian, it serves him as an inspiration for his own life. The portrait plays a role of a mysterious mirror, which bears the consequences of Dorian's behaving, therefore allows him to live a life which he wants. This motif is against the believe of Aestheticism that art serves only as an object of beauty with no other purposes or meaning. But Oscar Wilde was not focusing on the meaning of art in this novel, he tried to apply the Aesthetic values on a life of a real person, Dorian Gray. "Dorian's life turns out to be something like an experimental test case for the validity of Pater's aesthetic philosophy"(Caroll 2005, 291). Oscar Wilde took Pater's opinions on a work of art and investigated their validity in a case of a real life. Therefore the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a work of Aestheticism and the values and ideas of this movement are traceable throughout the book via the

character of Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray himself. "The novel, an archetypal tale of a young man who purchases eternal youth at the expense of his soul, was a romantic exposition of Wilde's own Aestheticism" (Britannica, 2012).

Oscar Wilde himself confirms that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a work of Aestheticism. In the preface to this book he writes: „The artist is the creator of beautiful things.", „All art is quite useless." These are premises of the Aesthetic movement. Aesthetes concentrated their theories mainly on works of art, but Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* he tried to apply these theories on a real life. The Aestheticism in Dorian's life is the desire to live only for beauty and passion, without any obstacles, because the portrait bears and hides all the signs of Dorian's corrupted souls. In his life, there are some moments of regret, e.g. after the break up with Sibyl or at the end, when he is all alone without friends, when Dorian tries to accept at least some morality into his life, but each time he chooses to live according to hedonism. At the end Dorian ends badly, which means that Wilde wanted to show that if one lives a life of an Aesthete without any boundaries, limits or a balance between sensual pleasure and moral pathos, it will not end well. And that is the same that Morgan Scott Peck claims. Moral order and sensual pleasure has to be in balance in order to have a meaningful and healthy life. Everything in life has to be in balance, because every extreme leads right to the end. Because Dorian was fully absorbed by Henry's philosophy and the ideas in that yellow book and he was not able to set a limit between pleasure and morality, his actions were highly immoral and in a real life this kind of behaviour has consequences. That is why Dorian ended up dead, leaving behind only his beautiful jewellery and his hideous and corrupted body.

But what about the film, is it also an Aesthetic work ? Yes, in the sense that it follows the basic meaning of the novel. Oscar Wilde tried to apply Aesthetic theories about work of art on a real life, and he discovered that it is not possible to live purely

Aesthetic life, our desire for sensual pleasure has to be in balance with moral order. The film sticks to this lesson, so the message is the same that Wilde wanted in his book.

It is more difficult to evaluate the film in terms of its aesthetic value. The most important feature of the work of art according to Aestheticism is that it has to bring beauty, be beautiful. The film is copying the novel, it is not original, not innovative. It just wants to make money on a story that has been considered famous and beautiful earlier. The film has many additional expressive sexual scenes, probably to superficially attract more audience. The beauty of the novel was in its playfulness, nothing is said directly, the reader has to explore the story and think about it. In the case of the film, everything is shown explicitly, the viewer has no chance to immerse into the story, to sympathize with the characters.

The film follows the story of the original novel, but simplifies many of its features, which leads to the reduction of the Aesthetic philosophy included in the original. The film changed the reason for Dorian and Sibyl's separation from a loss of artistic interest into an ordinary unwanted pregnancy. The love that Dorian had with Sibyl was from his side purely aesthetic, but in the film it is reduced only to a sexual relationship. In the novel Henry's pieces of advice contain all kinds of pleasure and self-development, but in the film the main focus is only on sensual and sexual pleasure. The whole Aesthetic philosophy was reduced only to sensual pleasure in the film.

### **3. A theory of adaptation**

#### **3.1. About adaptation**

Adaptation is a work of art based on another work of art. „Adaptation is an openly acknowledged and extended reworking of particular other text, transported to another medium, or even moved within the same one" (Hutcheon 2006, 16). Basically it means that we find a story we like and then do variations on it through adaptation. The most common are adaptations that move from the telling to the showing mode, usually from print to performance and the most favourite are the adaptations of novels. „Novels contain much information that can be rapidly translated into action or gesture on stage or screen or dispensed with altogether" (Hutcheon 2006, 38-39). This paper will focus mainly on novel to film adaptation.

Hutcheon claims that the phenomenon of adaptation can be defined from three distinct but interrelated perspectives:

1. *a formal entity of product* – an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works, this „transcoding" can involve a shift of medium or genre , or a change of frame and therefore context

2. *a process of creation* – the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective

3. *a process of reception* – adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation

(Hutcheon 2006, 7-8).

For this paper the most important definition is the first one. With this definition Hutcheon suggests that adaptation openly admits its dependence and inspiration in the original text. The creators of the adaptation may change and re-interpret the story,

but there will always be a relation between them. Unlike Hutcheon, Brian McFarlane claims that the new piece should be considered separately, as a new work of art without the relation to the original. This paper supports Hutcheon's view and respects the relation between the adaptation and the original text. The original texts were created for people to explore and understand them, and adaptations just show, how the new creator understands and likes the original work. Art was always derived from other art and so stories were born of other stories. „Adaptation is a kind of repetition, but with variation, it gains from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Adaptations are never simply reproductions" (Hutcheon 2006, 4). Everybody understands a story differently, in his or her own way that is why every adaptation is different, it is based on one's own nature and ability to retell in their own words something they have read. It is not a simple copy of the original text.

### **3.2. The novel-film adaptation**

Adaptations are so popular, because it is very easy to talk about them. The original text is usually well known, so the viewers feel able to comment on it, at levels ranging from the gossipy to the erudite, on the nature and success of the adaptation involved. „That is, the interest in adaptation is not a rarefied one. The film-makers themselves have been drawing on literary sources, and especially novels of varying degrees of cultural prestige, since film first established itself as pre-eminently a narrative medium" (McFarlane 1996, 3).

Another explanation for the popularity of novel-film adaptations lies in Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and Freud's theory of unconsciousness. In every story, there is a hidden "sub-story", which affects our subconsciousness and unconsciousness. "Both psychiatrist believed that art is a reflection of underlying structures of meaning that is satisfies certain subconscious needs in both the artist and the audience" (Giannetti 2004, 403). Jung claims that there are some basic

stories which need to be repeated. "Jung was fascinated by myths, fairy tales, and folklore, which he believed contained symbols and story patterns that were universal to all individuals in all cultures and periods" (Giannetti 2004, 403-404). These symbols are archetypal patterns which create **collective unconsciousness** which is common to all people. By constant repeating of these stories we connect ourselves with the roots of our culture. Of course the story is changed in order to be presented to a different people from different era, but in the core they are the same. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* we can obviously find the story about the desire for eternal beauty and also the story of a debt that must be paid, connected with the willingness to promise one's soul in exchange for what one longs for, as it was in the Faust story.

### **3.3. The issue of fidelity**

We know that every adaptation must be evaluated by film critics, but which method of investigation whether the adaptation was successful or not do the critics use? The most common method is „**fidelity criticism**". „The term adaptation studies has historically implied a perspective of comparison, which admits a fundamental and determining relationship between "this book" and "this film" and leads frequently to "fidelity criticism". Such an understanding is intuitive and supports the longstanding comparative approach to adaptations" (Welsh 2007, 51). „The most basic and banal focus in evaluating adaptations is the issue of "fidelity," usually leading to the notion that "the book was better" (Welsh 2007, xiv). It is not easy to decide, whether the fidelity criticism is the right way to evaluate an adaptation. „The relationship between film and literary sources is the basis of the field of the theory of adaptation, but many of its experts have different and varied notions about the importance of fidelity. No doubt some, such as Frank Thompson or David Kranz, would argue for "fidelity, accuracy, and truth" as being essential components for evaluating adaptations. Others are more interested in evaluating the relationship

between films and their sources in different terms, giving more consideration, for example, to cinematic form (Brian McFarlane), intertextuality (Thomas Leitch), or intellectual history (Donald Whaley) or positing that a film may surpass its source (in the case of Peter Lev's approach)" (Welsh 2007, xxv). McFarlane claims that each reading is different and that film only shows the concrete reading of a concrete director.

The critics should be careful about the strict perseverance to the fidelity of a film to an original text. It is a very important aspect of adaptation, whether the adaptation is similar to the original text and respects it, but literal replication of the dialogues and scenes is not the basis of adaptation and in the case of a long story it is not even possible. Here the term fidelity means that the adaptation respects the original and holds the **story, motifs and description of characters**. There might exist other ways to create an adaptation with the respect for the precursor. „Perhaps one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of fidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous" (Hutcheon 2006, 20). The proximity or fidelity to the adapted text does not need to be the only criterion of judgement or the focus of analysis, but it surely is one of the most important that is why this paper will evaluate the film adaptation on the basis of fidelity to the original text with focus on plot and description of characters.

### **3.4. What is adaptable**

It is important to know which story can be adapted and which cannot. „Let's begin with the notion that **everything is adaptable** that whatever exists in one medium might be adapted or translated into another, given the right imaginative initiative" (Welsh 2007, xv). With this sentence, Welsh suggests that we are able to adapt everything that it is possible to adapt every novel to a film screen. „This



transfer is a process by which novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium" (McFarlane 1996, 13). Hutcheon explains the novelistic elements as mainly the „**spirit**", „**tone**", „**style**" and „**story**" of the original text. Spirit means "the feeling, quality, or disposition characterizing something" (Merriam Webster 2012)- Tone is "style or manner of expression in speaking or writing" (Merriam Webster 2012), so it can be for example serious, humorous, joyful or informal. Style is "a particular manner or technique by which something is done, created, or performed," (Merriam Webster 2012) so in writing it is the way of using language. The most easiest to transfer is the story. Elements of the story are its **themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery** and so on. „Themes are perhaps the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres of framing contexts" (Hutcheon 2006, 10). Hutcheon explains, however that while themes are, in fact, of most importance to novels and plays, in TV and films, on the contrary, themes must always serve the story action. Characters, too, can obviously be transported from one text to another, characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts. The separate units of the story can also be transmediated – pacing can be transformed, time can be compressed or expanded (Hutcheon 2006, 11). The film medium has many ways to transfer the story and its features. "Many concepts have been proposed to help describe how on-screen data is transformed through various spatial, temporal, and causal schemes culminating in a perceived story world. The various stages have been described with concepts like script, set decoration, technology, technique, performance, material, shot, form, style, plot, diegesis, code, narration, and referent" (Branigan 1992, 34).

### **3.5. What influences adaptation**

Besides the abilities of the film-makers, there are some other things that can

influence what the adaptation will look like. „Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture” (Hutcheon 2006, 27). Both the creator and the spectator of the story are influenced by the surrounding world. "The contexts of creation and reception are material, public and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic” (Hutcheon 2006, 27). Adaptation is always framed in context, therefore the directors have to adjust their work to a concrete culture and current social and political situation, so some features of the novel have to be changed so that the new audience would be able to understand it and appreciate it. This fact that the target society for which is the adaptation created influences its form can be illustrated on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its adaptation from 2009. In the film there are scenes with sexual context and the decline of Dorian’s soul is caused mainly by his unstoppable desire for sexual experiences supplemented with the usage of drugs. In the novel Dorian is seeking pleasures and experiences of all kinds, also the intellectual ones, and there is no straight mention about sexual matters. It is possible that these additional scenes were created because the film is intended for the mainstream audience of the 21st century, which appreciate expressive sexual scenes, so the film-makers want the film to appeal to the audience. Nowadays the sexuality is not a taboo, so people can relate to it.

Another very important thing that influences adaptation is **technology**. "Technology, too, has probably always framed, not to mention driven, adaptation, in that new media have constantly opened the door for new possibilities. If you want to express the features of a text in a film, you have to have technologies that would let you to do that” (Hutcheon 2006, 30). In a film medium it could be working with the camera, slow motion, lighting, close-up, flashbacks and nowadays also **computer technology** that allows you to do and create practically everything.

### 3.6. From print to screen : the differences between book and film

Books and films are completely different media. In one the reader is involved in the story by language, in the other one by visual images. If you buy a new book, you can read it how long you want with so many stops and rereading as you want. If you go to see a new film to the cinema, it lasts the given amount of time and you cannot stop it or slow it down that is possible only if you are watching DVD. There are many differences between these two media, but it is still popular to try to transfer them from one to another. The original text is model, the artwork, and the film is a particular rendition of it.

The most noticeable difference between novel and film is the issue of the **spots of indeterminacy**. Roman Ingarden claims that a literary work of art has spots of indeterminacy. These are the things in a text that are not explicitly described and it is on the reader to imagine them, to supplement the missing information. The spots of indeterminacy are the features of the plot and characters that every reader sees differently, because they depend only on their own fantasy and imagination (Thomasson, 2008). Wolfgang Iser (inspired by Ingarden) claims that the spots of indeterminacy are indispensable for literary prose and they engage the reader into the reconstruction of the story, they offer an active participation. The text becomes a space for the reader's imagination (Schneider, 2001). The reader has to imagine what the scenery and the characters look like, what exactly they are doing, how they are moving and many other things, so he is a part of the story and is absorbed by it. In seeing a film adaptation of a novel, the reader is deprived of this possibility. Every visual and aural image and feature is given, described and there is no place for imagination or one's own reconstruction of the story or characters. The spectator is not actively connected to the story, but is only passively receiving the information. "In film adaptation it is up to the director and actors to actualize the text and to

interpret and then recreate it, thereby in a sense adapting it for the stage” (Hutcheon 2006, 130). So the director and the actor do this job instead of the spectator.

Since a film is a different medium from a book, it is apparent that even if the adaptation works with the same story as the original text, the reaction of the audience may differ. In order to understand the different reactions of audience to the original and to the adaptation, we have to distinguish between possibilities of engagement across different media. Each media has a different type of narration mode and therefore it is able of a different type of engagement. The telling mode works with the spots of indeterminacy, because it awakens our imagination. „In **the telling mode** – in a narrative literature, for example – our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text and liberated – that is, unconstrained by the limits of the visual or aural. We can stop reading at any point, we can re-read or skip ahead, we hold the book on our hands and feel, as well as see, how much of the story remains to be read. But with the move to the mode of showing, as in film and stage adaptations, we are caught in an unrelenting, forward driving story. And we have moved from the imagination to the realm of direct perception – with its mix of both detail and broad focus. **The performance mode** teaches us that language is not the only way to express meaning or to relate stories. Visual and gestural representations are rich in complex associations; music offers aural equivalents for character’s emotions and, in turn, provokes affective responses in the audience; sound, in general, can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects” (Hutcheon 2006, 45). Different is also a decoding process. „In reading, we gather details of narrative, character, context, and the like gradually and sequentially; in seeing a film, we perceive multiple objects, relations, and significant signs simultaneously, even if the script or music or soundtrack is resolutely linear” (Hutcheon 2006, 130). All modes

of engagement can be considered immersing. The act of reading a print text immerses us through our own imagination in another world created mainly by the possibilities of our fantasy, and seeing a play or film immerses us visually and aurally by images and sounds created by somebody else.

In order to create a novel to film adaptation the director has to know how to do the transfer. There are many ways, how film-makers can transfer a story from print to screen, but it is not an easy task. "It is said that the familiar **move from telling to showing** and, more specifically, from a long and complex novel to any form of performance is usually seen as the most fraught transposition. On the other hand, film medium and cinema have within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions and other story features that have so far failed to find expression in words. Most powerful seems to be **the soundtrack**. Soundtracks in films are able to enhance and direct audience response to characters and action. Film sound can also be used to connect inner and outer states in a less explicit way than do camera associations" (Hutcheon 2006, 41). It is true that the soundtrack is a very powerful tool. The sound can express anything, the mood, the feeling, the emotion, the atmosphere and even some actions, when you here steps, you know that somebody is coming.

Another advantage of film medium is the fact that it can display practically everything. With modern computer technologies it is not a problem to express such thing as a beautiful odour without any words, just with an apt shot on a spring garden, as it was in a Tykwer's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. Moreover, today it is not a problem to find a cinema that offers also olfactory perception, as well as simulation of movement. Film also has the power to attract viewers by its **visual images**. Some reader could be bored with a book but satisfied with a film adaptation of it because of the simple work of **light, colour and sound**. Film also has its own ways of narration. „Most films use the **camera** as a kind of moving third-person narrator to represent

the point of view of a variety of characters at different moments” (Hutcheon 2006, 54). The work with the camera is also able to express inner feelings. "The power of that **close-up**, for example, to create psychological intimacy is so obvious that directors can use it for powerful and revealing interior ironies" (Hutcheon 2006, 55).

The cinema is also able to express **time and time changes** very well. "Film medium is indeed capable of **flashbacks** and **flash forwards**, and its very immediacy can make the shifts potentially more effective than in prose fiction where the narrating voice stands between the characters immersed in time and the reader. Performance tropes do exist, in other words, to fuse and interrelate past, present, and future” (Hutcheon 2006, 63). In films, flashback is used to inform the spectator about something that happened in the past, but is somehow related to the present. Not only the actual time can be expressed in film, but also the historical time, in which the story takes place. "There are in fact many ways in which the past or „pastness" can be represented in film: through décor and costumes, props, music, titles, colour, archaic recording devices, and artificially aged or real past footage” (Hutcheon 2006, 64). Also moving forward in time can be easily expressed in film. "The "montage-sequence" has long been popular: a collection of shots showing selected aspects of an event or sequence, usually integrated by continuous music. There have also been many cruder solutions, like peeling calendars, dates written as legend on the screen, and voice-over narrators” (Chatman 1080, 69).

A book and a film have many things in common, but they are also different. Another type of medium means another possibilities of creation a story, atmosphere, characters, tone and style and other features. The film adaptation uses the same story as the original text, but creates a new work of art. An adaptation offers as many ways of treatment and understanding of the original text as well as many critical opinions, which will never be in a complete agreement.

## **4. Comparison: the book versus the film(2009)**

### **4.1. The differences in the narrative structure**

This analysis of the differences in the narrative structure will be structured according to three main points in which the film differs from the novel. The differences will be analysed and interpreted with the connection to the theory in the previous chapter. These three points are: explicitness, simplification and the portraying of Dorian Gray. Together these changes lead to the Hollywoodisation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Along with the super modern technologies and creativity, the success of the Hollywood films lies also in the displaying of sexual and other explicit scenes. „Hollywood formula is sex, violence, action and drugs" (Artz, et al. 2007, 45). As Michael Medved, an American film critic, claims, in these days Hollywood production is focused on mainstream audience, the teenage cinema goers, which are interested in seeing the latest modern visual and aural technologies as well as open sexual scenes. „Today's films, [...], use their enormous capacity to influence opinion by glamorizing violence, maligning marriage, mocking authority, promoting sexual promiscuity, ridiculing religion, and bombarding viewers with an endless stream of profanity, gratuitous sex, and loutish forms of behaviour" (Mintz, 2012).

#### **4.1.1. Explicitness, physicality, action**

The film is made for an entertainment of the audience, it carries mainly thrill, action and sexuality and the main theme of the novel retreats into background. In the film the first scene that is introduced is Dorian Gray killing somebody and then cleaning the blood with a yellow scarf. With this additional scene rises a suggestion that Dorian will do something tragic in the future and probably to a person with that yellow scarf. This scene creates suspense in the same way a detective story does, which attracts people to watch it to the end.

The film shows right from the beginning that it will focus on sexual pleasure. After the scene of the murder, the viewer is told that the story is moving in time one year earlier. Dorian, Basil and Henry are in Basil's atelier and they decide to go to town, to Whitechapel. They enter a club called Hell Fire and have a few drinks there. Henry talks about life and passion and claims that pleasure, and mainly sexual pleasure is the most important thing in life, along with beauty and youth, youth is a gift and we should use that gift. After the visit to the club, when they are back in the atelier, Dorian delivers the wish. In both media Henry is influencing Dorian by his aesthetic philosophy, but in different places. In the book they are in the garden, watching flowers and butterflies. In the film the scene is set in a pub where there are many disturbing inputs, such as alcohol, prostitutes and also Sibyl Vane. The possible interpretation for this change is connected with the theory of the spots of indeterminacy. In the novel it is on the reader to understand Henry's words and pieces of advice, but in the film they give us the understanding by this scene, they tell us that they will focus just on the pleasure connected with physical contentment.

Another explicit element concerns Basil Hallward. In the film, the preceding scene of the murder of Basil is Dorian's birthday party, where Dorian has oral sex with Basil. There is no mention about their sexual relationship in the novel. After the sex they get into a fight and Basil leaves and forgets his yellow scarf. The close-up on the yellow scarf identifies that the story goes back to the initial scene of the murder, so the viewer can predict that something will happen now. When Basil returns to Dorian's after the party, he is disappointed with Dorian's behaviour and wants him to explain what has happened to him. Basil's death is described similarly from this point, the only difference is that Dorian throws Basil's body into the river and eventually the body is found and there is also a funeral.

In the film there are also scenes that increase action, because in today's



Hollywood action is an important element of the film and has the ability to attract the audience. The next day after Sibyl's death, a brother of Sibyl Jim Vane (in the book his name is James) comes to Dorian's house and tells him that Sibyl was pregnant and now she is dead, she killed herself because of Dorian. Jim attacks Dorian but his servant saves him. Another action comes also with Jim Vane. It is on the street outside the church where is Jim and he attacks Dorian. He tries to shoot him, but Dorian runs to hide in the tube. After a small catch me game Jim suddenly falls into the trackage and is run over by a train. There is no mention of a fight between Dorian Gray and James Vane in the novel and there is also no chase, in the novel James is killed by accident.

The Hollywoodisation of the film lies also in the visual and aural effects. When Dorian looks at the portrait, it is displayed in a horrible way, with dark colours and moving worms inside it. And it is accompanied with terrifying sounds produces by the painting. But the most explicitness and physicality is in the additional scenes, mainly sexual scenes, for example the one when Dorian and Henry make a bet and Dorian has sex with a mother and her daughter, or the one where Dorian gives oral sex to Basil. Or the scene where Henry goes with Dorian to the theatre, but on the way there they make a stop in an opium den and have sex with prostitutes, which is another scene put there only for the audience and their entertainment. These scenes are explicitly expressing Dorian's lack of moral values and his focus only on sensual pleasure.

Another feature of the film is that its camera focuses on the faces of the main protagonists. Laura Mulvey claimed in her article called *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema in 1975* that classical Hollywood film focuses on the male spectator. It means that the film is created in order to appeal to men, so it displays beautiful women to satisfy desires of men. „Traditional films treat women as passive

objects of desire for men [...] and do not allow women to be desiring sexual subjects. Men do the looking, women are there to be looked at" (Chandler 2000). Nowadays the situation is different and the film makers try to satisfy also the female audience, so also the male beauty is displayed in the films and may be the central point of a film. *Dorian Gray* is also full of close-ups focused on the faces of the main protagonists. As Giannetti suggests, the aim of some films is to show "beautiful people being beautiful" (Giannetti 2004, 372). In the case of *Dorian Gray*, this aim nicely corresponds with the opinions of the *l'art pour l'art* movement that art should be beautiful and serve no other purpose.

#### **4.1.2. Simplification**

Another difference between the novel and the film is the simplification of some features of the story. The film makers reduced the Aesthetic theory only to sexual and physical passion, which lead to additional sexual scenes. The first thing that was simplified is the title itself, the film is named only *Dorian Gray*. Also the name of Sibyl's brother, James Vane was reduced to Jim. What is also missing are the intellectual debates, which are shorter and more simple in the film. All the simplifications allow the audience to concentrate less on the actual story and the things beyond it and enable them to enjoy the film by the means of a simple visual entertainment.

The key fact that leads to Sibyl's suicide is simplified in the film. The reason for Dorian and Sibyl's separation in the novel is that Dorian is disappointed with her performance and feels ashamed before his friends. He realizes that he loved only her art, her acting and the fictional characters, not the person of Sibyl Vane. When her art vanishes, he is not able to love her any longer. In the film the reason is much more simpler, it is the unwanted pregnancy. This is connected with the creating an adaptation for a particular culture and age. It is difficult to describe Dorian's true

reason to the mainstream audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in such a short time that is given in the film, and it is possible that even if there was enough time the true reason would be still incomprehensible for today's audience. Therefore Dorian's motive had to be simplified in order to enable the audience to identify with the character's feelings.

Another simplification is connected with the omission of one character which would complicate the story and make the audience think. In the novel, the next day after Basil's murder, Dorian invites to his house and old friend and scientist, Alan Campbell. He tells him about the dead body and wants him to use his knowledge of chemistry to take care of it, make it disappear. Firstly Alan disagrees, so Dorian reminds him of a secret that he can reveal and that would ruin Alan's life. After blackmailing Alan agrees and destroys the body. In the novel Alan is quite important, because it is one of the persons who gets destroyed by Dorian's selfish and bad behaviour. In the film there is completely missing the character of Alan Campbell, because the film focuses mainly on Dorian's sexual "indiscretions" so there is no need for a character like that.

In the film the ending is more compact. There is a new character, Emily Wotton, Henry's daughter. Dorian thinks that he is in love with her and that she can save his soul, because she is so young and her soul is not spoiled. But Henry is against their relationship. In the novel Dorian also tries to be better, but is connected with completely unknown girl. In the film Dorian falls in love with Emily, because she is a relative to Henry and it makes the story more compact, the character is associated with another character, so it is easier for the spectator to accept her and it makes the story less realistic, because nothing in life is so connected and compact.

#### **4.1.3. Dorian goes to Hollywood**

In the film the character of Dorian Gray is portrayed in a way that he is a better

person than in the novel. He is behaving with more morality, so he can appeal to the audience. When he has a speech at Basil Hallwards's funeral, he reminds one of the character of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. During the day he is also a respectable man belonging to a higher society, knows a lot about life, but in the night he turns into something different. This scene indicates to the audience that Dorian has not only a dark side. The idea that a character lives a double life is popular, because everyone from the audience has a secret wish or dream, but is not able to fulfil it. So by seeing the character freely live two lives, the spectator feels through the character the liberating feeling that rises from such a way of life. Also the spectator gets an expectation or hope that someday maybe he will be able to make this dream come true (Clausson 2003, 342-350).

The film shows the Character of Dorian Gray in a better light. In both media after Basil's death the story moves twenty years forward. In the film, Dorian, on his way home from an opium den, sees the old picture of Sibyl, the memories of her come back to him, so he goes to the cemetery to honour her grave. When Jim Vane is run over by a train, before he dies, Dorian manages to apologize to him for Sibyl's death. Because of these two scenes the audience can see that he regrets what happened, which is not truth in the novel. The fact that in the film Dorian apologizes for Sibyl's death and also that he meets Jim Vane in the cemetery can partially compensate for his awful behaviour, he is there because he wants to recall Sibyl and feels bad about her death. It makes him more likeable person and the audience can relate to him and can accept him as a typical protagonist of a Hollywood film.

Dorian appears as a better person in the film also because he tries to blame Henry for his deeds. At the end of the film Henry sees Basil's old yellow scarf and is shaken by the hideous person in the painting. Dorian tells him that he has become the person that Henry wanted him to be, he followed his lead and the painting is the

result of it. Dorian becomes angry and starts to strangle Henry, but Emily appears. Henry uses the time that Emily's arrival gave him and he sets the painting on fire, escapes and locks Dorian in the room. Emily wants to save Dorian, but he realizes it is too late for him to be saved and lets Henry to take Emily away. When is Dorian alone, he takes a knife and stabs the painting. The painting becomes beautiful again and dead Dorian's body is now the one that is ugly and decayed. The scene where Dorian and Henry are openly discussing the reason why Dorian became what he became helps the spectator to understand what was happening, namely that Henry spoiled Dorian's soul by his philosophy of living selfishly and only for pleasure. This final discussion enables the viewer to relate to the characters. And the fact that Dorian blames Henry for teaching him to be a bad person can purify Dorian in the eyes of the audience, they can consider him as manipulated by Henry.

#### **4.2. Analysis of the differences in describing the main characters**

##### **Basil Hallward**

Basil Hallward is a London's famous painter. He is reasonable and kind person. It seems that he has no other passion in life than his painting. It is possible that he is in love with Dorian Gray, but he is not trying to make Dorian his lover. He could be one of the "lucky ones", as Sigmund Freud says that are able to sublimate their libido, passion and greed into art. Freud suggests that one of the ways of reaching happiness and satisfaction is the way of art. But it is not for everybody and it does not involve the physical contentment: „A way to reach happiness is the sublimation of libido into psychical and intellectual sphere which means to focus on satisfying of psychical needs by self education or by creating art" (Freud 1998, 29). Only few people are able to do that and they are satisfied by creating something beautiful.

The friendship with Dorian Gary changes his style of work. He finds Dorian very interesting, he is somewhat an ideal to him. Basil claims that he is not able to

paint well without Dorian by his side, Dorian is like a new muse to him. When Henry asks him why he won't exhibit the painting, Basil replies: „Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him” (Wilde 2000, 14). He does not want to show the painting publicly, because he put much of himself into it, therefore nobody is allowed to see it. He is afraid that if Dorian notices his feelings for him in the painting, it would make him more suggestible and vulnerable to Dorian's influence. He also knows that people and society in his times would not understand and accept this excessive admiring of man's beauty by a man. After some time, he realizes that art is not revealing his soul, art is there only to show beauty, so nobody could read Basil's mind through the painting.

The description of Basil's character is almost the same in the book and film. The only notable difference is in sexual matters. In the novel, the reader can only guess his true relationship to Dorian, we know that he loves him, but it is more love to a subject of adoration than physical love. In the film when Dorian gives oral sex to Basil, it is obvious that he is truly pleased, so it indicates that his love to Dorian is a real love with all included. Today's audience is willing to accept a homosexual character, but in the time *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written it was unthinkable to say out loud that somebody, even a character from a book, is a homosexual.

### **Lord Henry Wotton**

Henry Wotton is a young gentleman, who has his own philosophical opinions on life. He is a typical representative of hedonism, which is "the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life" (Merriam Webster 2012), so he thinks that the pleasure is the best things that can rule his world. He teaches Dorian about the importance of youth and beauty and that he should always follow his desires and live every experience, the bad ones as well as the good ones. Henry is a

great talker, so it is predicable that Dorian eventually believes his words. He obviously does not think about the consequences of his philosophy and what it might do with Dorian, because at the end of the novel he claims that Dorian could not kill anybody, because murder is only for a lowlife person. He does not realize that his words actually made a lowlife from Dorian.

In the book, Henry only talks about the excitement of life, about the importance of searching for pleasure and every kind of experience that gives us pleasure. In his own life, he is quite decent man, he is married and he participates in London's social life, such as the parties of the cream of the society or the theatre. In the film, he also does some things that he is teaching Dorian. For example he takes Dorian to an opium den, which is also a house of prostitution, and he takes the drugs and has sex with the prostitutes. But also in the film Henry never exceeds the ultimate moral limits and when he is old he realizes the bad side of this kind of living.

Another significant difference in the film is Henry's age. In the novel, he is ten years older than Dorian, but in the film we see that he is twenty years older minimum. So at the end of the story, where he should be around forty according to the book, he is very old, around sixty, so the difference in appearance between him and Dorian is even more visual. This change is connected with the effort to portray the character of Dorian Gray in a more „Hollywood style". Because of his age Henry looks like a fatherly model to Dorian, so the spectator respects him and understands why Dorian is listening to him.

Except for these differences, the character of Lord Henry Wotton presented in the film is similar to the one in the book. At the end of the original story, Henry is the one who tells Dorian that his desire for change is not real that it is only a selfish way to save himself. In the film, he is the one who locks Dorian in the old schoolroom and sets the room on fire, so it is again he who helps Dorian to realize that it is too

late for a change.

### **Dorian Gray**

At the beginning of the story, Dorian is portrayed as an innocent man, whose soul and thoughts are pure and not spoiled by anything bad. Dorian is very impressionable and as he becomes friend with Lord Henry, he starts to be influenced by Henry's own opinions on life and his pure and innocent soul becomes slowly but surely corrupted.

After Sibyl's death, he feels terrible, he regrets what he had done, but Henry's influential words win again. He persuades him to understand Sibyl's death as a closing of a work of art. Dorian now feels like he is the master of life and that he can do and have everything. The corruption of his new ego culminates when he kills Basil, his dear friend. Dorian's initial innocence is all gone. At the end of the story, Dorian wishes to be a better person, but realizes that it is not possible after all he had done, so he kills himself. Dorian's relationship to Emily Wotton in the film is additional, there was no Emily Wotton in the book. He falls in love with her at the end of the story and wants to change for her, to be with her.

The film displays openly Dorian's sexuality, which is something that is not directly described in the book, in the novel the reader can only sense or feel that he is going through wild sexual experiences, but in the film everything is shown. Dorian seduces Sibyl so they have intercourse before wedding that indicates that his new life style will be dedicated to sexual pleasure, so in the film his sins are mainly of the physical character. In the book, the reader somehow knows that he is enjoying physical pleasure, but the main reason for the decline of his soul is his cruel and careless behaviour. He destroys everybody who he meets, illustrated on a character of Alan Cambell, who commits suicide after his encounter with Dorian. The character of Alan is completely missing in the film.



Another openly displayed feature is Dorian's bisexuality, or partial homosexuality. In the book, there is no proof of actual relationship between Basil and Dorian, but in the film Dorian is having sex with another man and also gives oral sex to Basil.

### **Sibyl Vane**

Sibyl Vane is a young and beautiful actress, who falls in love with Dorian. She is very naive and hopes that Dorian is her "Prince Charming". After the separation with Dorian, she commits suicide. The difference between character of Sibyl in the book and film is that in the film she has sex with Dorian. She gets pregnant and when she tells it to Dorian, their relationship ends. In the novel, she sublimates her libido into art, in a similar way as Basil Hallward, she puts all her desires into acting. When she is in love with Dorian, her acting is bad, because she directs her passion towards Dorian, not the theatre.

### **Emily Wotton**

Emily Wotton is a completely additional character in the film. She is Henry Wotton's daughter and meets Dorian when she is about twenty years old. She is clever and good-hearted and is able to think independently and make her own decisions. Emily falls in love with Dorian and wants to leave with him. She thinks she is able to see good in Dorian and help him to find a salvation. When Dorian dies, she blames her father for it and stops speaking with him. This fact that Emily blames her father for Dorian's death again corresponds with the Hollywoodisation of Dorian. By giving the fault to Henry, she purifies Dorian and confirms that Henry has been the one who caused Dorian's = the protagonist's „transformation" to that bad person.

## 5. Conclusion

The Bachelor thesis focuses on the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* written by Oscar Wilde and its film adaptation from the year 2009 called *Dorian Gray* and directed by Oliver Parker. It attempts to compare these two works on the bases of the fidelity to the L'art pour l'art movement, narrative structure and description of the characters. Its aim is to demonstrate the fact that because of the Hollywoodisation, the film reduces the Aesthetic philosophy and simplifies the original story in order to be more commercially successful. The Bachelor thesis covers three main areas on which it tries to demonstrate this statement. These are the L'art pour l'art movement, the theory of adaptation and the actual analysis of the differences between the novel and the film.

In the stories of Oscar Wilde can be found the motif of a struggle between sensual pleasure and moral pathos. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the representative of the pleasure idea is Lord Henry and the representative of the morality is Basil Hallward. Wilde took the ideas of Aestheticism and applied them on a real life. Dorian accepted Henry's Aesthetic philosophy and lived according to the idea of self-development and sensual pleasure. But his life was not successful, at the end he died, alone, with no friends and with the feeling of disappointment. Therefore Wilde's message is that it is not possible to live only according to sensual pleasure, it has to be in a balance with the morality. The film unfortunately reduces the Aesthetic philosophy only to sexual pleasure, in order to appeal to the audience.

The adaptation admits its source in the original text, but is a different medium from the book, so it has different possibilities of creating a story. The adaptation is also created in a different era and for different society than the original. It is produced for a different audience, so if the film-makers want to appeal to the audience, they have to change the story. They can use a lot of ways to attract the

spectators, which were unthinkable in the time that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written. Today's mainstream audience expects nudity, sexual and action scenes in a film. In the 1960s the film-makers started to focus also on a young audience between 15-25 which meant to increase the number of action, love and erotic in the films (Mintz 2012). In the 2009 version is the effort to appeal to the mainstream audience, the Hollywoodisation, most apparent. If you take a look on the poster, it looks very attractive, there is a handsome young boy with a shiny fragments emitting from his chest. The whole picture looks very dark, which corresponds with the assertion from the creators that it is horror film and thriller. Also the trailer is aimed to the mainstream young audience and indicates that it will be a thrilling film with beautiful actors in it.

One of the main differences, connected with the Hollywoodisation of the story, between the novel and the film is that the film has more explicit content. The sexual scenes are shown openly, the sexual satisfaction is an important motivation for the characters. In the film there is also more action than in the novel, because action scene are now very popular.

Another difference is that in the film the main motifs are simplified. The Aesthetic philosophy introduced by Lord Henry is reduced only to a sexual pleasure. Also the reason for Dorian's separation with Sibyl differs, it is simplified so that the audience can relate to it. There is also an omission of one important character of the novel, Alan Cambell. On this character the harmful influence of Dorian is shown, but in the film there is no character like that.

Also the way Dorian Gray is portrayed differs. In the film he is described as a better person than in the novel, so he can play the role of a typical Hollywood protagonist. His character is improved by his regrets of Sibyl's death and his behaviour is partially excused by blaming Henry for Dorian's transformation, which

is confirmed by Henry's own daughter, Emily.

In the film, the main characters are played by beautiful people, so the audience may watch „beautiful people being beautiful" (Giannetti 2004, 372) and do not need to pay attention to any other deeper features of the story.

The portraying of the characters is also simplified in the film. Henry's philosophical speeches are reduced only to the ones concerning sexual pleasure and satisfaction. He not only talks about it, but also does it, so in the film he can be seen having sex with prostitutes and using drugs. He is also older in the film which supports the idea that he is a fatherly role model to Dorian, so it is actually he who is responsible for Dorian's behaviour.

The main aim of the 2009 adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not to celebrate and carry the legacy of the original novel, but to appeal to the audience and gain commercial success. That is why the film-makers made such a Hollywoodising changes in it. They used a worldwide known and popular story and adapted it on the screen. "Oliver Parker is aiming for the sort of younger audience attracted by the casting of Ben Barnes (from the recent 'Narnia' films) as Gray. So the focus is on the surface narrative of Wilde's novel" (Calhoun 2009). The result is an average Hollywood film that focuses on the mainstream audience that searches for entertainment and amusement, not for a deep and valuable meaning. This film may influence what will the audience that had never read the novel think about the original and when they will read it, they can be very (and maybe pleasantly) surprised.

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