

LITERATURE ART OF OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Movement

Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet and dramatist who is best known for his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Despite many personal difficulties, including a scandalous trial, imprisonment, and a serious illness, he made a significant contribution to world literature and its development. Oscar Wilde is considered one of the main representatives of Aestheticism, an art movement that originated in England in the late 19th century and focused on the belief that art exists only for its beauty and should serve no other purpose. Aestheticism challenged the values of Victorian culture, as many Victorians believed that literature and art should perform an important ethical function.

Mythological Allusions and Hidden Symbols in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

During the period of Aestheticism, there was a renewed interest in Classical antiquity. In his novel, Oscar Wilde often refers to Greek mythology. One example is the image of Dorian Gray himself, whose story is similar to that of Narcissus, a hunter who falls in love with his own reflection and eventually dies because of this. Similarly, Dorian is so fixated on his portrait that it leads to his moral downfall: “*Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him.*”

According to Wilde, sin moves our world. Our desires and passions give us that bright experience that rules of morality cannot. In this way the author makes aesthetics higher in position than ethics as only through art we can get the real pleasure and perfection. But even though art may seem very far from reality it still mirrors our life. The most vivid symbol of this idea is the portrait of Dorian. “*For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin.*” While Dorian’s beauty remains unchanged, the portrait is changing, reflecting the ugliness of Dorian’s soul after every sin he committed. Other symbols that Wilde uses to reveal Dorian’s weak and sinful soul are: theatre, opium den, yellow book and violin. They all represent the inability of the protagonist to resist manipulation and the loss of self. Moreover, throughout the story, the presence of flowers is noticeable, which is used to highlight the aesthetics of the novel, while also manifesting one of the main ideas: beauty of youth is like flowers, also begin to wither and rot with time and, eventually, die.

Hedonism in the Modern World: Insights from Oscar Wilde’s Works

Hedonism, the philosophy that prioritizes pleasure and happiness as life’s ultimate goals, has long been a subject of literary exploration. Oscar Wilde embraced a particular form of hedonism known as “aesthetic hedonism,” which emphasizes beauty, art, and sensual experience. One of the most profound examinations of hedonism is found in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Wilde uses characters like Lord Henry, who embodies self-indulgence and aestheticism, to highlight both the allure and the risks of hedonistic ideals. As Lord Henry famously declares, “*The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.*” In modern society, hedonism manifests in various forms, particularly through consumerism and social media. The pursuit of material possessions reflects the desire for instant gratification. The phenomenon known as the “Instagram Effect” demonstrates how the need for aesthetic perfection mirrors Dorian Gray’s pursuit of eternal youth. Wilde’s works serve as a timeless reflection on the dual nature of hedonism, illustrating both its pleasures and its dangers. His insights remain relevant today, reminding us of the fine line between enjoyment and excess.

The Influence of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun*

Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* remains a literary classic, exploring the dangers of external perfection concealing inner corruption. A comparison with Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* reveals a shared exploration of duality, human nature, transformation, and the symbolic role of the portrait. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde’s painted portrait is both a symbolic and narrative centerpiece, showing the consequences of Dorian’s sins while preserving his flawless appearance. It serves as a warning about society’s obsession with beauty at the expense of morality. Similarly, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* presents a modern “portrait” tied to technology and identity. Josie’s mother commissions a painting to preserve her daughter’s image, unaware that beneath this act lies a plan to immortalize her through Klara. Like Dorian’s portrait, this creation seeks to defy nature – aging, death, and moral consequence. By examining the role of the portrait in both works, Wilde’s concept of the “split personality” emerges in Ishiguro’s futuristic world. Both authors warn that placing too much trust in images risks losing what makes us truly human.

References:

1. Boston, Jack. Kenzo Ishiguro’s “Klara and the Sun.” Available at: <https://jackboston.com/kenzo-ishiguro-klara-and-the-sun/>
2. Chro Muhammad Saeed, The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Journal for Human & Social Sciences. Available at: <https://alustath.uobaghdad.edu.iq/index.php/UJIRCO/article/view/1792>
3. David E. Robinson The Gothic genre, classical allusion and other influences in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Available at: <https://literator.org.za/index.php/literator/article/view/1737/3376>
4. Simion, M. A New Hedonism in Oscar Wilde’s Novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. University of Târgu Jiu. Available at: https://www.utgiu.ro/revista/lit/pdf/2015-01/09_Simion.pdf