



Wilde's Aestheticism

- Oscar Wilde's motto: "my life is like a work of art".
- Against didacticism of Victorian novels.
- The artist is the creator of beautiful things.
- Art has:
 1. no didactic function
 2. no moral function
 3. no Utilitarian, but "Art for Art's Sake"
- Art celebrates beauty and the sensorial pleasures.
- All art is quite useless.





Setting

- "The Picture of Dorian Gray" takes place in the late nineteenth century **London**, England.
- Mostly at Dorian's estate, clubs, operas, ect., 19th century dainty London.





Main Characters

- **Dorian Gray**. A young and handsome boy. He is Basil's model for most of his paintings. He later becomes Lord Henry Wotton's corrupted pupil
- **Basil Hallward**. A gifted painter. A more shy person. He adores Dorian and wants to keep him safe and lovely.
- **Lord Henry Wotton**. The tempting snake. Wealthy nobleman who influences Dorian Gray. Witty talker with lot of theories He is the friend of both Basil and Dorian.





Basil Hallward is what
I think I am: Lord
Henry what the world
thinks me: Dorian
what I would like to
be - in other ages
perhaps....





Dorian Gray :plot

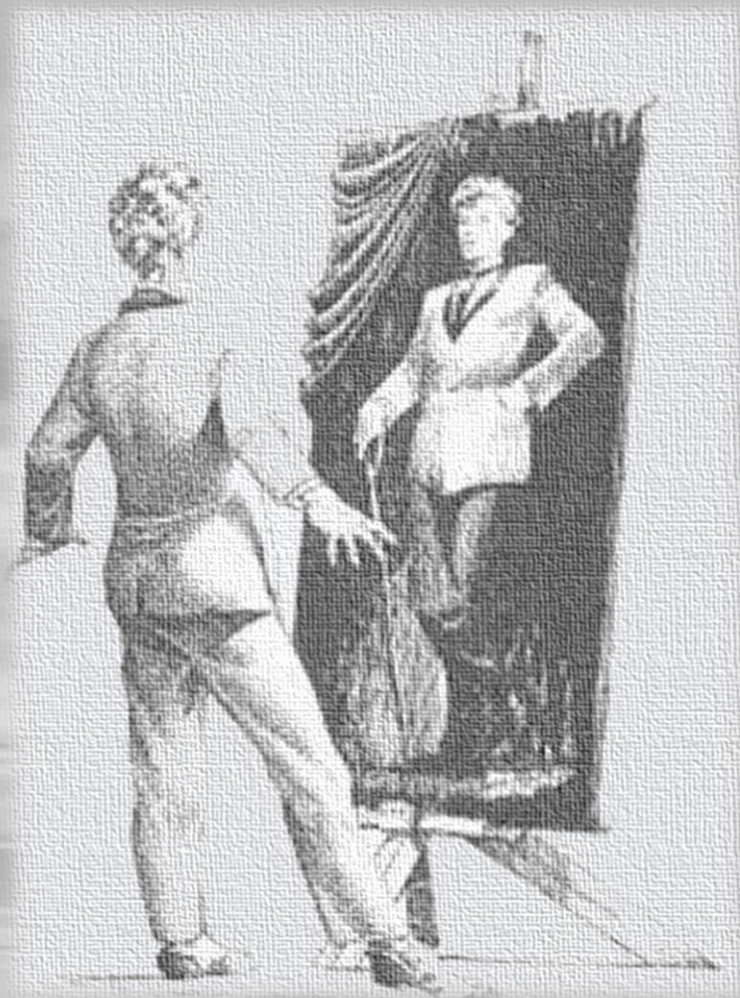
- The painter Basil Hallward makes a portrait of a handsome young man, Dorian Gray.
- Charmed by Lord Wotton's theories becomes his pupil.
- Once made aware of his beauty and the consequent power it derives, Dorian wishes intensely to be young forever while admiring the painting.





The Diabolical Bargain

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





The Consequences of a Choice

- Dorian's desires of eternal youth are satisfied.
- His experiences and vices appear on the portrait.
- Falls in love with a young actress and singer, Sibyl Vane....





«Tonight she is
Imogen and
tomorrow night
she will be
Juliet.»

«When is
she Sibyl
Vane??»

«Never!»





Sibyl Vane

- Sibyl falls head over heel for Dorian.
- Her experience of true love compromises her ability to act.
- She realizes the falseness of emotions on stage.
- The night Dorian takes his friends too see Sibyl on stage, she acts badly on purpose.

«I was Rosalind one night and Portia the other. The joy of Beatrice was my joy, and the sorrows of Cordelis were mine also»





Dorian's Reaction

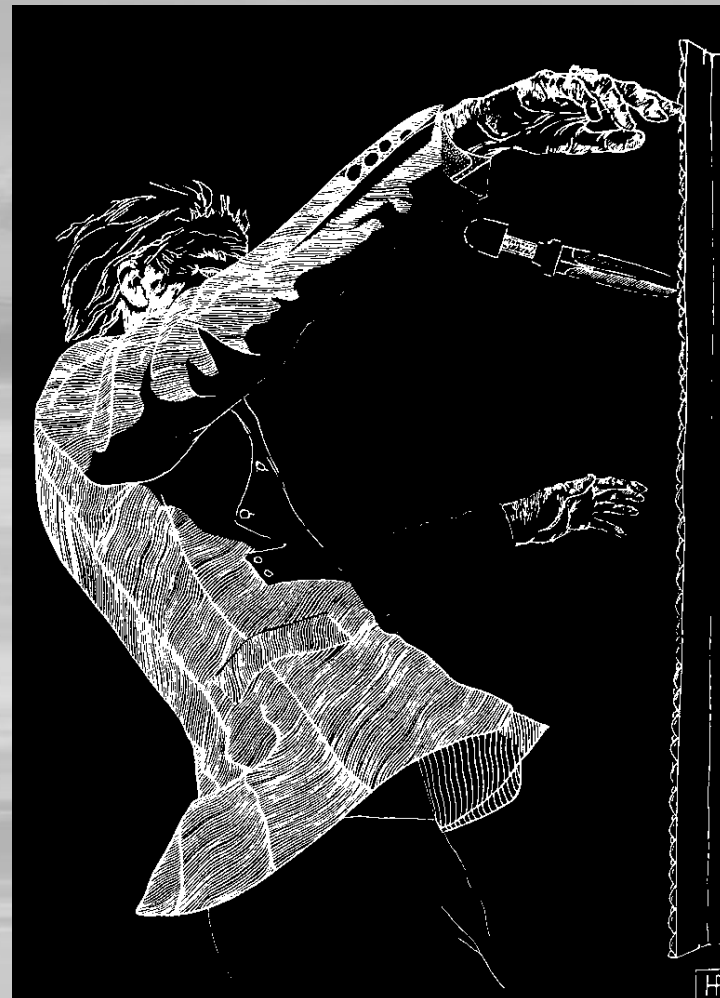
- Dorian is angered and eventually dumps Sibyl.
- The girl will commit suicide for disappointed hopes.
- Sybil's character represents all that Dorian has lost;
youth, beauty,
innocence and purity.





The End

- Dorian lives only for pleasure.
- Basil discovers Dorian's secret , hence Dorian cannot but kill him.
- Later Dorian wants to get free from the portrait; he stabs it but in so doing he kills himself.





Lord Henry Wotton

- Lord Henry is a man possessed of "wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories."
- He is a hedonistic manipulative aristocratic.
- Becomes Dorian's mentor.
- Advocates the equal pursuit of both moral and immoral experience.
- Dorian falls under his spell .
- He lives a rather staid life.
- His character is based on Lord Ronald Gower, a friend of the author Oscar Wilde.





Dorian Gray: a modern Dr. Faustus?

- A temptation is placed before Dorian: a potential ageless beauty.
- Lord Henry Wotton's cynical attitude is in keeping with the devil's role in Dr. Faustus.
- Lord Henry acts as the "Devil advocate".
- The picture stands for the dark side of Dorian's personality.





Meaning (at our peril)

- Dorian dies while he attempts to go into the meaning of the symbol (the portrait) and that 's why he dies.
- The horrible, corrupting picture is the symbol of the immorality and bad conscience of the Victorian middle class.
- The picture, restored to its original beauty, illustrates Wilde's theories of art: art survives people, art is eternal.(Keats)





The Picture

- Metaphor of the Victorian Compromise
- Once the changes on the picture become unbearable to Dorian, he covers and hides it from everybody's sight.
- Vices must always be kept hidden.
- The picture represents Dorian's dark side.





Dorian Stabs the Portrait





- But this murder—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself— that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old.
- Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.





He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.





"Whose house is that, Constable?" asked the elder of the two gentlemen. "Mr. Dorian Gray's, sir," answered the policeman. They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton's uncle. Inside, in the servants' part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily—their bolts were old.





When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty.

Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was **withered**, **wrinkled**, and **loathsome** of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.





An Italian Dandy: Andrea Sperelli





Andrea Sperelli

- Andrea Sperelli is the protagonist of Dannunzio's Il Piacere (1889)
- Refined young aristocrat
- Typical decadent hero:



«Il conte Andrea Sperelli-Fieschi d'Ugenta, unico erede, proseguiva la tradizione familiare. Egli era, in verità, l'ideal tipo del giovine signore italiano del XIX secolo, il legittimo campione d'una stirpe di gentiluomini e di artisti eleganti, ultimo discendente d'una razza intellettuale.»





Sperelli the Aesthete



- Sperelli's main passions are art and beauty, which he develops through studies and readings
- He means to turn his life into a work of art; thus aesthetics (beauty) becomes his moral.
- Understanding this superior rule, the aesthete:
 1. feels contempt for the mass,
 2. detaches himself from ordinary men
 3. doesn't want to mess with the democratic flood which makes everyone vulgarly equal and indistinct.(Globalization?)





The Cult of Beauty

- The Aesthete is never satisfied with himself, as the cult of beauty focuses on the search for sensation, imagination, pleasure, as a continuous experimentation of new emotions:
- «Egli era, per così dire, tutto impregnato di arte. La sua adolescenza, nutrita di studi vari e profondi, parve prodigiosa. Egli alternò, fino a venti anni, le lunghe letture coi lunghi viaggi in compagnia del padre e poté compiere la sua straordinaria educazione estetica sotto la cura paterna, senza restrizioni e costrizioni di pedagoghi. Dal padre appunto ebbe il gusto delle cose d'arte, il culto passionato della bellezza, il paradossale disprezzo de' pregiudizi, l'avidità del piacere. Questo padre, cresciuto in mezzo agli estremi splendori della corte borbonica, sapeva largamente vivere; **aveva una scienza profonda della vita voluttuaria e insieme una certa inclinazione byroniana al romanticismo fantastico.** Lo stesso suo matrimonio era avvenuto in circostanze quasi tragiche, dopo una furiosa passione. Quindi egli aveva turbata e travagliata in tutti i modi la pace coniugale. Finalmente s'era diviso dalla moglie ed aveva sempre tenuto seco il figliuolo, viaggiando con lui per tutta l'Europa.»





Il piacere	
Struttura	Trama
I Libro Un <i>flashback</i> racconta la relazione tra Andrea Sperelli ed Elena Muti	Il romanzo inizia un pomeriggio di dicembre del 1886, in cui il protagonista attende nel suo appartamento la visita dell'ex amante Elena Muti, dopo una separazione di circa due anni. Andrea rievoca la loro passionale storia d'amore: la conoscenza a un ricevimento mondano, gli incontri, la brusca interruzione della relazione voluta da Elena, per un matrimonio di interesse con lord Heathfield. Andrea, per dimenticarla, passa da un'avventura erotica all'altra e viene ferito in duello da un marito offeso dalla sua intraprendenza.
II Libro La convalescenza nella villa Schifanoia: l'intimità affettuosa con Maria Ferres	Durante la convalescenza nella villa di una cugina sente il bisogno di mettere in versi le proprie sensazioni e suggestioni. Qui conosce Maria Ferres, in vacanza con la figlioletta e, affascinato dalla bellezza spirituale della donna, se ne innamora. Anche Maria ricambia l'amore con un sentimento puro e nobile, sedotta dalla sua cultura raffinata e dalla sua sensibilità artistica.
III Libro Il ritorno a Roma: Andrea dibattuto tra Elena e Maria	In autunno, ritornato a Roma, Andrea ritrova Elena: la donna gli concede l'appuntamento con cui si apre il romanzo, ma rifiuta di riprendere la relazione. Andrea riversa il suo desiderio su Maria, trascinandola nell'adulterio, ma conduce il nuovo rapporto con un ambiguo gioco di trasposizioni di persona: sta con la donna angelo ma continua a desiderare la donna lussuosa. E quando, trasportato dalla passione, chiama Maria con il nome di Elena, la donna compresa la verità lo abbandona.
IV Libro La sconfitta dell'esteta	Al conte Sperelli non resta che registrare la propria instabilità emotiva e il fallimento del proprio stile di vita.





Conclusions



- Sperelli is affected by a sickness of the will.
WHY?
- He is not morally grounded
- He is tortured by ideals, but he has pursued none
- Having yielded to instinct, Sperelli is the emblem of the decadent society: refined, hedonist, but totally devoid of will.
- Thus he becomes the forerunner of the so called «inept», that is the one who is unable to live in the contemporary society.





1st
ROMANTIC
GENERATION

2nd
ROMANTIC
GENERATION

AESTHETICISM

IMAGINATION

YES

YES

YES

POET /GENIUS

YES

YES

YES

POET/ TEACHER

YES

NO

NO

ART/BEAUTY

NO

YES

YES

NATURE/GOD

YES

YES

YES

SIMPLE
LANGUAGE

YES

NO

NO

REBELS

NO

YES

YES



