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## Bakalářská práce

Film and Television Adaptations of Oscar Wilde's Novel

*The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Comparative Analysis*

Filmové a televizní adaptace románu *Obráz Doriana Graye*

od Oscara Wilda: Srovnávací analýza

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Martina Davidová

## **Poděkování**

Vděčnost a poděkování bych ráda vyjádřila vedoucímu mé bakalářské práce PhDr. Christopheru Koyovi, M.A., Ph.D., za jeho podporu, odborné vedení, ochotu a cenné rady, jež mi byly z jeho strany poskytnuty. Poděkování patří také mým nejmilejším a sice mé rodině a přátelům za jejich nesmírnou podporu při uskutečnění mé cesty za univerzitním vzděláním.

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## Anotace

Práce nejprve představí v teoretické části období, ve kterém pobýval irský autor Oscar Wilde, dále se pak bude stručně věnovat jeho životu a tvorbě. Poté popíše děj a charakteristiku postav stěžejního románu zvoleného pro tuto kvalifikační práci *“Obraz Doriana Graye”*, jež bude pak dále v praktické části analyzován a porovnáván se čtyřmi chronologicky zvolenými filmovými adaptacemi. Půjde tedy o srovnávací analýzu filmových adaptací a různých aspektů spojených s románem. Práce prozkoumá etické analogie a dialogy, jakož i vyprávění méně vhodné pro přímé zobrazení ve filmové produkci.

## Abstract

The theoretical part of the thesis will first introduce the period in which the Irish author Oscar Wilde lived, then it will briefly discuss his life and work. It will then describe the plot and the characters of the pivotal novel chosen for this qualifying work, *“The Picture of Dorian Gray”*, which will then be analysed and compared with four chronologically chosen film adaptations in the practical section. It will therefore be a comparative analysis of the film adaptations and various aspects related to the novel. The thesis will explore ethical analogies and dialogue, as well as narratives less suitable for direct representation in film production.

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# 1. Introduction

The main aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyze the literary work *“The Picture of Dorian Gray”*<sup>1</sup>, which was written by an Irish writer Oscar Wilde and to make a comparative analysis of the novel’s four chronologically chosen film adaptations. The author of this bachelor’s thesis chose this topic because she is interested in the subject.

The first part of the thesis is the theoretical part that introduces the Victorian era in which the novel is set. The Victorian era is a period of prosperity for the British Empire, education of the middle class of Britain and industrial innovation. Then the author focuses on the Irish author Oscar Wilde himself and describes the period in which he lived, then it will briefly discuss his life and work. The theoretical part will focus then the description of the plot and the characters of the pivotal novel chosen for this qualifying work, *“The Picture of Dorian Gray”*

The theoretical part is followed by the practical part of this thesis, which focuses on a comparative analysis of film and television adaptations of the same novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As first, this part analyses the novel, its characters, storyline, and its structure, as same as the themes, symbols, and motives along with the novel’s narrative perspective. The depth analysis of the novel then moves over to the subchapter *“Book to Screen”*, which briefly introduces methods of narrative perspectives alias *“points of view”* that are used by filmmakers.

The brief introduction is then followed by an individual analysis each of the four chronologically chosen film adaptations.

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<sup>1</sup> WILDE, Oscar a Robert MATHIAS, DREW, John M. L., ed., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Wordsworth Classics*. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, 194 pg. ISBN 1853260150.

The main aim of the individual analysis is a resulting comparison between them and the novel itself, including both similarities and differences that are discussed in the conclusion of this thesis.

It will therefore be a comparative analysis of the film adaptations and various aspects related to the novel. The thesis will explore ethical analogies and dialogue, as well as narratives less suitable for direct representation in film production.

In the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde, despite the mistaken beliefs of critics at the time, does not attempt to encourage hedonism or to fulfil the desire to know all the sins of the world. He speaks in a moralizing voice in the work and merely shows the bitter truths of life. Unfortunately, youth does not last forever. To know all is usually to be disappointed, and one cannot escape one's conscience. The work is very timeless. In writing this work, the author has gained many valuable new insights.



## 2. Period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

This chapter purposely introduces the social background, where the author of the pivotal novel for this thesis, Oscar Wilde lived. The following sections of this part provide brief and essential information about the historical development as well as the weighty problems in society that occurred in the times of the Queen Victoria's reign that influenced not only the art, literature, and the subject matters of this work, but also the world itself.

### 2.1. The Victorian Era<sup>2</sup>

The Victorian era started in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Queen Alexandrina Victoria ascended the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and became the Empress of India. She reigned for almost an incredible 64 years until her death in 1901, thereby exceeding previous rulers in their length of reign. Victoria meant true victory for the Kingdom, she brought wealth and power. The time of prosperity came, and the country flourished greatly. The English had their order of magnitude, moral values, and rules.

And when James Watt invented the first steam engine, he started an industrial revolution that influenced all engineering in the major of world. People began to move from villages to cities for better jobs in factories. The middle class increased, thanks to the industrial Revolution, workers from mills were now included. Worthy was materialism and respectability.

#### 4.2.1. The Subversion of Society

The set values pressured its citizens, who had to stand out with wealth or recognition to make a difference in society. According to Haight: their "*world was between the two nations, the rich and the poor*".<sup>3</sup> Social events such as balls and parties provided one method of achieving a higher level. However, not everyone could afford them. Families

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<sup>2</sup> HAIGHT, Gordon S., ed. *THE PORTABLE VICTORIAN READER: A PENGUIN BOOK*. 2. pg. XI. – XII.

<sup>3</sup> HAIGHT, Gordon S., ed. *THE PORTABLE VICTORIAN READER: A PENGUIN BOOK*. 2. pg.23.

also tried to make themselves financially secured by marrying their daughters to men of importance or material means, despite their child's antipathy. The wealth was the way of living and wealthy Victorians took pride in their lives even though many of them were not happy. They lived by the moral values, rules, possessions, and perfection. As Haight states: "*Victorian meant everything prudish, sentimental and conventional*".<sup>4</sup> The higher upper class acted as a wolf in sheep's clothing. They hid their mindset immorality with elegance and pride.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, the lower class worked in bad conditions, trying to get to where the proud rich stood. Women were getting married with visions of a brighter future, having offspring, and staying at home. Guan writes that: "*Children of six or seven were working in mills twelve hours a day, six days a week.*"<sup>6</sup> The children working class had not attended schools until, "*the first significant Factory Act in 1833*", which forbade children under nine to work in factories for textile with the exception of silk. From this Act also prospered children under thirteen whose weekly work was limited to forty-eight hours. After this revolution they were allowed to attend schools daily for two hours. Workers under eighteen were given opportunities too, their labour hours were shortened from eighteen to ten hours a day.<sup>7</sup>

Another takeover came in 1842, as Haight notes, when: "*an Act of Parliament forbade the employment of women in the mines or of boys under the age of ten. (...) In 1839 the movement known as Chartism was launched to persuade Parliament to extend the franchise.*" "Manhood suffrage" was demanded as same as "*the election by secret ballot, annual Parliaments, payment of Members, abolition of property qualifications for Members, and equal electoral districts.*" This reversal brought new opportunities and better life conditions. However, some acts and taboos remained unaccepted by society.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> HAIGHT, Gordon S., ed. *THE PORTABLE VICTORIAN READER: A PENGUIN BOOK*. pg. 23.

<sup>5</sup> GUAN, Beibei. Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 29.

<sup>6</sup> HAIGHT, Gordon S., ed. *THE PORTABLE VICTORIAN READER: A PENGUIN BOOK*. pg. XVI.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pg. XVI.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pg. XVII.

## 2.2. The Society Taboos and Issues

England boasted the most advanced industry, civilization, and the largest colonies. The English prided themselves on perfection, superiority, affectation, and hypocrisy. Victorian society embraced its new values, manners, and rules for living. Money, materiality, being married to a wealthy family, and having children were life standards for the upper class. People cared rather about the decoration and status of a person than their own happiness. They masked their adversity behind the graveness and superficiality.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.2.2. Dark Times

Although the nation prospered and flourished on the surface, Saeed notes that: *“it still had a dark side and faced many problems such as limited job opportunities for women, prostitution, murder, fraud, child labour, and poverty of the underclass.”*<sup>10</sup> The starting police institutions must have dealt with a high criminality for the first time in the history of the land. Streets filled with prostitutes, filth, and alcoholism were the order of the day. Novels such as *“The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”* by Robert Louis Stevenson and *“Oliver Twist”* by Charles Dickens depicted the 19<sup>th</sup> century London, which Cybriwsky remarks as: *“one of the first great industrial cities in the world”*, where people including children, worked in bad-conditioned factories.<sup>11</sup>

### 4.2.3. Masturbation – The Cause of Disease

The increased population, air pollution and poor hygiene habits led to the cholera epidemic that spread and caused thousands of deaths within 30 years.<sup>12</sup> Conditions like these led to disease very quickly, but the chaste and timid Victorians believed that the cause of weakness and disease was not their hygiene but masturbation, which they

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<sup>9</sup> GUAN, Beibei. Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 30.

<sup>10</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray. pg. 551.

<sup>11</sup> CYBRIWSKY, Roman Adrian. *CAPITAL CITIES AROUND THE WORLD*. Santa Barbara. 2013. pg. 163.

<sup>12</sup> KINDERSLEY, Dorling. In: *Family Guide London: London*. 2016.

strongly condemned. The prejudiced society considered masturbation as a dirty resource that destroys the core of the family, causing physical and psychological harm to the individual in whom it induces weakness, madness, closed-mindedness, consumerism, and self-damage.<sup>13</sup> The Victorians believed that to maintain a vital health, a man should limit sex in marriage, not masturbate and commit fornication.<sup>14</sup> Conservative society stood not only against masturbation, but also against perversion, prostitution, and homosexuality, which they considered a threat to heterosexuality. These sexual elements became taboo and came to the surface due to the openness of artists who wanted to outrage and change the prudish society.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2.4. Sexuality and its Influence on Art and Literature

The nineteenth century not only witnessed revolutions, reforms, and discoveries, but also significantly changed the way we view nudity and pornography. The Victorian era had a profound influence on today's sexuality.<sup>16</sup>

Sex has always been a dominant feature of human history. Ancient civilisations, the Egyptians, Greeks, Aztecs, and other cultures have dealt with it in depth. As we learn from history, the Spartans and Greeks manifested the homosexuality. Evidence of the celebration of naked female bodies and curves as a symbol of beauty and fertility can be found as early as in prehistoric times, if we consider Venus of Dolní Věstonice, the oldest known Palaeolithic figure found in Bohemia.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was no exception as the categories of sexual preference we know today came into awareness. This era proved to be a watershed. Heterosexuality and homosexuality came to the forefront of artistic creation and sought to outrage the more conservative society of the time. The sexuality of the Victorians became key to their

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<sup>13</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 511.

<sup>14</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 513.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, pg. 510.

<sup>16</sup> KRUPKA, Jaroslav. *Historie porna: Viktoriánská doba nakládala se ženami tvrdě*. Deník.cz [online]. 2019.

identity through its categories.<sup>17</sup> *Identity served to express freedom, social and political status, and to define oneself in relation to the aristocracy, the peasantry, and the emerging working classes*<sup>18</sup>.

According to French scholar Michel Foucault, sex became a subject of obsessive debate because it was not censored and thus sexuality was portrayed to a great extent not only in art and literature but also in medicine and in studies about the Victorian era. Artists openly celebrated and shocked society with their sexual artistry. Painters of that time depicted female beauty by painting nudes. Literature provoked high Victorian society with taboo topics such as prostitution, masturbation, homosexuality, and free-thinking views on sex and its orientation.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly enough, the first pornographic film in the history of cinema was even released in 1896. It consisted of a seven-minute silent film in which the actress playing the role of the bride gradually undressed herself.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.2.5. Prostitution and “The Fallen Women”**

Although the popularity of intercourse and its aspects were growing, the sacred act of ventry had to still happen in marriage. However, the possibility of marriage worsened as the British royal crown expanded with its great number of men serving in the military. Being a soldier in the royal army meant pride, respect, and responsibility that required giving up starting a family and marriage. Coitus became important especially to men, and when they could not have a wife with whom to realize it, they found other ways that gave rise to prostitution. This service was intended to satisfy male desires and made London a hotbed of vice and filth. Girls as young as 12 (later 16) were legally engaged in it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 508.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, pg. 510.

<sup>19</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 512.

<sup>20</sup> KRUPKA, Jaroslav. *Historie porna: Viktoriánská doba nakládala se ženami tvrdě*. Deník.cz [online]. 2019.

<sup>21</sup> KRUPKA, Jaroslav. *Historie porna: Viktoriánská doba nakládala se ženami tvrdě*. Deník.cz [online]. 2019.

Many women aka “Fallen Women” chose this path of self-sacrifice in this very profitable trade to balance and improve their or families’ life conditions for many reasons, but mainly because of the lack of job opportunities that were offered.<sup>22</sup>

However, according to personalities as Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth or Charles Dickens became the harlotry a serious problem as the venery was made in other intentions than procreation.<sup>23</sup>

Prostitution happened to be one of the biggest and most devastating issues in society as Siuli notes that it: “*went against every moral value during this time. Values as chastity, purity, and grace were disregarded by these fallen women.*”<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, not only prostitutes, but all unfaithful or adulterous women were despised, abhorred, and called “Fallen Women” by the public without community’s knowledge of their reasons and circumstances behind the action, as they had a hard time making ends meet.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.2.6. Women’s inequality**

The Queen Victoria's time treated women neither with respect nor equality. There was enormous pressure on them, as they had to be beautiful, fertile and had to learn the rules of how to behave in society and towards men. Sex in the form of pleasure was completely forbidden to them. They married very young and sacrificed their happiness not for the sake of love, but for material things. However, not only set ethical standards, but also artists of the time greatly undervalued women. Images of naked female bodies in various positions, even masturbating, became controversial, as it remained unacceptable for a woman to enjoy sex with herself.<sup>26</sup>

Only men could enjoy coitus and the community secretly tolerated their infidelity. Women were expected to bear children, take care of their families and their husbands.

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<sup>22</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 514.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, pg. 512.

<sup>24</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. Research Gate [online]. November 2015, pg. 509.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> KRUPKA, Jaroslav. *Historie porna: Viktoriánská doba nakládala se ženami tvrdě*. Deník.cz [online]. 2019.

If a man wanted to divorce his wife, he could accuse her of infidelity and declare her a "fallen woman" without her committing adultery. Women at this time suffered abuse and humiliation. they could only ask for a divorce if their husbands proved to have committed more serious acts than adultery, such as crimes.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.3. The Victorian Literature

Queen Victoria's world shaped society into a hypocritical and conservative one, with its traditional and moral values.<sup>28</sup> The desire to moralize with ethical codes also extended to art and literature, which had to fulfil strict aesthetics in theme, style, and technique to be considered as a part of Victorian Literature. Important values such as order, virtue, self-reliance, and self-control were among them.<sup>29</sup> Literature provided a model of self-improvement and proper behaviour, it evoked gentle emotions and rewarded good actions.<sup>30</sup> Aesthetically sensitive and open writing did not fulfil this form and was therefore rejected.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.2.7. Different Views on Literature

Rebellious authors such as Gautier, Walter Pater, Charles Algernon Swinburne, and even Oscar Wilde opposed Victorian literature with a completely different view, arguing that moral values for society had no place in literature, as the artist's only aim ought to be the creation of beauty, rather than another moralizing. "Art for Art's Sake" became the motto of this philosophy, with art being identified with the aesthetic and questioning the values of Victorian mainstream.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. *Research Gate* [online]. November 2015, pg. 509.

<sup>28</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 26.

<sup>29</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 2022. pg. 546.

<sup>30</sup> BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 2014.

<sup>31</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 2022. pg. 555.

<sup>32</sup> BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 2014.

Wilde considered all art immoral. According to him, artists should not be bound by the moral values of society, but they should have the right to express anything even at the cost of causing a scandal.<sup>33</sup>

Wilde proclaimed that: "*aesthetics is higher than ethics and belongs to a more spiritual sphere*" and that: "*to recognize the beauty of a thing is the finest point we can reach.*"<sup>34</sup> According to him: "*there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.*"<sup>35</sup> The critics of Victorian literature tended towards Aestheticism and Decadence, which privileged sensuality and encouraged artistic, sexual, and political experimentation, causing a shock to the moral society of the time. They were heavily inspired from abroad by French writers such as Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier, whose poetry overflowed with, as Burdett reports: "*themes of perverse sexuality or cruelty and violence*"<sup>36</sup>, were thus considered the opposite of Aesthetic poetry.<sup>37</sup>

#### **4.2.8. Aestheticism and Art for Art's Sake**

Aestheticism began as a nineteenth-century art movement in Europe, from where it later spread to North America and England. The idea of the movement influenced all art and considered it as a sensual pleasure whose main motive was beauty. The philosophy "*Art for Art's Sake*" stood against the moralizing and didacticism of the Victorian view on art.<sup>38</sup> Poetry became the central element of this aesthetic style, whose important essayists included Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, and Vernon Lee.<sup>39</sup>

The "*Art for Art's Sake*" was based on the ideas of the 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who believed that art can only be judged by its own criteria,

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<sup>33</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 27.

<sup>34</sup> WILDE, Oscar. *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Great Britain. 1949. pg. 997.

<sup>35</sup> WILDE, Oscar. *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Great Britain. 1949. pg. 17.

<sup>36</sup> BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 15 March 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> H. AL-JABBARI, Ekbal & Alla Eddin Sadeq JRAB. *The Portrait as an Alive Character in The Picture of Dorian Gray: by Oscar Wilde*. *Research Gate: Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* [online]. 2014. pg.110.

<sup>39</sup> BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 15 March 2014.



not by something external. “*Art for Art's Sake*” is therefore an expression of beauty using a highly artistic style.<sup>40</sup>

Aestheticians sought a basis in beauty, creating contrasts to traditions and getting into the hierarchy between art and life. The novel “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*”, in which the Irish playwright, poet and novelist Oscar Wilde celebrates and embraces aesthetic values, is considered the best representation of Aestheticism and “*Art for Art's Sake*”.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4.2.9. Decadence

At the end of the 19th century, Aestheticism was often confused with the literary movement Decadence, that came from France. Not only did the movement have its own French representatives as Baudelaire and Gautier<sup>42</sup> but it also found its foreign supporters. The English decadent tradition represented authors such as Arthur Symons, Ernest Dawson, and Oscar Wilde, along with other important poets as were Lionel Johnson and John Davidson.<sup>43</sup>

Decadence explores immoral and bad experiences. It does not preach or insist on ethical responsibility, but interests itself in morbid, and perverted situations. It celebrates disgust, finds beauty in ugliness, despises truth, marriage, and social conventions.<sup>44</sup> One of the symbols of decadence became “*The Yellow Book*”, the most famous decadent periodical, which contained witty, erotic essays, poems, fiction, and even illustrations by artist Aubrey Beardsley. This publication had been published for three straight years since 1894. The author chose yellowish cover of the book, as the colours yellow and green symbolized bruises and decay, which expressed a decadent style.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 25.

<sup>41</sup> H. AL-JABBARI, Ekbal & Alla Eddin Sadeq JRAB. *The Portrait as an Alive Character in The Picture of Dorian Gray: by Oscar Wilde*. *Research Gate: Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* [online]. 2014. pg.110.

<sup>42</sup> GOLDFARB, Russell M. *Late Victorian Decadence*. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* [online]. 1962. pg. 373.

<sup>43</sup>BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 15 March 2014.

<sup>44</sup> GOLDFARB, Russell M. *Late Victorian Decadence*. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* [online]. 1962. pg. 373.

<sup>45</sup>BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians* [online]. 15 March 2014.

Decadence represents the decline and decay of society, which disturbed the believers of traditional norms. The 1890s writer Max Nordau transformed decadence into degeneration with his same called book, where he condemned decadent writers including Oscar Wilde<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.2.10. Dandyism

Aestheticism became associated not only with decadence, but also with Dandyism, an important social phenomenon of the 19th century. Guan notes that Dandyism: "*manifested the contradiction between the spiritual and the material, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and art and nature.*"<sup>47</sup>

Any elegant, and anti-bourgeois intellectual who despised vulgarity and a falsely moral society considered himself a Dandy. This cynical figure stood out as an art, it used a refined language and style. The aesthetic was essential to Dandy, he used it as a tool in his rebellious performances.<sup>48</sup> Being himself without pretence, Dandy purposefully shocked and offended the society. His aestheticism consisted of external beauty, elegance, dressing and lifestyle.<sup>49</sup>

According to Barbey: "*Dandyism is a complete theory of life... it is a way of being*"<sup>50</sup> and Guan notes: "*It is a form of rebellion as part of a style and approach to life.*"<sup>51</sup> In the Victorian era, there lived one highly prominent man who, by his outstanding behaviour and different opinions on life, managed to influence a part of society, became a representation of both decadence and dandyism and as Adut writes he was a: "*talented, and very famous man connected to everybody who mattered in London.*"<sup>52</sup> His name was Oscar Wilde.

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<sup>46</sup>Ibidem, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 24.

<sup>48</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 24.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, pg. 25.

<sup>50</sup> BARBEY D'AUREVILLY, Jules & D. AINSLIE. *Of Dandyism and of George Brummell*. London, 1897. pg. 17.

<sup>51</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 26.

<sup>52</sup> ADUT, Ari. *A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde*. *American Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2005. pg. 229.

### 3. Oscar Wilde

This chapter focuses on the author who has been attracting and fascinating literary fans since his early days with his special and truly unique creations. His first and only novel that he has ever published, became basis of the comparative analysis in this thesis. Because of the greatness and importance of Wilde, the following subsections present more details about his life and artworks.

#### 3.1. Childhood and Education

The famous Anglo-Irish writer Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde was born in October 1854 to a successful and respected couple in Dublin.<sup>53</sup> He inherited his talent as a writer from his highly educated mother, Jane Francesca Agnes Elgee, a journalist, who published an inspirational nationalist poetry, pro-Irish editorials for the journal "The Nation" under the pseudonym "Speranza", and thus joined Irish movement of the 1840s. Wilde's father, Sir William Robert Wilde, operated as a well-known doctor with specialization in the fields of ear and eye surgery, and he also had a tendency towards writing and fashion, as he enthusiastically changed his hats. Oscar had two siblings, older brother William, and younger sister Isola Francesca.<sup>54</sup> The Wilde family witnessed not only achievements, but also failures, and rumours, when a female patient of Lady Wilde's husband publicly accused Sir William from drugging and raping her in the past. A Year after the court hit the family another disaster, the beloved daughter and sister Isola died. As a child, Oscar experienced dark times that gave him an insight of the "good" Victorian society.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, there also came positives. Thanks to the beneficial background his parents arranged for him, little Oscar gained a great predisposition for a successful future education and career from the very beginning. His period of study began at home, where his parents educated him and developed in him an interest in books and languages.

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<sup>53</sup> O'CONNOR, Kate. *The Importance of Being Wilde*. GREAT WRITERS INSPIRE [online]. 2012.

<sup>54</sup> FRANKLIN, James L. *A bit of irony: Sir William Wilde and Oscar Wilde*. Hektoen International: A Journal of Medical Humanities [online]. Hektoen Institute of Medicine, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> WILDE, et al., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Wordsworth Classics. Great Britain. pg. VI.

He then successfully graduated with a gold medal from the Royal School of Portor, which earned him a scholarship to Trinity College Dublin.<sup>56</sup>

Wilde was a very successful and creative student. He won university prizes for his repeatedly published poems and a scholarship to study at Oxford Magdalene College, where he proved his linguist skills and philosophical thoughts on life from looking up to ancient Greeks and to modern critics such as Ruskin, Pater and Swinburne. He gained fame as a leader of Oxford's young "Aesthetes" and used the obtained educational experience to develop himself in the form of knowledge, beliefs, and character qualities for his entire life.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.2. Family and Private Life

*"To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all"*<sup>58</sup>

Worldly-wise Oscar enjoyed travelling through Europa, mainly Greece, where the "Aesthete" admired beauty of the land and Platon's outlook on the same-sex love. In America and Canada he gave lectures on art and aesthetics, and soon became a very successful and famous writer. The multiple award-winning artist won the Newigate Prize for his poem "Ravenna" and enjoyed a fruitful period of the life until Sir William Wilde died. His father's death put him in the position of a working mortal. He settled in London to concentrate fully on literary pursuits, worked for a newspaper and, as a feminist, became editor of the magazine "Woman's World".<sup>59</sup>

Although public awareness of his style increased as everyone admired the artist's work and passion for fashion, the aristocrats took a dim view of Wilde. His visuals made people question Oscar's sexuality, as the feminine appearance, with his rich, curly locks and purple dress, together with flapping collars, and knee-length socks coming from low leather shoes, truly fit the Victorian image of the homosexual. In addition, he became the

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<sup>56</sup> *Krátká biografie Oscar Wilde: Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde Shrnutí životopisu Oscar Wilde* [online], 2020.

<sup>57</sup> WILDE, et al., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Wordsworth Classics. Great Britain. pg. VI.

<sup>58</sup> Wilde Oscar, 1854 – 1900.

<sup>59</sup> *Krátká biografie Oscar Wilde: Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde Shrnutí životopisu Oscar Wilde* [online], 2020.

target of Punch magazine, where George du Maurier repeatedly caricatured him with, for example, with a sunflower head.<sup>60</sup>

The unease and gossip about his orientation faded for a while when he surprisingly married and had two sons with Constance Lloyd in 1884, got a haircut and became a typical 19th century dandy. Guan points out that: *“Although most Victorians were very frugal at the time, Wilde was extravagant in his dress and parties.”*<sup>61</sup> In the world of English aristocrats, Wilde was able to sell himself as a writer, an aesthete lecturing on aesthetics and dress. He promoted himself, attended social events, and, with his wife Constance, tried to promote more comfortable women's clothing, such as split skirts and trousers. This inspiring celebrity harvested many successes and even as a father. Sons Vivian and Cyril could enjoy the fairy tales published for them by their writer father.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.3. The End of the Writer

Beauty doesn't last forever, and as a one of the proverbs says, "Pride precedes a fall." Wilde's life turned into a misery when his homosexuality came out. Everything changed when he fell in love with Alfred Douglas, a seventeen year-younger man of wealth. The artist admired all things beautiful, and the spoiled aristocrat Alfred became his Dorian Gray, for whom Wilde stopped seeing his family. After an affair with Alfred, Douglas's father, a dissenter of homosexuality, the Marquess of Queensberry, accused Wilde of committing gross indecency (intimate intercourse with a man).<sup>63</sup>

19<sup>th</sup> century England did not accept the same-sex love, mainly between men, as it was considered as a threat to families and heterosexuality.<sup>64</sup> The court sentenced Wilde to the maximum punishment, two years hard labour, based on his cynical evidence, when on the court's question about kissing Alfred, Wilde responded: *“Oh dear no.*

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<sup>60</sup> ADUT, Ari. *A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde*. *American Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2005. pg. 227.

<sup>61</sup> GUAN, Beibei. *Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 26.

<sup>62</sup> GREEN, Cynthia. *Oscar Wilde: Of Dress Shirts and Dentures: FAMOUS WARDROBES: THEN AND NOW*. *The Voice Of Fashion* [online]. 2020.

<sup>63</sup> *Krátká biografie Oscar Wilde: Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde Shrnutí životopisu Oscar Wilde* [online], 2020.

<sup>64</sup> SIULI, Shantanu. *A Paramount Justification of Victorian Sex and Sexuality and the Concept of Prostitution of 19th Century London*. *Research Gate* [online]. November 2015, pg. 510.

*He was a peculiarly plain boy. He was, unfortunately extremely ugly. I pitied him for it*"<sup>65</sup>

While in prison, he wrote "De Profundis" a letter about his life and partnership with Douglas, or also "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", in which he protested the poor conditions for prisoners.<sup>66</sup>

Wilde's sexual desires were closely associated with the Decadence, which went considerably against the tide with its experimental creativity, and when Wilde's trial became an extraordinary media event, it brought about the collapse of his career and personal life<sup>67</sup>

The trial and scandals disgraced his family and made them suffer. People wisely distanced themselves from anything to do with him, including his wife. Constance was struck by a stroke of fate. She contracted syphilis from her sexually promiscuous, imprisoned husband, and later suffered a progressive paralysis of the spinal cord as a result of the untreated disease. After the trial London despised the whole family. Constance therefore attempted to escape the rumours and disgrace by moving away from London and changing the family name to "Holland". By doing so, she ensured that Wilde would never see her or his sons again. (*Deborah Hayden, Pox: Hayden: Genius, Madness, and the Mysteries of Syphilis (Génius, šílenství a záhady syfilidy), Basic Books, 2004, s. 200-228*).

The worst scenario also hit the writer's profession. His plays were banished, the same as many of his other creations that bookstores pulled out to avoid homophobic works as "The Picture of Dorian Gray", so that people would not be inspired by Wilde's sins.<sup>68</sup>

Even though the protective measures against Wilde and his art destroyed nearly everything, the imprisonment did not have the power to defeat his inner belief and to stop the progress of Decadent movement, which in the 90s propagated Platon's relationship between men and pro-longed bachelorhood. Those Greek themes together

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<sup>65</sup> Wilde, 1928. pg. 90.

<sup>66</sup> ADUT, Ari. *A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde*. *American Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2005. pg. 233.

<sup>67</sup> BURDETT, Carolyn. *Aestheticism and Decadence*. *The British Library: Discovering Literature: Romantics & Victorians* [online]. 2014.

<sup>68</sup> ADUT, Ari. *A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde*. *American Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2005. pg. 214 - 239.

with the Decadence according to Adut, influenced the following increasement of, mainly male, homosexuality.<sup>69</sup>

In May 1897 Wilde was released from prison, he then left England for good, changed his name to Sebastian Melmot and settled in France. As a result of the bad incidents, Wilde was drowning his sorrows in drink, which drastically changed his health and aesthetic visage. Wilde's teeth turned black and started to decay because of the mercury injections in order to treat the syphilis that had appeared on his skin as spots. He also gained a lot of weight and therefore lost his sharpened features. Wilde died three years after his release of meningoencephalitis caused by an inflammatory ear disease (His father's specialization) from the time in prison. This led to an unilateral deafness and by drinking a litre of brandy a day went hand in hand with his death.<sup>70</sup>

### **3.4. Wilde's Artistic Creation**

Oscar Wilde didn't exist, he stuck to his motto and really lived. He had been successfully making his way through life since childhood. He was a passionate student, following his parents' writing footsteps, and winning numerous awards for his works. He travelled many countries as lad, and met inspiring people who enriched, betrayed, and hurt him through his life. The world-famous dandy always stood his ground and remained fearless with distancing himself from the uptight and proper society of the time with both his flamboyant fashion style, decadent ideas, and cynicism. He became a London celebrity, people either admired or despised him. Despite the tragic fate that he faced, he has belonged to the world's most successful writers. His unique legacy is to be found in literature, culture, and art. Therefore, the following lines, deals with few of his works.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> ADUT, Ari. *A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde*. *American Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2005. pg. 222.

<sup>70</sup> FRANKLIN, James L. *A bit of irony: Sir William Wilde and Oscar Wilde*. Hektoen International: A Journal of Medical Humanities [online]. Hektoen Institute of Medicine, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> WILDE, Oscar et. Robert MATHIAS, DREW, John M. L., ed., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Wordsworth Classics. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, pg. VI. – XV. ISBN 1853260150.

#### 4.2.11. Poems<sup>72</sup>

Wilde's first published work was a book of poems. The gifted poet wrote very innovative verses of that time. Some of his well-known stories include *"The Harlot's House"*, *"The Sphinx"*, as well as the long poem, written after his release from prison, *"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"*. Other poems written, this time in prose, include *"The Artist"* and *"The House of Judgment"*.

#### 4.2.12. Plays

Not only a poet, but also as a successful playwright he wrote comedies such as: *"Lady Windermere's Fan"*, *"A Woman of No Importance"*, *"An Ideal Husband"* and *"The Importance of Being Earnest"*. Wilde's dramas criticized (at that time) contemporary society and its morality. Through his decadent approach, Wilde found the aesthetic in the evil, which made him draw attention to the bourgeois society, which was corrupted by industrialization.<sup>73</sup> He showed the true nature of the Victorian nobility, by using paradoxes, which was the most typical form of Wilde's comic style.<sup>74</sup> Paradoxes purposely dramatized the dialogues and development of characters. Cynicism and dark humour, according to Kohl: *"is what distinguishes Wilde from all other dramatists, and it constitutes the originality of his contribution to the history of English comedy."*<sup>75</sup> His works contain witty, irony enriched dialogues and unique plots. The plays had become world famous and have been still performing nowadays.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> WILDE, Oscar et Robert MATHIAS, DREW, John M. L., ed., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Wordsworth Classics. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, pg. VII. – IX. ISBN 1853260150.

<sup>73</sup> GUAN, Beibei. Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 31.

<sup>74</sup> GUAN, Beibei. Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism. *Journal of Arts & Humanities* [online]. 2018. pg. 29.

<sup>75</sup> KOHL, Norbert. trans. by David Henry WILSON. *Oscar Wilde: The Works of a Conformist Rebel*. Cambridge University Press., 1989. pg. 227.

<sup>76</sup> VESELÁ, Eva, 2019. *Oscar Wilde: Dekadentní umělec, jehož jméno se stalo synonymem pro závrtný vzestup i střemhlavý pád*. Reflex [online].



#### 4.2.13. Fictions<sup>77</sup>

In addition to poems, plays and other literary works, Oscar also wrote fictions such as: The Crime of “Lord Arthur Savile” and “The Devoted Friend”. His fictions, however, began to contain elements of homosexuality, which became prominent in the writing after his first love affair with a young Canadian man in the 1880s. Plato's philosophy of relationships between men, appeared in his first work of fiction, *The Happy Prince and Other Stories*. However, homoerotic motives clearly appeared in his most famous, and perhaps because of them, most criticized 19th-century novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

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<sup>77</sup> WILDE, Oscar et Robert MATHIAS, DREW, John M. L., eds.. *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Wordsworth Classics*. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, 2001, pg. VIII. ISBN 1853260150.

## 4. Comparative Analysis

The practical part of this thesis is a comparative analysis of film and television adaptations of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde. As first, this part analyses the pivotal novel, its characters, storyline, and its structure, as same as the themes, symbols, and motives along with the novel's narrative perspective.

The depth analysis of the novel then moves over to the subchapter "Book to Screen", which briefly introduces methods of narrative perspectives alias "points of view" that are used by filmmakers. The brief introduction is then followed by an individual analysis each of the chronologically chosen film adaptations.

The main aim of the individual analysis is a resulting comparison between them and the novel itself, including both similarities and differences that are discussed in the conclusion of this thesis.

### 4.1. The Picture of Dorian Gray Analysis

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a gothic horror novel which was written in 1890 by the decadent artist Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (originally from Dublin, Ireland), whose art and sexual orientation shocked English society.

In terms of the narrative perspective, the novel provides reader with a third-person omniscient narration that creates a perfect setting not only for reader's thoughts, but mainly for feelings and emotions, resulting from actions of novel's characters, who usually keep their thoughts to themselves.

Similarly, this narrator's perspective provides filmmakers with comfort and greater insight into a story and makes it easier for them to adapt their films to novel's template. Because of that, they can record same feelings on camera by capturing actresses' facial expressions and gesticulations. In fact, the producers try to film same or at least very similar imagination, that reader experiences when reading a book. Thanks to the omniscient narration become both viewer and reader a silent observer of an action.

The description of novel's events is in chronological order with a linear plot structure, consisting of three principles: the rising action, the climax, and the falling action. These principles, together with the linear structure, allow the novel to be read smoothly.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* demonstrates the tradition of art for art's sake and aestheticism, where intellect is not as essential as beauty itself. Oscar Wilde shows how a beautiful, young, and innocent soul can be destroyed by the bad influence of a corrupted man. The story of the struggle between good and evil, in just twenty chapters, moves readers dramatically. The complicated plot makes it hard for readers, as they find themselves in a difficult position, unable to decide whether to love or hate the main protagonist. This untypical novel differs from the Victorian classics with focus on dialogues, feelings and supernatural.<sup>78</sup>

#### **4.2.14. The Story Line**

The novel tells a story of an orphaned, respectable, and wealthy Dorian Gray, whose portrait makes him proud and aware that his beauty and youth are limited by time. Unable to accept the fate of mortality, he wishes the portrait to age instead, and by doing so, he unknowingly sells his soul for an eternal life of youth. Conceited Dorian discovers life through his senses and physical pleasures, which initially fulfil his desires but not his soul. His soul seems to gradually fade away with each of his committed sin.

Dorian acts horribly under the evil influence of his companion, Lord Henry Wotton. The originally honest and innocent young man becomes a victim of corruption. He lives the life his companion desired. The eternally young Dorian feels empty after all the years and crimes. His, at first beautiful, now hideous portrait mirrors his wicked soul. When Dorian sees again the ugly painting at the end of the story, he tries to destroy it himself, which leads to his own end. The painting that Dorian stabbed with his knife remains untouched and beautiful as at the beginning, and on the ground beside it, lies a disgusting dead body of an old man.

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<sup>78</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. pg. 546.

#### 4.2.15. Plot Structure

**Major Conflict:** Dorian Gray, grants his wish and sells his soul for eternal youth, then he must deal with negative affect, which is a decay of his portrait that mirrors his gradually corrupted soul.

**Rising Action:** Dorian notices the portrait changes after a breakup and following death of his fiancée Sibyl Vane. Then he runs his life according to the “Yellow Book” and enjoys a carefree youthful life without regard of his worsened reputation. His soul rots along with the portrait, while Dorian's physical beauty remains unchanged. The contradiction between Dorian and his portrait, therefore arises.

**Climax:** Immoral Dorian Gray kills his caring and loving friend Basil Hallward.

**Falling Action:** Dorian drowns his black conscience in opium dens, regrets and dies when he attempts to destroy the portrait.

#### 4.2.16. Themes, Symbols, and Motives

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* includes horror and gothic features along with supernatural elements and Faustus theme of the devil's bargain. The story warns against people's bad influence. This decadent art interests itself in a beauty of evil. It celebrates a bohemian life, homosexuality, sex, crime, murder, guilt, outrage, epiphany, and finally, justice. All those motives point out the evil that is ignored by the Victorians, which in that time caused a scandal.<sup>79</sup>

Influenced by the French Symbolist movement, the book evokes symbols of purity and beauty by introducing a colourful and aromatic atmosphere with an aesthetic background through description of flowers and various sensual experiences. Some of the

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<sup>79</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. pg. 547.

symbols remain hidden in the text, but the most important according to Saeed are: *“the portrait, the yellow book, the flowers, the theatre, and the opium den.”*<sup>80</sup>

The portrait represents Dorian's sold soul, where each of his sins and immoral acts are reflected in the visual aspect of his portrait. The picture thus becomes a mirror of his inner corruption.

The yellow book symbolizes ideas and philosophy of Lord Henry Wotton, who with his states poisoned Dorian's mind and thus influenced his following actions. The yellow book is also a hidden symbol of a warning. It reminds reader that art's strong influence can cause a fall of an individual, which is also the case of Dorian Gray.

The Opium Dens located in a deserted part of London, represent a bad state of mind and a guilty conscience. Dorian visits them whenever he commits a horrific act, such as killing his friend Basil. Opium den symbolizes an escape from the cruel reality, which Dorian attempts to forget.

Wilde lived in an anti-homosexual society. He found the acceptance of Uranian love as a sign of cultivation. Therefore, he created the aesthetic painter and homosexual, Basil Hallward into his novel and thus tried to apply some of the homosexual motives to justify his own lifestyle.

Themes of beauty, youth and art accompany a reader from the very beginning of the story. Beauty and youth are both very essential to both society and Dorian, as he sells his soul for their eternity. However, at the end of the story, Dorian realizes that true beauty comes from purity of soul.

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<sup>80</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. pg. 547.

#### 4.2.17. The Main Protagonists

In the letter to Ralph Payne from 1894, Oscar Wilde wrote: *“Basil Hallward is what I think I am; Lord Henry what the world thinks of me; Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages perhaps.”*<sup>81</sup>

##### 4.1.3.1. Dorian Gray

Dorian Gray is the main protagonist of the novel. When writing this character, Wilde was inspired by the ancient Greek ideal of beauty. Blue-eyed and with curly blond hair, Dorian represents the beauty itself. He inherited his physical appearance from his attractive mother, Lady Margaret Devereux. His father was killed in a duel at Spa, and after his mother's death, the orphaned boy was raised by tyranny of an old loveless man. When the Lord Kelso died, his last grandson, Dorian, came into a wealth. As the story progresses, the young man's behaviour changes. At the beginning of the story Dorian behaves very well. He helps Lady Agatha (Lord Henry's aunt) with charity. However, under the influence of Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian becomes obsessed with his beauty, sells his soul, becomes spoiled, and sexually promiscuous. He enjoys his eternal beauty and youth, which later makes him a victim of the bad influence or a bad character.

##### 4.1.3.2. Lord Henry Wotton

Lord Henry Wotton is an elegant older man with dark and round eyebrows. Henry symbolizes evil and lust, as he says to Dorian: *“Yes, Dorian, you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit.”*<sup>82</sup> He holds a bad influence over Dorian and is always late. Henry, as same as Wilde criticises the moralism and hypocrisy of Victorian society. Although he married a curious woman with name Victoria, he holds marriage in scorn, because of his and own wife's intrigues. Victoria is very romantic, untidy and she likes going to church. The cynical Henry underestimates women and finds them practical but silly.

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<sup>81</sup> Wilde, Hart Davis, 1979. pg. 116.

<sup>82</sup> Wilde, Oscar., 1949. pg. 70.

#### **4.1.3.3. Basil Hallward**

Basil Hallward works as an emotional artist, who painted the picture of Dorian Gray and becomes obsessed with Dorian after meeting him at a party. He is a friend of Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian, who becomes his new model of art. Basil represents Dorian's good inside. The portrait of Dorian Gray is the best work he had ever done, yet he does not want this masterpiece to be exhibited, because he gave too much of himself into it.

#### **4.1.3.4. Mrs. Sibyl Vane**

Like the novel tells, Sibyl Vane is a: *“girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little flower-like face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose.”* For Dorian *“She was the loveliest thing, he had ever seen in his life.”*<sup>83</sup> Sibyl lives a poor life with her mother, who seems to be tired of living. Both mother and Sibyl work as actresses in Jew's West-End theatre in the Bristol, where Dorian falls deeply in love with her talent and beauty. However, her acting on stage suddenly seems to him as affected, because, after falling in love with Dorian, she cannot long pretend love on stage, therefore becomes a bad actress, and Dorian leaves her.

#### **4.1.3.5. James Vane**

Sibyl's caring, older brother with brown hair, as the page 52 describes him: *“he was thick-set of figure, and his hands and feet were large, and somewhat clumsy in movement.”*<sup>84</sup> Unlike Dorian, James is brave and selfless. He goes abroad to Australia with purpose to earn some money and thus help his mother and sister to get out of the theatre, where they are trapped. He does not trust Dorian at all. When a tragedy happens, he wants his revenge.

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<sup>83</sup> Wilde, Oscar., 1949. pg. 42.

<sup>84</sup> Wilde, Oscar., 1949. pg. 51.

## 4.2. Book to Screen

When Lippincott's Monthly Magazine published Wilde's first and only novel in 1890s,<sup>85</sup> the Victorians denounced it and considered it an un-aesthetic work, because its symbolism and decadent ideas contradicted conventional Victorian values and thus shocked the society.<sup>86</sup> Although this scandalous and immoral novel was deeply criticised by 19th-century Englishmen, and was published before Wilde's fame, it still has found its fans from different places and centuries. This masterpiece has become an inspiration for many artistic spheres, such as theatres, musicals, operas, and even some directors have pursued to adapt the book into a film.

However, to make a film, producers have to layout the plot, dialogues and they mainly must know, how to take a right shot. On which of the angles focus to build an ideal perspective for the audience. The viewer's right point of view, is therefore, essential. According to Maria, filmmakers distinguish three perspectives.<sup>87</sup>

The first-person point of view transforms the viewer into the main character, as he sees through the protagonist's eyes. Because of this perspective, the viewer empathizes with the character and thus experiences everything that happens during the film. However, one of the disadvantages of the first-person point of view is that the viewer does not perceive feelings and thoughts of other figures in the film.<sup>88</sup>

The second-person point of view is shot by a camera against the actor. This perspective then acts as if the actor is looking at us. The instant eye-contact the viewer gets from this point of view makes him, or she feel as they are present on a stage with an actor. It allows the viewer to build faster and stronger relationship with the actor.<sup>89</sup>

The third-person point of view is the last perspective that is used the most by filmmakers. This classic shot makes the viewer a distant observer of the action. The

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<sup>85</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. pg. 545.

<sup>86</sup> SAEED, Chro Muhammad & Asst. Prof. Dr. Azad Hamad SHARIF. *The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*. pg. 546.

<sup>87</sup> Maria, 2022. *Point Of View In Filmmaking: What Is It And Why Is It Important?*. FILMSTRO [online].

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*.



viewer then watches the action as a third person and is not drawn into the action as in previous perspectives.<sup>90</sup> To adapt a book into a film, can be very difficult.

Therefore, this subchapter deals with some of the chosen adaptations, which are analysed and compared with the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*<sup>91</sup>. The following analysis deals individually with each of the films.

#### **4.2.18. The Film Adaptation: “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*”, Eugene Moore (dir.), 1915.**

This traditional film adaptation by director Eugene Moore, from 1915, is a dramatic, black-and-white silent film that managed to describe the storyline of Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, using only 12 text frames, packed into just 22 minutes. It is therefore, a very unique adaptation, and the one that differs most from the others in terms of editing.

##### **4.2.18.1. Setting and Viewer’s Point of View**

The time-space is unknown but based on the year 1915 in which the film was released, the viewer can assume that the adaptation takes place during the First World War.

When watching this film adaptation, the viewer may notice that the limited camera shots, attempt to capture all the novel's essence even on the basis of drama, using changes in the viewer's perspective to do so. In fact, the film presents all three perspectives that the viewer can perceive while watching the film. The third-person point of view is most often shown here, capturing the dramatic grimaces and pantomimes of the characters. This shows the viewer the emotions that the character experiences.

Another perspective is the second-person point of view. The viewer looks directly at the protagonist, who makes eye contact with the camera, thus evoking a sense of presence and connection in the viewer.

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<sup>90</sup> Maria, 2022. *Point Of View In Filmmaking: What Is It And Why Is It Important?*. FILMSTRO [online].

<sup>91</sup> WILDE, Oscar a Robert MATHIAS, DREW, John M. L., ed., 2001. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Wordsworth Classics. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, 194 pg. ISBN 1853260150.

This perspective appears, for example, when Dorian watches the performance of his beloved actress.

The last perspective, which is very important for silent films, is the first-person point of view. When the viewer becomes the protagonist for a moment, as he sees and experiences everything the main character does. In the film, the perspective is used when the protagonist reads a letter from Basil.

#### **4.2.18.2. Plot Structure**

For an illustrative description of the plot, this subchapter presents individual text frames and its scenes, including a few direct interpretations.

- 1) **Scene:** The film opens with an excerpt from a theatrical performance of Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet", showing three shots. One of the actress as Juliet, one of the audience member, Dorian Gray, who by his expression is enjoying the performance very much, and one of the audience applauding.
- 2) **Text:** after the play, Dorian dares to introduce Juliet.
- 3) **Text:** Dorian watches his Juliet's performance every day in different roles.
- 4) **Scene:** Dorian expresses excitement (the second-person point of view), his expressions of enthusiasm seem somewhat creepy and overreacted.
- 5) **Scene:** Dorian expresses his love towards the actress
- 6) **Text:** introduces the following evening
- 7) **Scene:** Dorian reads a letter from Basil (First-person point of view), who sends him his portrait and writes that he and Henry will join Dorian to see his successful actress.
- 8) **Scene:** Henry, Dorian and Basil drink to Dorian's portrait
- 9) **Text:** Henry wishes to Dorian: "May you always look as young as your picture shows you now."
- 10) **Scene:** The actress is performing badly, people leave the theatre and Dorian is angry
- 11) **Scene:** Mad Dorian goes to the actress.
- 12) **Text:** The actress says: "I love you so much I can no longer play at being in love."
- 13) **Text:** Dorian replies: "You have humiliated me before my friends and I hate you."

- 14) **Text:** Dorian finds out that the actress shot herself.
- 15) **Text:** Dorian realises the portrait mirrors his soul.
- 16) **Scene:** Dorian hides his ugly portrait.
- 17) **Text:** Dorian becomes addicted to drugs.
- 18) **Text:** With each of his sins, he wants to see the portrait, as the portrait fascinates him.
- 19) **Scene:** The look at the portrait drives Dorian mad, he loses his mind.
- 20) **Scene:** Basil comes to see the portrait
- 21) **Text:** Dorian tells Basil: "That is a picture of my soul. I forbid you to look at it."
- 22) **Scene:** Dorian locks himself with his portrait, takes knife and he is stabbing the portrait with it, then he dies.
- 23) **Scene:** Dorian's servant and Basil finally open the door and find dead body of wrinkled and ugly man.

#### **4.2.18.3. Style of Production**

This silent film performs extremely well for its year and limited equipment. Despite its modest size, it manages to describe the important point of the novel when it criticizes human superficiality and prudery.

The work draws attention to the importance of good manners and decent behaviour. It shows the punishment of the protagonist as a result of his immoral behaviour. The film warns the viewer that the evil actions done by a man will be returned to him.

The plot is set in a movie screen, with each silent scene sketched with 12 inserted text frames that describe each act. The overall piece is accompanied by a very serious and dramatic music, which becomes more intense by the seriousness of the plot itself.

#### **4.2.19. The Film Adaptation "*Pact with the Devil*, Allan A. Goldstein (dir), 2003."**

The fifth adaptation is called "Pact with the Devil" and was directed by Allan A. Goldstein, scripted by Peter Jobin and Ron Raley in 2003. This adaptation comes from the United States and was chosen for this thesis because of its unique modern settings.

#### **4.2.19.1. The Storyline**

This film adaptation tells a story where a young and attractive Louis is sought out by the devil's agent, Henry Wotton, who meets him and gives him a better material life, including a successful career as a supermodel, whom he then manages.

When Louis's best picture becomes the face of "Savage" magazine, Henry shares his success with Louis, but also causes him to feel disappointment when he reminds him that youth is fleeting (see dialogue in the subchapter below), but then he tells him of the novel, where Dorian Gray's wish for eternal youth comes true. Louis would give anything for it, and on one stormy night, he sells his soul for the same wish. His best photograph thus becomes the mirror of his sinful soul. Henry's plans to possess Louise go well except for a small obstacle, Louis' fiancée, whom he eventually manages to get rid of. Right after her death Louis, under Henry's influence, and with his acquired fame and fortune, heads down the path of evil. Drowning in alcohol and drugs, every day is a big party for him, and he sleeps with multiple women.

After a moral conversation with Henry, Louise takes a vacation and goes to Germany for a few years, where she falls in love and commits adultery. Unfortunately, he causes two people die, including his German lover. After this tragedy and the years that have passed, Louise returns to the United States where he meets his friends, who have all aged for two decades. Although the wish brought him eternal youth, it took away the most precious thing of his soul. Louis feels empty and morally devastated, especially after the recent intentional murder of his photographer, and lover, Nina, who tried to destroy his photograph. As a consequence of the horrific acts, he has committed and which Henry witnessed, Louis commits suicide by stabbing the photograph with a knife. At the end of the film, Henry then seeks out his next Dorian, who resembles Louis.

#### **4.2.19.2. Setting and Viewer's Point of View**

The film is set in the late 20th century in the United States. It begins with the investigation of the Louis's death. The story is told retrospectively from a Henry Wotton's point of view. who tells a police detective how he met Dorian in June 1980 for the first time and how their relationship continued. Henry becomes an omnipresent narrator and finds

himself in every important and sinful part of the plot. The story takes multiple places, beginning in the photography studio where Henry meets Dorian, then showing the small and crumbling apartment where Louise lives with her fiancée Sibyl. After her death, he moves into a luxury apartment, he got from his manager Henry. As time passes, he leaves the United States for a long-term vacation in Germany. After more than twenty years, he returns to his luxury apartment, where he commits a suicide.

#### **4.2.19.3. The Differences According to Oscar Wilde's Novel**

The movie differs not only with settings, but also with characters and its acts and purpose. The film is set in the 1980s in the United States, whereas the novel takes place in London around the 1890s. The film takes place in photography studio, then in protagonist's old ruined flat, located in a homeless district, or later in his luxury apartment and his accommodation on vacation in Germany. On the other hand, the novel's protagonist stays in the London, he only changes the buildings as he spends his time at his or Henry's house, or at Basil's studio.

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However, what changes the most, are the chosen characters and its important acts in the plot. The protagonist of Oscar Wilde's inspirational novel portrays an American actor Ethan Erickson, who plays the character of the attractive supermodel, Louise. However, his appearance quite differs from the original Greek ideal of beauty. This Dorian has green-brown eyes and brown hair. With Henry's help, Louis becomes a successful face of the magazine "Sauvage". His photo is excellent, but in order to protect his face against aging, deliberately sells his soul. This is a further contrast to the fictional character who sells his

soul unintentionally. The photo then becomes a portrait of his sinful soul. As in the book, Dorian leads a bohemian life full of sex, alcohol, and drugs. After all the tragedies and horrific acts Louise commits, he suffers a mental breakdown and realizes the cost of his pact with the devil. When he then deliberately kills Nina, who attempts to destroy his painting, he cannot live anymore and commits a suicide, like the novelist Dorian, by stabbing his painting with a knife.

The character of Lord Wotton is portrayed by the white-haired old narrator of the story with the same name. Henry is a very elegant and cynical manager, differing from the original novel perhaps only by his meaner version. The film gradually reveals his true devilish self. Henry is a perverse element of evil, and destroys everything good around Louis, including his fiancée, Sibyl. Louis becomes one of his many victims. Henry, as the plot reveals, is in fact the devil's agent.

Instead of Basil Hallward's character, a viewer gets a German photographer, Nina, who is Henry's oldest client. Henry then introduces her to young Louis, who becomes her supermodel. The artist Nina then gives life to an excellent photograph of Louise, which has the same role in the film as the portrait from the novel. Nina's importance also consists of her morality, which she uses to help break Louise out of the evil Henry's clutches and get him back on the right path. Like Basil in the novel, she also dislikes the influence Henry has on young Louis. However, both characters share the same fate, they are murdered by their Dorian, whom they both love, but unlike Basil in the book, Nina has a romantic relationship with Dorian later on.

The film leaves out the innocence and name of Dorian's fiancée Sibyl, who is very caring and sensitive in the film. She worries about losing her fiancé Louis, who is being badly influenced by his manager Henry Wotton. Sibyl is equipped by the producers with a cautiousness and protectiveness that causes the couple to fight. After an argument in which Louis throws Sibyl against a wall and injures her, regrets the protagonist his actions, but Sibyl forces him to leave. However, Sibyl meets a tragic end. She becomes a victim of Henry's process of elimination when Henry bribes a homeless man in from their neighbourhood to drug Sibyl, who then dies of an overdose. Unlike the book version, Sibyl killed herself

unintentionally. Sibyls were Dorians' last hope for a good ending; After their death, both protagonists collapse, and their plot takes a bad turn.

The book then introduces the character of Sibyl's revengeful brother, James Vane, or Henry's wife Victoria. Another aspect missing from the film production is perhaps Opium Den, which is replaced by parties and bars.

#### **4.2.19.4. Style of production:**

Style of production is unique as the novel from the previous century was changed to the following one by moving with only one number of the year. Instead of "1890", the producer used "1980". The curious is also the modern movement from portrait to photo or Henry's cynical pearls of wisdom that copy Henry Wotton's statements in the book. The contemporary environment together with dress code and the whole expression of plot gives a realistic feeling. The viewer can connect this adaptation to warning signs before drugs, alcoholism, materialism, naivety and before bad, dangerous, selfish and people.

#### **4.2.20. The Film Adaptation: "The Picture of Dorian Gray, Dave Rosenbaum (dir), 2004."**

A psychological drama with mystique elements based on the same named novel The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde, was directed in 2004 by Dave Rosenbaum. The film covers a ninety-minutes story divided into five chapters about a young, handsome man, who gets himself on a wrong road. Anna Marie Donahue casted Josh Duhamel into the main role of Dorian Gray, and Branden Waugh into the novel's Antagonist, Harry Wotton. This adaptation sticks out by its interestingly chosen style of setting.

##### **4.2.20.1. Setting and Viewer's Point of View**

The director Dave Rosenbaum inspired his film adaptation by Wilde's beloved Greek and its beauty features, when the protagonist Dorian Gray, was played by a blond and handsome man with blueish eyes. Unlike other adaptations, the setting of this production

differs from the Victorian England the most. The time and place remain unknown, but the viewer experiences a peaceful and positive atmosphere from the sunny beaches and ocean backgrounds. No industrialisation, nor poverty, or prostitutes and other terrors, but beauty of the nature itself. For most of the time cameraman used Third-person's point of view and make the viewer its silent and distant observer.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.2.20.2. The Differences According to Oscar Wilde's Novel**

Although this adaptation fulfils Wilde's interpretation of Dorian's visual aspects, its settings differ mostly from other chosen adaptations. The producers tried to bring back Wilde's beloved Greece, where the film could be probably set. The plot structure resembles the book. Even the protagonist, Dorian, is portrayed according to Wilde's Greek ideal of beauty. Both Dorians are blond with blue eyes. However, the place and time of the story differs from the book. The film doesn't begin with an illustration of painter Basil Hallward's beautiful floral studio but shows a nostalgic scene of little Dorian playing the piano and soon becoming an orphan when his grandfather shoots the boy's mother and then himself.<sup>93</sup>

In adulthood, he then becomes a subject and art for the female painter Basil. After meeting Harry, who plays the role of Henry Wotton in a young and charming version, Dorian is influenced by Harry's cynical statements about beauty and a life of enjoyment. Based on Harry's advice, which Dorian takes to heart, he makes bad decisions. For example, he wishes the portrait would age instead of him, which then miraculously comes true. His first sin shown in the painting is revealed after he verbally hurts his fiancée, Sibyl, because of her poor performance. After the argument, Sibyl hanged herself. Dorian feels like a murder, but Harry takes Sibyl's death as the greatest work of her career. According to Harry's point of view, Sibyl never lived, so she could not die. After this argument Dorian finds out, he is not so affected by Sibyl's death.

When Basil meets Dorian, she tells him that he has changed, he speaks as if he has no heart, she says that Harry influences him badly. After Harry's divorce, he marries Basil and

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<sup>92</sup> Maria, 2022. *Point Of View In Filmmaking: What Is It And Why Is It Important?*. FILMSTRO [online].

<sup>93</sup> Note: Dorian's grandfather invented a method to split an atom, which brought wealth, but also several deaths. Therefore, he took life of his daughter's life including his own.



Dorian becomes their best man. However, Dorian ruins their wedding, by seducing Basil before their ceremony. Dorian then lives life full of vice, alcohol, drugs, and enjoys his sex life to the full in brothels, where Sibyl's brother Jim notices him. To revenge his dead sister, Jim chases Dorian with his car, then crashes and Dorian finishes him. His other victim becomes Basil, whom he shows his corrupted portrait. Basil wants to pray with him, but Dorian says that it is too late and shoots her with Jim's gun. Then he confesses to his last friend Harry. They then tie Harry's books to Basil's feet and throw her dead body to the sea. After this act Dorian consciences about horrors, he has experienced and caused. He recalls his friends, fatal love, and all his tragic actions. Finally, he shoots himself in front of his painting. On the ground falls an old ugly man and the painting remains the same as it was at the beginning, depicting a young and handsome man with flowing hair, blue eyes, lying on a cliff with a sunset backdrop by the sea.

#### **4.2.20.2.1. Characters:**

The character of Dorian Gray remains the same in both, novel and this film adaptation. Dorian inherited blue eyes and blond curly hairs, becomes an orphan and his pure soul gets spoiled by the bad influence of his companion Mr. Wotton. His sins appear as same as in the novel on his portrait, painted by Basil. The difference can be found in film adaptation, where Dorian seduces her friend Basil, the female painter and by doing so he ruins Basil's and Harry's wedding. Both stories end by Dorian's mental breakdown finished by his suicide.

A viewer can also find differences in character of Lord Henry Wotton, who is in the movie represented by a young and charmante man as Harry Wotton. As same as in the novel's template Mr. Wotton makes a cynical statement and gives the protagonist immoral advice that led to Dorian's corruption. Although he warns Dorian before marriages, he is married twice in the movie.

Character that differs the most is Basil Hallward, who is played by an actress. Basil's morality and solicitude towards Dorian shows both in book and screen. However, her relationship with Dorian and Harry happens to be diverse, as she used to date Harry, then secretly admires Dorian, with whom she then sleeps before hers and Harry's wedding.

### 4.2.20.3. Style of Production

The film adaptation based on the same named novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. This adaptation tries to stick to the book by dividing the film into chapters, each of which has an introduction containing philosophical quotes according to the novel template, by Oscar Wilde. The quotes further illustrate the following plot each of film passages.

The film consists of 5 chapters and outlines the most important lines from the book that influenced Dorian Gray to become who he was.

*Chapter One: "Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us."*

The beginning of the movie shows that behind all that is beautiful stands always something tragic.

Henry Wotton influenced by this quote Dorian in the novel. The quote means that man does not get rid of his sinful thoughts until he commits them. Because the more we try to resist them, the more we think of them and the more we want to taste them.

This quote introduces the first chapter of the film and shows that behind all that is beautiful stands always something tragic. Which in the case of film means that behind Dorian's beautiful face stands his tragic past.

Chapter II. "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants and the other is getting it."

Wilde often used paradoxes, and this is one of them. Because people desire to achieve their aim, but when they do so, they often lose their interest, or it can create an uncertainty in them, whereas when they do not, they become desperate.

This chapter introduces a love affair of Dorian and Sibyl, an actress to whom he falls in love. He desires for her and after he finally gets her, the situation changes. Sibyl cannot pretend love on stage, as she loves Dorian, but he loved her, because she was art to him, now she bores him and means nothing for him. Dorian becomes depressed.

*Chapter III. "Those who are faithful know only the trivial side of love; it is the faithless who know love's tragedies."*

Dorian first sin happens Harry marries Basil and Dorian ruins their wedding, by seducing Basil before their ceremony.

Chapter IV.

"The years pass and for reasons of influence and romance, Harry and Basil forgive Dorian. However, new wars loom and those who watch the battle will be more deeply wounded than those who also part."

Jim notices Dorian and wants to revenge his dead sister Sibyl, Jim chases Dorian with his car, then crashes and Dorian finishes him. Then he kills Basil, the observer of Dorian's sins. She tries to help him but becomes his victim.

Chapter 5. "Live exclusively on the surface and you will certainly drown in the depths. Something was dead in each of them. And what was dead was hope."

Redemption. Dorian consciences about horrors, he has experienced and caused. He recalls his friends, fatal love, and all his tragic actions. Finally, he shoots himself

The film adaptation ends with this image.

Oscar Wilde was forced to defend his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in a trial that resulted in his imprisonment, imprisoned him and destroyed him.

"Yes, there is a terrible moral in *Dorian Gray*, a moral which the prurient will not find, but will be revealed to all whose minds are sound."

"It is a tragedy that mirrors my life. Harry is what the world thinks of me. Basil is who I think I am. And Dorian is who I would like to be..."

"... In another life perhaps." (Oscar Wilde 1854-1900)

#### **4.2.4. The Film Adaptation: "Dorian Gray, Oliver Parker (dir.), 2009."**

Horror, thriller, and fantasy "*Dorian Gray, directed by Oliver Parker and scripted by Toby Finlay in 2009*", is the latest film adaptation of the novel "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde. The main character "*Dorian Gray*" was represented by Ben Barnes, the actor who starred the character "*Prince Caspian*" in the family fantasy movie "*The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*". The antagonist of the story "*Lord Henry Wotton*" was played by Colin Firth.

##### **4.2.20.4. Setting and Viewer's Point of View**

The director Oliver Parker keeps to the novel's setting, as the film shows 19th century London, including its industrialised buildings, prostitutes and the poverty of poor men and children. The director captures shots from all three perspectives, but it primarily considers the third-person's point of view, which offers the viewer an ideal angle that is

very similar to the third-person omniscient narrative perspective that one experiences when reading Wilde's novel. This point of view lends the viewer eyes, through which he or she can see the story from a distance as a silent observer. This method can be seen in most films. In Parker's film adaptation, however, experiences the audience not only a third-person point of view, but also second and first. Through the main characters' (first-person) point of view, the viewer can feel Dorian's emotions. Also, by tasting the second person view, one feels the immediate eye contact that brings visual sensation and the impression of being on stage with the protagonist. In *Dorian Gray*, the viewer can experience this kind of pleasure, for example, from the perspective of a portrait when Dorian looks at it for the first time. This type of contact strongly builds the observer's bond with the actor.<sup>94</sup>

#### **4.2.20.5. The Differences According to Oscar Wilde's Novel**

The film adaptation *Dorian Gray* offers a great setting for the novel's template, which supplies viewers with a perfect imagination of the Victorian's society. However, to make the film more attractive for the 21<sup>st</sup> century audience, producers changed features of characters, some of their actions and even came up with a few different, but similar names. For the sake of clarity, this subsection lists the book's differences in footnotes, which address each specific paragraph of the analysis.

##### **The Storyline**

The film starts retrospectively on a late night when Dorian Gray stabs Basil Hallward in the chest, then he grabs his dead body into a trunk and lets it sink into the sea. After the murder scene, the movie returns to events from the year before and chronologically tells a story of the Dorian Gray, who moves to London, as he inherited his grandfather Kelso's villa.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Maria, 2022. *Point Of View In Filmmaking: What Is It And Why Is It Important?*. FILMSTRO [online].

<sup>95</sup> The storyline of the book starts chronologically and peacefully in the flourish studio of Basil Hallward.

Dorian is an orphan, his dad died of typhus and mother while giving birth. Kelso blamed Dorian for his daughter's death and because of that, he tortured Dorian his whole childhood. After Lord Kelso's death, Dorian comes to a wealth.<sup>96</sup>

At Kelso's funeral, Mr. Gray meets a famous painter Basil Hallward, with whom he becomes friend. Dorian then goes to a party, where he encounters a curious Lord Harry Wilton, a charming cynical man.<sup>97</sup>

The young Adonis behaves with his best manners and kindness. However, he is also naive and suggestible, whereas Harry acts foolishly and persuasively. After Basil finishes Dorian's portrait, he wishes the portrait would age instead of him, that he would give his soul for it. In a theatre, he falls in love with Sibyl Vane, an opera singer, whom he falls in love with because of her great talent. Dorian finds out his wish comes true as his scars from brutal grandfather's tyranny disappeared. Dorian engages Sibyl Vane, with whom he has then argument because Dorian did not go to see her performing and instead of it, he went with Harry to brothel to celebrate his future fatherhood. Sibyl does not like Harry's bad influence and Dorian leaves her in anger. At home he notices a fly flew from his portrait.<sup>98</sup>

To dispel doubts, Dorian enjoys pleasure with other girls, when Sibyl's brother Jim comes to his villa, to tell Dorian that his sister Sibyl has drowned herself and that she was pregnant with him. Mad Jim almost throttled Dorian, but the servant saved him, and Jim is taken to prison and his following years spends in asylum. Dorian feels guilty, but Harry persuades him that experiences make man stronger and that it is not his fault.<sup>99</sup>

Dorian's portrait looks awful, so he locks it in the loft, so nobody can see that worms are eating holes inside his picture. At one party, Mr. Gray seduces a young woman and then her mother. Dorian lives limitlessly, he enjoys sexual experiments, alcohol, opiates, and every night goes to a party. Basil wants to exhibit his best portrait to become famous. To avoid Basil from seeing the catastrophe, Mr Gray lets Basil satisfy him.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dorian's mother, Margaret Devereux from the upper class, fell in love with a lower-class soldier, who was killed at duel spa, which purposely arranged Lord Kelso because of the soldier's social background. Margaret died within one year after.

<sup>97</sup> Basil meets Dorian Gray at a party and Dorian encounters Henry Wotton (not Harry Wilton) at Basil's studio.

<sup>98</sup> The fulfilled wish shows, as the first change of the portrait answers Dorian's first sin, when he behaves cruelly and disrespectfully towards his fiancée Sibyl, as he leaves her because of her bad performance.

<sup>99</sup> Dorian finds out Sibyl's death from a Lord Henry Wotton.

<sup>100</sup> Unlike to the adaptation, the novel does not express homosexuality with such a rage.

Dorian uses people for his own pleasure, he acts cruelly, egoistically, and heartlessly. However, his worst act comes when he shows Basil the concealed portrait, which mirrors his corrupted soul. The terrified painter offers Dorian help. Unfortunately, Basil slits Basil's throat with a piece of glass. Then follows the murder scene from the beginning of the film. After Basil's funeral, the narcissist leaves London for several years. Meanwhile things have changed, Harry got older, his wife died, and their daughter Emily grew up into a beautiful and optimistic young woman who considers her father as a cynic. Although everybody has aged for decades, Dorian's face remains the same.<sup>101</sup>

When Dorian visits Sibyl's graveyard, Jim Vane spots him, stalks him and wants to shoot him, but Dorian assured him it is not him, as he would be old now. Jim apologizes. When Dorian leaves, he loses his silver case for cigarettes, with his name on it and Jim notices it. The main protagonist starts to hallucinate. He sees dead Basil, Jim Vane stalks him and now he becomes fully aware of all his sins. Dorian has feelings for Harry's daughter in order to protect her, he tells her to not see him again. Dorian wants to destroy his portrait, but he cannot do that. The picture is full of worms, it putrefies and nearby sneak rats and cockroaches.<sup>102</sup>

Dorian wants to purify himself, so he goes to church for confess. After Dorian leaves the church, Sibyl's brother follows him and tries to shoot him. They both end up in the underground, where a train hits Jim. The last words Jim hears are that Dorian is sorry about what had happened. Mr. Gray wants to tell all his sins to Emily, but before he manages to do that, he falls into a coma. Lord Wilton is against the relationship between Dorian and his daughter Emily. Dorian wants to start the whole life again, but with Emily.<sup>103</sup>

Harry finds out, Dorian sold his soul. He stands in front of the portrait and wants Dorian to show him. He also recognizes Basil's bloody clothes and realizes that Dorian is a killer. Dorian proclaims that the fault is Harry's. Then Dorian tried to throttle him. Emily runs to find them. Harry finally sees the ugly portrait, throws down the oil lamp and lets the portrait catch on fire, then grabs the keys and locks Dorian in the loft. Emily tries to save

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<sup>101</sup> Unlike the adaptation, Henry Wotton does not have children, his wife lives.

<sup>102</sup> James Vane spots Dorian in an opium den.; The lost object had the mark "Prince Charming", which Sibyl called Dorian.; Henry's daughter does not exist.

<sup>103</sup> Dorian does not confess, but he believes that purification is through punishment.

him. However, Dorian does not want to. He then expresses his love towards Emily, and destroys the portrait by cord, dies, his body transforms into the old, ugly man from the picture and then he burns down. Emily runs away to Harry's sister Agatha and does not want to see her father again. The portrait survived the fire and remains untouched and hidden in Lord Wilton's house.<sup>104</sup>

### **Style of Production**

The film *Dorian Gray* impresses the viewer with almost every sense. Camera captures the exact Victorian era. The shadowy and gloomy period, together with the dramatically serious music by Charlie Mole, creates a very dark and mystical atmosphere through the whole film. Costume Designer Ruth Meyers also depicted the social dress-code of the time, which mainly used elegant black suits, tight corsets with open ladies' decor and large skirts, which gave women the required sexy proportions of that time. Casting Director Lucy Bevan ensured a handsome selection of attractive actors, although their visuals differ greatly from the novel's template, dark-haired actors fit the scene of the Victorian era's gothic style, even better. The viewer also experienced a bitter taste in the mouth when watching the decomposing protagonist Dorian Gray.

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<sup>104</sup> Dorian drowns his black conscience in opium dens, regrets his acts and dies when he tries to destroy the portrait by stabbing it with a knife.

## 5. Conclusion

The main aim of this bachelor thesis was to introduce the works of Oscar Wilde and to make a comparative analysis of its four chronologically chosen film adaptations of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The analysis compared ethical analogies and dialogue as well as narratives less suitable for direct portrayal in film production. The thesis concluded by comparing each film adaptation with the book version.

The theoretical part introduced the period in which the Irish author Oscar Wilde lived, then it will briefly discussed his life and work. Then it described the plot and the characters of the pivotal novel chosen for this qualifying work, "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*", which was then analysed and compared with four chronologically chosen film adaptations in the practical section.

The practical part of this thesis was a comparative analysis of film and television adaptations of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde. As first, this part analysed the pivotal novel, its characters, storyline, and its structure, as same as the themes, symbols, and motives along with the novel's narrative perspective. The depth analysis of the novel then moved over to the subchapter "*Book to Screen*", which briefly introduced methods of narrative perspectives alias "*points of view*" that are used by filmmakers. The brief introduction was then followed by an individual analysis each of the chronologically chosen film adaptations.

This paper provided an analysis of the film adaptations, comparing them to Oscar Wilde's book novel. In doing so, it revealed his life and the problems of society at the time, which were reflected in the film adaptations of the novel as well as in his literary work.



## 6. Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo představit dílo Oscara Wildea a provést komparativní analýzu jeho čtyř chronologicky vybraných filmových adaptací románu *Obraz Doriana Graye*. Analýza porovnávala etické analogie a dialogy i vyprávění méně vhodná pro přímé ztvárnění ve filmové produkci. V závěru práce byly jednotlivé filmové adaptace porovnány s knižní předlohou.

Teoretická část představila dobu, ve které irský spisovatel Oscar Wilde žil, dále bude stručně pojednáno o jeho životě a díle. Poté popsala děj a postavy stěžejního románu vybraného pro tuto kvalifikační práci, "*Obraz Doriana Graye*", který byl následně v praktické části analyzován a porovnán se čtyřmi chronologicky vybranými filmovými adaptacemi. V praktické části této práce byla provedena srovnávací analýza filmových a televizních adaptací románu Oscara Wildea "*Obraz Doriana Graye*". Jako první byl v této části analyzován stěžejní román, jeho postavy, děj a jeho struktura, stejně jako témata, symboly a motivy spolu s perspektivou vyprávění románu.

Hlubková analýza románu pak přešla k podkapitole "*Kniha na plátno*", která stručně představila metody vypravěčské perspektivy alias "*úhly pohledu*", které používají filmaři. Po stručném úvodu pak následoval samostatný rozbor každé z chronologicky vybraných filmových adaptací.

Tato práce přinesla analýzu filmových adaptací, které porovnála s knižní románovou předlohou Oscara Wilda. Odhalila tím tak jeho život a tehdejší problémy společnosti, které se promítaly jak do filmových adaptací, tohoto románu, tak ale i do jeho literární tvorby.

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