

***The Picture of Dorian Gray: Oscar Wilde's Novel
and the Film Version *Dorian Gray* (2009) by Oliver
Parker***

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Bachelor's Thesis
2022



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2021/2022

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: Nikola Glabová
Osobní číslo: H180215
Studijní program: B7310 Filologie
Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi
Forma studia: Prezenční
Téma práce: *Obraz Dorian Gray: Román Oscara Wildea a filmová verze Dorian Gray (2009) v režii Olivera Parkera*

Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění materiálů k tématu
Studium odborné literatury
Formulace cílů práce
Analýza románu a filmu
Vyvození formulace a závěrů práce


Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:


- Brown, Blaine. *Cinematography: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
Elmann, Richard. *Oscar Wilde*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.
Peters, John G. *Style and Art in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: Form as Content*. *Victorian Review* 25, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 1-13.
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Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Ewald Mengel**
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **8. listopadu 2021**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **9. května 2022**


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Ve Zlíně dne 28. února 2022

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této bakalářské práce je porovnat dílo Oscara Wilda, *Obraz Dorian Graye*, s její filmovou adaptací *Dorian Gray* v režii Olivera Parkera z roku 2009. Tato práce si dává za úkol odhalit metody, které byly zvoleny k přenesení knihy na plátno a analyzovat, do jaké míry filmoví tvůrci vycházeli z knižní předlohy. V první části se práce zaměřuje zejména na popis filmové adaptace a režiséra. Dále zkoumá místo a čas, ve které se děj odehrává napříč obou zdrojů a kinematografické efekty, které jsou ve filmu vyobrazeny. Závěr práce vyznačuje hlavní rozdíly, mezi novelou a její filmovou adaptací.

Klíčová slova: *Obraz Dorian Graye*, *Dorian Gray* (2009), filmová adaptace, komparativní analýza

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to compare the work of Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, with its film adaptation *Dorian Gray* directed by Oliver Parker from 2009. This thesis aims to reveal the methods chosen to transfer the book to the screen and to analyse how far the film was based on the book template. In the first part, the work focuses mainly on the description of the film adaptation and director. The thesis' conclusion marks the main differences between the novel and its film adaptation.

Keywords: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Dorian Gray* (2009), film adaptation, comparative analysis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor DR HAB Ewald Mengel, for his help, patience, advice, and especially great guidance throughout the whole process of writing. I would also like to thank my friends and family for their support during my studies. This thesis would not have been possible without their support.

I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis deals with a film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which is based on the famous novel written by one of the most recognized novelists in British literary history, Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde. He was born on October 16, 1854, at 21 Westland Row in Dublin. Wilde is considered a commander of the aesthetic movement in the 19th century during Victorian era.

The overall goal of this bachelor's thesis is to compare Oscar Wilde's most famous book *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with its film adaptation *Dorian Gray* directed by Oliver Parker. The main purpose of this work is to analyse and evaluate the main differences between the movie and the book as well as to describe how the director transferred the text of the book on the screen and what methods were used to achieve the best result.

The first chapter deals with the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* from the year 2009. This film was directed by Oliver Parker. This director is also known for creating movies such as "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again", "Johnny English Reborn", "Othello", and "The Importance of Being Ernest". The first part briefly introduces him and the main purpose of choosing this story for his movie. The main body of this chapter describes setting that includes location, transportation, society, and clothing during Victorian era.

The next chapter describes the cinematic effects (special effects) used in the film version and the technology, which was used to shoot individual scenes, which is also the most important part to create a movie. Technology is the basis for making a movie because it helps creating the scenes and shots. In books, everything is described by words. How the characters look, what the environment in which the story takes place looks like. However, the film gives us this information in a visual form, which saves a lot of time. These tools help the filmmakers transform a book of 180 pages into the 108 minutes screen version. The narration is told as it is edited by filmmakers and by the combination and connection of the events. The cinematography chosen for these scenes is called narrative strategies.

The last part of this thesis focuses on the comparative analysis of the book and the film. I must emphasize that the story of the book and the storyline of the film are different in many ways. The chapter explains all the differences between these two sources. Surprisingly, the movie differs from Wilde's story in many aspects. The filmmakers have preserved the main idea and symbols of the book, such as the immortality, the picture that interacts with Dorian's soul, flowers, Basil, Sybil, and James's death, and finally the destruction of the portrait itself. The rest of the narrative is solely the work of the director and screenwriter. All in all, Parker's

film adaptation turns out to be scary, but at the end also a romantic story, in which a man is able to give up everything, his immortality and life, for the woman he desperately loves.

1 THE FILM ADAPTATION *DORIAN GRAY* (2009)

“Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope.”¹

- Oscar Wilde

These words come from the well-known and successful writer Oscar Wilde who mentioned this idea in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published in the 1890s during the Victorian era in the Philadelphia magazine called *Lippincott's*².

Since Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was published, it has become increasingly popular over the years, and such a unique narrative could not avoid several film adaptations. This paper deals with the book's newest film adaptation, *Dorian Gray*, which premiered on 9th September 2009, starring Ben Barnes.

The story is about a young man who seeks beauty, youth, and eternal life, without any concerns about the impact on his moral side or soul. Even though the book was written in 1890, it is possible to see Wilde's ideas on how people try to stay young and beautiful for as long as possible in the 21st century. Not only that people crave beauty, but also healthcare nowadays allows them to prolong their young appearance a little longer for a certain amount of money. This attitude to appearance can also be seen in the film adaptation, where young Dorian instead of the money pays by his soul.

Compared to its source, many aspects are very different in the book. The adaptation is shot like a horror film without any secondary intent. This is contrary to the novel, as it has a more philosophical purpose. In contrary, the film turns into a Hollywood love story, in which a man wants to change his behaviour for a woman he loves. In the end, Gray dies as a man who wants to make amends and who is aware of his actions and is ready to be punished for them. In the viewer's eyes, therefore, he dies like a hero in front of his beloved [01:40:31].³ However, in the book, his story ends with a hasty decision, when he tries to destroy the picture out of pure anger, but he does not know that it will end his life. Therefore, he dies alone as an immoral, dishonest man, without any self-realization.

All in all, the book tries to say something, while the film's main purpose is to meet the viewer's expectations. The production wrote the script to make the story end positively, not

¹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2014), 3.

² André Gide, *Oscar Wilde: A Study* (Oxford: Hollywell Press, 1905), 6.

³ *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), 01:40:31.
https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

negatively. These changes are due to the director Oliver Parker and the screenwriter Toby Finlay.

1.1 Director Oliver Parker

The director's main task is to put together a team that is responsible for the entire shooting and filmmaking. Already in pre-production, together with the screenwriter, they must agree on a certain vision, which they expect from the final version of the film. During the production, he approves the places where the filming will take place and manage the actors. In the last step, which is post-production, he collaborates with the editor on editing the scenes and approves the final changes to the film.⁴ At *Dorian Gray*, Oliver Parker is in charge of all these steps mentioned above.

Oliver Parker is a British director, actor, and producer, born on 6th September 1960, in London. His filmography life started with the role of a moving man in *Hellraiser*, where he occurs in a short scene with another man, trying to move a mattress up the stairs. However, more than for his acting, he is known for filmmaking.

Given the films Oliver worked on, such as *An Ideal Husband* (1999), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2002), and *Dorian Gray* (2009), it seems like the director is interested in British literary classics, especially in Oscar Wilde's books.⁵ To paraphrase his words from an interview for *Empire Magazine*, he chose this novel because Wilde "tells the most fabulous stories"⁶.

Despite Parker's enthusiasm, the film script structure and plot sequence do not entirely follow the book's story. According to Oliver, the narrative of the gothic novel fits its time, which means the Victorian Era. However, the novel and the film are two distinctive forms, created at a different time, and even though the story is excellent, he was not convinced if the narrative would also work on a film. So, to meet the cinematic potential, some changes need to be implemented.⁷ Considering the script, Parker was delighted by the narrative that Toby Finlay wrote.

⁴ Lorene M. Wales, *The Complete Guide to Film and Digital Production: The People and the Process* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 129-131.

⁵ "Dorian Gray," IMDb, Accessed March 28, 2021, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0662529/?ref=fn_al_nm_2

⁶ Oliver Parker, "Oliver Parker Talks Dorian Gray | Empire Magazine" interview by Emily Phillips, *Empire Magazine*, October 28, 2009, video, 03:34. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiAE-0MF8jY>.

⁷ Oliver Parker, "Oliver Parker Talks Dorian Gray | Empire Magazine" interview by Emily Phillips, *Empire Magazine*, October 28, 2009, video, 03:34. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiAE-0MF8jY>.

1.2 Screenwriter Toby Finlay

Like Oliver Parker, Toby also grew up and studied in London. After graduation, he relocated to Paris, where he was teaching English. When Finlay moved back to the United Kingdom, he did not know what kind of job would suit him best. Eventually, his passion for writing introduced him to *Working Title* and *Pathé* companies. However, he had already been reading some scripts at that time, but the mistakes that appeared in the texts made him write his own script.

The screenwriter attributes credit for creating the storyline for the film adaptation *Dorian Gray* (2009). This was the first screenplay he had been working on. The script is mainly based on the well-known novel, but Finlay also added new aspects to make the plot more exciting and more attractive for a young audience.

1.3 Plot

The protagonist of the film is a young and rich man named Dorian Gray, who returns to London after the death of his uncle.⁸ The film has a very fast storyline and the 108minute movie consists of many entanglements and surprising moments. This subchapter describes some of the most important parts of the story.

At the beginning of the film, a brown-haired man is standing on a pier at night, dropping a chest sprinkled with blood, which bears the initials D.G. At this point, the viewer has no idea what kind of man he is, nor what is hidden in the chest. This scene only serves to build tension in the viewer. In cinematography, it is called an Opening scene.

In the next part, the film moves to London. Dorian goes to a church, where he meets the local painter Basil Hallward, who has lately started to paint his portrait. While the two men are in the painter's studio, Dorian meets Basil's good friend Lord Henry. He inspires him with an idea of how fleeting youth and beauty are. This moment is one of the most important in the film, as in this scene the painter completes a portrait of Dorian and Dorian expresses a wish that he wants to be beautiful and young forever, thus concluding the pact with the devil.

Dorian and Lord Henry gradually become friends, and Henry leads him on the wrong path. The turning point comes when Dorian falls in love with an actress named Sybil Vane and wants to marry her, but the Lord misleads him and Dorian reconsiders his marriage to

⁸ *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), 01:40:31.
https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

the young woman, which breaks her heart. This leads to a horrible act when Sybil commits suicide out of sheer despair. After this, Dorian notices that the look and expression on the portrait face have changed.

In the story, the young man becomes a self-centred, immoral and cynical man who seduces single and also married women, drinks alcohol, tries various types of drugs and organizes parties. His behaviour blends into the portrait, but his real appearance remains the same. From this, Dorian hides the portrait in the attic so that no one can see it. The turning point comes when Basil decides to publish his masterpiece at a vernissage. Dorian disagrees and gets into conflict with the painter. When Basil finds out the truth about the painting, he is horrified however he thinks that Dorian can still be saved. But Gray is frightened by the painter's reaction and kills him in rage. Then, the young man puts the dead body in a chest. At this moment, the viewer finds out, who was hidden in the chest in the Opening scene.

Basil's death surprises everyone, especially Lord Henry. After the funeral, Gray decides to travel. He communicates with the Lord through letters during that time. After a few years, Dorian returns to England and visits Henry. At that time, he is holding a party where the whole society of London appears. Everyone in the room is surprised when the young man enters, as he has not aged a day.

At the party, he meets a young woman and finds out that she is the daughter of Lord Henry. Dorian starts spending time with her, which Lord Henry doesn't like. Eventually, he falls in love with her and decides to change because of her. At that moment, another turning point occurs when Lord Henry discovers that Basil was killed by Dorian.

Lord Henry goes to Dorian's house to look for the picture that was painted by his friend. There, he meets Dorian, and a conflict arises between them. The attic starts to burn. Henry's daughter comes to the house and tries to persuade Dorian to leave, but he is locked in the attic. Dorian's love for a woman is so strong that he lets her go to save her. Dorian came to the painting and stabs it. He doesn't realize he will kill himself by this action.

2 MISE-EN-SCÉNE

“One of the most frequently used terms in film analysis is *mise-en-scène*, which literally translates as ‘putting on stage’, or ‘staging’.”⁹ First and foremost, it focuses on what is filmed, what appears in the place and how it is situated. It is a part of a film discourse. While the book describes things by words, the film creates various meanings through metaphors. Everything has some connotation and objects are settled on purpose.

These scenes are mainly shot by using long-take method to show the viewer the whole environment in which the scene takes place.¹⁰ For example, at the beginning of *Dorian Gray*, when Dorian arrives in London, filmmakers used the long-take shot to show the Victorian London [00:04:00].¹¹

Mise-en-scène consists of setting, lighting, costume, makeup, and the overall look of the entire environment in particular shots. This part is very important, and everything is carefully chosen and thought out, because the film tells the story not only through dialogue but also through set design. This chapter aims to give a comprehensive description of the time and location, in which the movie takes place.

2.1 Setting

Setting may be also called art direction, because it creates the meaning by designing the set or location. The overall goal of this section is to prepare the environment for filming. It's not just about choosing the right equipment for the environment like clothing, appearance of characters, buildings, roads, furniture, and transportation, but also about how the characters and things are placed. The art director thus communicates with the audience through metaphors. How the things are placed displays the situation or atmosphere at the moment¹². It can also be a choice of colours that evoke various feelings in the viewer, which already have a certain impact on a person from a psychological point of view. For example, it is already known that blue represents calm and red evokes danger or excitement. People may also notice that, if a sad scene comes up, it is always followed by raining. The reason for the use of it is because the rain makes people feel depressed. Filmmakers often use psychological tricks to manipulate the viewer. It is a form of communication between them.

⁹ Warren Buckland. *Film Studies* (London: Hodder Education. 2003), 9.

¹⁰ David Bordwell. *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 2005), 16.

¹¹ *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), 00:04:00.
https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

¹² Michael Ryan, *An Introduction to the Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (London: Continuum, 2012), 96.

The art directors are in charge of this part. Their main task is “to create a background in which the action of the film was unfold.”¹³ It is necessary to create the scene and the environment that fits its time.

2.1.1 Location

The story takes place in the capital city of the United Kingdom. London is also divided into two halves: The East End and the West End. The East End represents the bottom, people with immoral principles, opium dens and docs. In contrast, the West End constitutes high society, luxury real estates and social clubs.¹⁴

Focusing on the film adaptation, from the very beginning, young Dorian arrives in London, which can be recognized by the eccentric clock and decorated metal arches that are part of Smithfield in the centre of London [00:03:42]. Other scenes are shot at Basil’s house, Lord Henry’s house, Radley’s house, Hyde Park, a church and underground. These parts express mainly the West End.

In contrast to this, the East End is shown in the Opening scene, in which Dorian is on the docks [00:02:44], and also when Dorian, Basil and Henry go to the Devils club, they walk through the streets full of prostitutes and poor, lower-class people [00:14:26]. Moreover, there are also places like the Royal Theatre and cemetery.

To sum up, to identify the narrative’s location, all these findings above point to the fact that the filmmakers adhered to the original version in this respect, and both the plot in the book and its adaptation are set in London. Even though the story is narrated in the United’s Kingdom capital, not all places mentioned in the book are also used in the film adaptation. The director and the screenwriter decided to re-interpret or add some elements. For example, the underground, the church, the cemetery, and Radley’s house that play a role in *Dorian Gray* (2009) do not occur in the original version. Also, unlike the book, the film adaptation’s plot has a rapid shift between the locations in which the characters appear.

2.1.2 Time

Even though Wilde’s work does not mention at what period the story takes place, and neither does the screenplay, it is possible to deduce this from the context of both these sources. Firstly, as was mentioned earlier, the book was published in the 19th century, at the end of the Victorian Era. The novel reveals many aspects that contributes to Oscar Wilde’s life, so

¹³ Warren Buckland. *Film Studies* (London: Hodder Education. 2003), 10.

¹⁴ Unless noted otherwise, all facts are taken from *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

it can be said, the plot takes place in the author's presence. This statement is also supported by several characteristics that are typical for this time, such as clothing, transportation, and society.

2.1.2.1 Transportation

During the Victorian era, the main source of transportation were carriages, as it can be seen in the Opening scene. However, in the film, the viewer can also see cars that appear on the roads. That depicts the industrial revolution in the late of the 19th century.¹⁵ At the beginning of *Dorian Gray* (2009), people are transported mainly by coaches. Nonetheless, during the story, the audience may notice changes in traffic and people instead of horses use cars [01:04:53]. In addition, there is also a scene in which James Vane tries to kill Dorian and drives him to the subway, where he is hit by a train [01:24:21].

The electric turbines that were used to drive the train were assembled by the 20th century.¹⁶ According to the British history of industrial revolutions, the first electric railway that drives through the underground was established in London in 1905, so there is a shift into the 20th century in the film's storyline. Furthermore, the scene that was mentioned in the previous paragraph is shot in the Farrington station as it can be seen on the sign that is displayed in the picture. These data confirm that the movie's narration can be classified to the 19th century, but also to the early 20th century. However, the cars and the underground are not included in the novel.

2.1.3 Costumes

Clothes are not just an indicator of fashion and appearance. Thanks to the costumes that are used in the visual source, it can be recognized in which era the story occurs. Firstly, there should be stated some general information about the clothing in Victorian society.

The upper-class and middle-class gentlemen's dress code included a shirt, a vest, a collar, cuffs, a necktie, a pair of drawers, a pair of socks, a frock coat, tight-fitting down trousers, and a tall top hat.¹⁷ In *Dorian Gray* (2009), the costume is composed of a vest, a white undershirt with cuffs, a starched stand-up collar, trousers, and in some scenes, they also wear the tall top hat. However, the attire is not very colourful.

¹⁵ Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (London: Continuum, 2006), 5.

¹⁶ Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 161.

¹⁷ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013) 35-60.

Generally, the Victorian women appearance is represented by curly hair wrapped in a bun and with a headdress.¹⁸ And for the face, Victorian women remained natural, without make-up. Make-up was just for prostitutes and actresses. Viewer can see the difference between Sybil Vane, who is an actress, and Lord Henry's daughter Emily Wotton. While Sybil's make-up is very extravagant, Emily has a natural look.

As for their clothing, ladies were covered in sturdy dresses. They wore a corset around their chests, under which they had a petticoat. Crinolines were tied around the waist to make the skirt fluffier and more supported. These skirts used to be very colourful, decorated and with bold trimmings.¹⁹

All in all, filmmakers successfully depicted the period fashion on the screen, which was worn by people in the Victorian Era. The main credit goes to Ruth Meyers, a well-known British designer who has been awarded many times for her contribution of dressing in cinema.

2.1.3.1 Society

This part outlines the cultural and social life during the Queen Victoria's reign, who ruled between the years 1837 and 1901.²⁰ The inhabitants of Victorian London were mostly conservatives who valued society as a family and lived a moral, stable, restrained, and honest life.²¹ For this reason, the community complied with principles and codes of social conduct.

The society was divided into classes: The working class, the middle class, and upper class.²² Even though the people of that time seemed to be the ideal model of a perfect society, the opposite was true. This fact was mentioned by the authors, who pointed out these social shortcomings in their books, where they attacked the Victorian high society's hypocrisy. As written in *Oscar Wilde's aestheticism* article, "The main point of the novel is not beauty but the hypocrisy and evil behind it."²³ There were huge inequalities between the classes, and the novel and its film adaptation also point out these differences. The industrial revolution had a great impact on people. The working class earn small amount of money, but the prices of goods were high, so the poverty graded.²⁴

¹⁸ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013), 109-114.

¹⁹ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013), 63-89.

²⁰ David Deidre, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

²¹ Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (London: Continuum, 2006), 10-11.

²² Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (London: Continuum, 2006), 12.

²³ Beibei Guan, "Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism," Volume 07, Issue 02 (February 2018): 27, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v7i2.1331>.

²⁴ Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 71.

In *Dorian Gray* (2009), the plot intersects between these two worlds: upper and middle class (West End) and lower class (East End). The great chasm between these people can be noticed when Dorian announces the engagement with Sybil Vane to his friends. Dorian's friend's reaction is precisely that one would expect from the society of that time. In short, it is inadmissible for such a high-ranking man to marry an ordinary actress who can barely make a living. Moreover, the Victorian woman must remain immaculate until the wedding.²⁵ Not only that, she should not have sexual intercourse, but also a mere was immoral. Sybil had already broken this code when she had an affair with Dorian before a marriage [00:27:00].

This also signifies the gender distinction because no such rules applied to men. When a man wanted to take a break from a well-behaved and educated person's daily routine, he fled to the opium paradise of the East End. In contrast, women could not afford such a "luxury" during Queen Victoria's reign, because females did not have many opportunities. The woman focused mainly on self-realization, such as playing the piano, drawing, or organizing social events. The novel does not deal with gender differences; considering the film adaptation, Emily Wotton fights for women's rights, especially for the right to vote [01:15:52]. The right to vote was granted to the fairer sex in 1918.

To sum up this subchapter, all the above evidence concludes that the story takes place at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. It can be said that the filmmakers managed to capture the Victorian era very accurately and thus successfully transferred the period from the book to the screen as well. However, there is a difference between these two sources. *Dorian Gray* (2009) includes technological advances such as cars, subways, and cameras. The book does not mention these things and is characteristic only of the 19th century, not of the 20th century.

²⁵ Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (London: Continuum. 2006), 45.

3 MAKING OF *DORIAN GRAY* (2009)

When a film was discovered in the 19th century, the book got into the background, and people became more interested in this new type of media. After 1960s, people began to study it as one of the academic disciplines.²⁶ Since the books represent written words to describe their story and the reader can only engage his imagination. The film adaptation involves visual and auditory stimuli that evoke various feelings and experience from a given story.²⁷ However, most directors use novels as a template to transfer a famous story to the screen, as in the case of Oliver Parker.

“A movie is a marriage of technique and meaning. Whenever filmmakers lay put a setting, direct actors to act in a certain way, place the camera in particular positions, and assemble the resulting mass of shots into a coherent narrative, they not only tell a story, but they also make meaning.”²⁸ However, making a movie is a process, which must be carefully planned to save money and time, but also to achieve the best result. In a film, they use the term workflow. It means, that everything must be precisely planned to make the work effective and efficient.²⁹

This chapter conceives how the filmmakers transferred the text to the screen by using cinematographic tools such as editing, camera movement, computer generated imagery, music and sound. Moreover, this part is divided into three main processes: Pre-production, production, and post-production. Based on the terms listed above, in order to identify the techniques implemented in the film adaptation. This part is investigated by the shot-by-shot analysis that focuses on these production methods in a particular series of shots.³⁰

3.1 Pre-production

Before the whole process of making a film begins, the director must have a clear picture of what he wants to convey to the screen and to the audience. According to Oliver Parker, he intended to create a film based on the novel from the 19th century, but which will fit more into the 21st century. Together with Toby Finlay, they managed to write the script, so that

²⁶ Adriana Gordejuela, *Flashbacks in Film: A Cognitive and Multimodal Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1.

²⁷ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An introduction* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008), 2.

²⁸ Michael Ryan, *An Introduction to the Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (London: Continuum, 2012), 1.

²⁹ Bruce Mamer, *Film Production Technique: Creating the Accomplished Image*, 3.

³⁰ Michael Ryan, *An Introduction to the Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (London: Continuum, 2012), 12.

the main idea of the story, place, time and characters remained the same as in the book. Nevertheless, they reshaped the plot structure and also added some new aspects, which does not figure in Wild's novel.

When the idea of the film is made out, other steps are to create a budget and cash-flow schedule, creation of shot list and workflow, choose locations and studio space, purchase a domain name and create a website, set castings and prepare staff and things for the first day of shooting.³¹ All of these activities mentioned above are part of preproduction.

This chapter describes these processes that need to be done before the filming itself can begin. For this section, cinematographers use a term called *Mise-en-scène*, which includes everything what needs to be done before the camera work. The activities consist of all things that are very time-consuming, such as the selection of actors for the main roles, creating costumes and the setting creation, which was described in the previous chapter.³²

3.1.1 Casting

The pre-production includes casting which is conducted by the director and the casting director. In *Dorian Gray*, it is Oliver Parker (director) and Lucy Bevan (casting director). This part of making a film is as important as other elements used to create a movie, because it establishes a meaning within the film.³³

As written by Wharton and Grant, "This is not just because an actor has a particular look or style, but also s/he may bring a certain identity to the role."³⁴ In other words, the screenplay can become famous and successful thanks to the actors that the filmmakers cast for the main roles. That is exactly what the filmmakers relied on while they were creating the main characters. As a result, the audience are able to watch actors who already have a lot of experience with a film and have previously been famous for their acting in other screenplays.

One of them is Ben Barnes, who is famous for his contribution to the *Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*. Ben Barnes proves that it does not matter if the film's character follows the character's look from the book. Dorian in the novel is described as a beautiful

³¹ Ryan Maureen A., *Producer to Producer: A Step-by-step Guide to Low-budget Independent Film Producing* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2010), 133-136.

³² David Wharton and Jeremy Grant, *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* (London: BFI Education, 2005), 21.

³³ David Wharton and Jeremy Grant, *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* (London: BFI Education, 2005), 20.

³⁴ David Wharton and Jeremy Grant, *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* (London: BFI Education, 2005), 20.

man with blond hair and blue eyes, while Ben Barnes has dark hair and dark eyes. In this case, it was Parker's intention to cast Ben. He did not want to get completely close to the original version, only to choose someone who has experience and is suitable for this role, so he asked Barnes to play the character of Dorian Gray.

Other famous names that star in the film adaptation are Collin Firth, Ben Chaplin, and Rachel Hurd-Wood. Here, the filmmakers had a free hand, as their appearance is not described in the novel. In addition, there is also a character who does not appear in the book at all, and it is Lord Wotton's daughter Emily. She is played by the actress Rebeca Hall.

3.1.2 Filming Locations

In preproduction, the filmmakers must choose and set up the list of locations, where the separate scenes should be shot. Usually, it is cheaper to take scenes outside of the studio because it is not necessary to build a stage takes time and also money. It works just in case the environment can be replaced.³⁵ Producers often use the same places to record the scene, only in the different periods in which the story takes place, as is the case with *Dorian Gray*.

As the story takes place in London, the producers have adhered to this theme and all the scenes are filmed here or at Ealing Studios. For example, a scene where Dorian and Henry meet at a ball, is filmed in Basildon Park, Berkshire, as well as a tea party, a staircase hall drug-smoking scene, or a Dorian Gray crimson bedroom scene. Other places where the film has been taken are Café de Paris in Soho (Casino de Venise), Crocker's Folly (Opium den), and Smithfield, Holborn (King's Cross Station). As for Ealing Studios, scenes recorded in the attic, where Dorian hides his portrait, and he also kills Basil were filmed there. Also, the underground tunnel and platform scenes are taken in the studio.

Since the story takes place during the Victorian era, some scenes had to be computer generated to match the environment. In this case, the filmmakers used modern technology and created the environment artificially.

3.1.3 Cinematic Lighting

During preproduction, the gaffer must set up the list of equipment, places and organize how every scene should be light correctly based on the script. The important part is to discuss the

³⁵ Ryan Maureen A., *Producer to Producer: A Step-by-step Guide to Low-budget Independent Film Producing* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2010), 179.

colours of the scene with the director, production designer, and costume designer. In order to find out what impression from the given story he tries to pass on the audience.³⁶

Lighting is another strategy how the filmmakers create meaning, mood, and atmosphere. It greatly affects the overall look of the film. Also, light reflects the emotions of characters. To describe how the process works, the art directors light the stage based on the situation that appears in the story and the mood they want to convey. Moreover, it tells the audience where to look and how to perceive the scene. The film distinguishes two most important lighting, and it is soft and hard. The hard light is usually used to create a drama or evoke strong emotions in the recipient while the soft light is calmer and more natural.³⁷

In the film industry, there are three main types of lighting: The key light, the fill light, and the back light. The key light is used mainly to highlight details on face. The fill light creates shadows on the face and the back light focuses on the surroundings of the filmed subject.³⁸ It also depends on if the shot is taken in the studio or in the location. In the studio the filmmakers have the control and can create the light they need. In contrary, in the location the production must adapt. However, it is cheaper and faster.³⁹ According to *Dorian Gray*, this subchapter analyses in details two methods of lighting. One in the studio and one in a location.

The movie starts with a scene where single character appears in front of the camera. It is Dorian and he holds a knife in his hand. According to his moves it looks like he stabs someone [00:01:58].⁴⁰ This shot was taken in the Ealing studio. The art directors light this stage to seem it dramatic as it fits to the situation in the script. That means they used the hard light. The spotlights mainly bright the man's face, where the shadow covers the other half of his face. The key light is used to show the characters face, so the recipient is aware of his mood and feelings. Also, it points out who is the subject of this scene. In this case, it is Dorian. The rest of the room is dark that means the art directors tells the audience that this act happens at night. Among this scene, the lighting is designed to generate a suspense and drama effect.

³⁶ Harry C. Box, *Set Lighting Technician's Handbook: Film Lighting Equipment, Practice, and Electrical Distribution* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 15.

³⁷ Krzysztof Malkiewicz, *Film Lighting: Talks with Hollywood's Cinematographers and Gaffers* (New York: Touchstone Book, 2012), 83-84.

³⁸ Robert Edgar-Hunt, *The Language of Film* (Switzerland: AVA Publishing SA), 129.

³⁹ Krzysztof Malkiewicz, *Film Lighting: Talks with Hollywood's Cinematographers and Gaffers* (New York: Touchstone Book, 2012), 98.

⁴⁰ *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), 00:01:58.
https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

To describe the lighting in the location, as was mentioned earlier, sometimes it is a better option, because there is no need of lighting. As it is in the scene where Dorian walks in the streets of London during the day [01:01:32]. The production chose to shoot this scene during a sunny day, so it supports Dorian's good mood. In contrary, when Dorian is in the streets during the night, the filmmakers use the soft light to soft dark areas. The light is not so strong, but the audience is able to see the appearance of the characters.

Among the movie, it is easy to recognise if it is day or night thanks to the use of lighting even if the shot is taken inside of the building. The selection of lighting is very simple. When the shot is taken in the room during the night, the light is strong, yellow and warm. In contrary, if it is shot to create a daylight, the colours are more natural, soft and seems a little bit cold.

Parker is primarily concerned with the neutral choice of lighting and colours. He tries to keep the story serious. The film is accompanied by dark colours, which create an impression of darkness and secrecy. As Dorian's immoral behaviour graduates, Parker uses red to underscore Dorian's evil deeds and passions. In one scene, he also decided to use the contrast between white and red, which supports the fight between good and evil.

3.2 Production

After pre-production, when the scene is set and the main roles are cast, it is time to start shooting the film. Production is the main part of making a movie. It focuses on camera work, which shoots the characters actions and care of the proper lighting of the scene. This fragment is delegated by a director of photography. This person films all the aspects seen in this media.⁴¹ Dorian Gray's production hired Roger Pratt for this job. He is mainly known for his contribution to movies such as *Harry Potter* or *The Karate Kid*.

Throughout *Dorian Gray* (2009), many shooting techniques are implemented to create a meaning in the situations in which the characters appear. This subchapter describes the techniques that were employed during filming and explains the reason for their usage in the particular scenes. Also, it consists of detail description of each shot and their meaning.

3.2.1 Camera movement

Camera movement is one of the ways how to create meaning within words. Thanks to the movements the filmmakers try to explain the audience, where to look and what to focus on.

⁴¹ David Wharton and Jeremy Grant, *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* (London: BFI Education, 2005), 21.

In the film industry, there exist several techniques how to create a meaning due to camera movements. They also setting the frame, which means the production choose what will appear in front of the camera to show the audience what is important. The cameraman's must settle the camera to the position that best catches the filming object and be careful if there are not inappropriate things in the frame.⁴²

Firstly, in the opening scene, the film adaptation uses mainly a close-up shot with zero camera movement. The audience can see Dorian in the middle of the frame, but the rest of the objects around are not visible. That is the purpose of close-up shots. In this scene, Dorian is murdering someone, and this camera's technique is used to cover the body and the objects around from the viewers, so they cannot recognize who is the dead person and where the act takes place [00:01:56 – 00:02:26]. The dramatic scene is followed by a handheld, extreme close-up shot, where the camera shifts down from Gray, who is sitting in a carriage with his hand on a coffer, under the carriage where drops of blood seep through the floor and fall on the ground. This shot indicates that it is sure the body is hidden in the coffer, and Dorian wants to remove it somewhere because the next tilt shot (the camera is fixed and moving down) focuses on the wheels of a carriage leaving [00:02:26 – 00:02:32]. The last part of the opening scene consists mainly of a static shot that captures the setting and Dorian's entire body. It continues with the same technique, but there is also a camera distance when Dorian stays on a pier and throws the hidden body into the water. The segment ends with an extreme close-up shot on the coffer, where the audience can notice the initials D.G. that the coffer bears [00:02:34 – 00:02:57].

The following scene is set in Smithfield in London. The camera uses close-up shot of Dorian and operate with zoom, to capture the character's face, so the viewer can see his first reaction and excitement about his returning to London [00:03:08]. Further, this scene consists of establishing shot which captures Dorian from above and the viewer can see him walking among people at the station [00:03:45]. This shot is used to bring the audience up to speed, where the character is currently located.⁴³ The sequence is followed by long-take shot. Directors implement these shots together to create some semantic meaning.⁴⁴

In the following examples from *Dorian Gray*, there is a static shot that occurs in the scene, in which Dorian speaks with Henry at his party. This shot expresses the dialogue

⁴² Blaine Brown, *Cinematography: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 15.

⁴³ Michael Ryan, *An Introduction to the Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (London: Continuum, 2012), 13.

⁴⁴ Michael Ryan, *An Introduction to the Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* (London: Continuum, 2012), 56.

between these two men. According to the fact that the camera pay attention mainly to these two men, together with the static shot it is also a two shot, that focuses on two people and states the relationship between people included in the frame. The static shot is used for the same purpose in Basil's house while he paints Dorian, and the discussion is based by Dorian, Basil and Henry.

Another type of shot is eye-level shot and at the same time it would be considered a POV shot that is shown after Basil finished the portrait and the shot is taken from the paintings point of view (POV shot) at the eye level [00:17:58]. Moreover, a shot such as a high angle where the camera points down on something occurs in many scenes throughout the film. For example, when Dorian is on the way to his house, the high angle shot shows the audience a part of London. Also, the pace is too sluggish in this scene to acquaint the viewer with the environment, in this case it is London. Moreover, when the portrait is revealed to the public for the first time, this shot is used to highlight people who watch and admire the painting.

Much more of the camera method are used in some scenes. For example, the Crane shot appears when the camera moves up and down by usage of a jib. Most of the scenes employ that to create a suspense. In *Dorian Gray* (2009), this movement can be seen many times. When Dorian arrives to London, this is used to create an agog among the audience. Also, this is applied in the scene, where Dorian walks through his house for the first time. It consists of all the movements: up, down, from side to side, so the viewer can explore the residence.

3.3 Post-production

Post-Production is the final part of making a movie. After every video is recorded the film production uses the collected material to put the film together. All of these things are made by technologies. Everything that was created during the pre-production and production has a great effect on for post-production because the editors also solve the problems that could have been avoided there.⁴⁵ However, editors must be aware that the images are combined correctly and do not create a so-called juxtaposition of the shots.⁴⁶ This means that the viewer may notice errors in the processing of the images and that the editing is obvious here. For

⁴⁵ Eve Light Honthamer, *The Complete Film Production Handbook* (London: Focal Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 463.

⁴⁶ Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice* (Londo: Elsevier, 2011), Introduction.

example, when two images are joined together, and one character stands on the right side of the main character and the other image stands somewhere else.

In this part, the chapter describes how the post-production work and what consists of all the things that must be done before the publication of the movie. These techniques include editing, CGI, recording music and sound effects. All of these combined create the final version of a movie.

3.3.1 Editing

Editing is a filmmaking process that puts together already created images so that they make sense and thus create one understandable plot. The keyword for this action is called a premise.⁴⁷ The film is not taken in one longshot; it is separated into fragments that happened in different times and spaces and all these fragments are put together during post-production.⁴⁸

The main reason why directors use editing instead of one long shot is that it creates hidden meaning. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, it would be easier for filmmakers to do one long shot, but the recipient would not see the meaning of each shot. For example, if there is a group of people sitting around a table and having some conversation, one long-take would not show us the reactions of the people sitting there or they would not have seen who the main character of this scene is and whom to focus on. Therefore, it is better to take multiple shots and then put them together.

Moreover, it is easier for actors because they do not have the capacity to remember the whole text. Even if they do, the amount of text would cause a lot of failed shots, so they must record it multiple times and it is not efficient. As mentioned in “If you want to eliminate some dead spots, you’ll have to cut, but if you film one long-take you have no shots to insert.”⁴⁹

3.3.1.1 Cutting

Dorian Gray was edited by Guy Bensley, who is also known for films such as *Johnny English Reborn* and *Fade to Black*, which was also directed by Oliver Parker. During a more detailed analysis of the film, the editing is really well thought out and Bensley did a professional job here.

⁴⁷ Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice* (Londo: Elsevier, 2011), 255.

⁴⁸ Warren Buckland. *Film Studies* (London: Hodder Education. 2003), 16.

⁴⁹ David Bordwell. *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 2005), 1.

The film begins with the so-called opening scene, in which the story takes place a year later where Dorian is depicted and a chest in which Basil's dead body seems to be hidden. The reason why the scene was given at the very beginning of the story is to arouse tension and curiosity in the viewer. The viewer then gets to this scene in the middle of the film, where there is also a revelation of who was hidden in the chest. The following scene already depicts Dorian arriving in England a year earlier.

If we take a closer look at the specific scene where the men Basil Henry and Dorian are in the inn by the hellfire, there is a conversation between the men at the table. The price of masonry was filmed as one long-take shot, but there are several images recorded here, which always capture the person who is leading the conversation and then the reaction of the others. During the conversation between the men, the scene ends with Henry telling Dorian about his youth, and the beauty of the camera, meanwhile, focuses on Dorian's left side of the face very closely. Dorian's face then blends into the next scene in the same position in the portrait Basil just completed, during which Dorian subscribes to the devil. Here it can be seen that the scenes follow each other not only in terms of events, but also visually.

Gradually, the plot progresses, and all the images follow each other carefully and there are no wrong juxtapositions of the shots. Scenes and environments that could not be captured by the camera were further created by using computer and design methods. One of them is called CGI.

3.3.2 Computer generated imagery

CGI, also called computer-generated imagery is a term used for a convergent technology that designs recorded scenes with touchpads and pens to create a picture that the filmmakers are not able to record on a video. With pixels, the designers transform the environment in the picture into 2D and 3D forms.⁵⁰ The supervisor of the work was Charley Henley who is responsible for the visual effects all over the movie.

According to *Dorian Gray*, CGI was applied to design the scene, such as the surrounding of Dorian's house, the London skyline, streets, and other buildings. For example, the climate, which cannot be controlled, has been modified in some places by visual effects. Most of the scenes were also created in 3D, such as the picture of Victorian London, where these computer adjustments are visible [00:04:04]. The computer modified not only the setting but

⁵⁰ Jill Nelmes, *Introduction to Film Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 47.

also other elements. For example, the painting of Dorian Gray that comes to life appears at the end of the movie [01:40:00].⁵¹

Henley mentioned that it was one of the hardest things he had ever encountered in his working life. To achieve the result of bringing the portrait to life, the production team used 3D oil painting, three cameras, and textual projection. Another thing that was computer-generated was the scene in the tunnel where Dorian fights with Jim. Designers worked to widen the tunnel to make it look bigger. The train that possesses here and then hits Jim was also created by a computer. Further, rats were added to the street of the East End, and Dorian's ageing face at the end of the movie is also made due to 3D projection.⁵²

3.3.3 Music and Sound

The sound and the movie are created after all filmed material is collected. The noises that are made during the shooting of the scenes are removed and sound is put independently during editing. This technique is the most flexible process of all the methods mentioned earlier.⁵³ Compared to a book template, the sound is one of the methods that save a lot of time. While in a book all circumstances must be described in words, in a film they can be replaced by sound.

The main purpose of using music and sound in movies is that it shows the audience what they can expect at the right moment of the story or what will follow. It creates a dramatic effect.⁵⁴ In terms of sound, there can also be included the verbal side and intonation of characters. The meaning is also created by the volume and tone of the voice. Also, by the intensity and pace. The audience may recognise the feelings of the person deduced by the way how the words are told.⁵⁵

Music and sound used during some scenes express mainly the emotions between the characters.⁵⁶ The sound must sync with the situation that appears on the screen at the same time to create the right atmosphere. It helps create the mood. If the situation and sound contradict, the audience can be confused. For example, if the filmmakers take one shot, but

⁵¹ *Dorian Gray*, directed by Oliver Parker (UK: Alliance, 2009), 01:40:00.

https://www.zkouknito.cz/video_144036_dorian-grey.

⁵² Adriene Hurst, "Dorian Gray – Moral Decay" Digital Media World, last modified April 12, 2022,

<https://www.digitalmediaworld.tv/in-depth/609-dorian-gray-moral-decay>

⁵³ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An introduction* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008), 264.

⁵⁴ Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice* (Londo: Elsevier, 2011), 243.

⁵⁵ Janina Wildfeuer, *Film Discourse Interpretation Towards a New Paradigm for Multimodal Film Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2014), 204.

⁵⁶ Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (London: MIT Press, 2004), 100.

with three different types of music, the audience will receive contrasting feelings and comprehension of a given moment. Also, by the sound, it can be deduced what is happening even if it is not seen on the screen. For example, at the beginning of *Dorian Gray*, a young man is standing in the attic and in the background, the viewer can hear the wings of a flying bird. However, this bird is not depicted in the frame of the shot. Even so, the viewer can imagine that the bird is in the room with him.

The interplay between the sound and pictures in *Dorian Gray* operate primarily with dark sound and music. Since the genre of this film is horror, it is clear why the team decided to use this more dramatic effect. Horror films try to arouse a feeling of fear in people. The dark component of sound gives them a certain emotion of tension. Already at the beginning of the film, the audience may notice that the filmmakers use dark and scary music. This shows what type and structure of the film they can expect.⁵⁷

Dorian Gray offers many examples, how the sound affects the situation in particular shot. There is a scene in which Dorian arrives at the train station. His scene is accompanied by a slow melody, in which the sound of the surrounding bustle can be heard. These sounds consist of train whistles, people's voices, falling metal coins, or the hooves of a horse pulling a carriage. Although not all these situations can be seen in the picture, it can be recognized by the sound. Moreover, the filmmakers manipulate with the loudness, pitch, and timber.⁵⁸ So, when Dorian walks through the crowd and suddenly men on the road start talking to him, the loudness of the surrounding noise is slightly muted so that the conversation of the men present can be heard.

However, there are parts of the movie that deals also with celebratory music, as in the case of the scene the ball, the time spent at the Devil's fire, or at the party at Dorian's house. Here is more suitable to employ the positive music, as they are festive events.

According to the music, the film adaptation applies music without voice expressions. That means, the movie work just with melody, not with songs. From the very beginning, the audience may hear a dark and thrilling melody that accompanies the entire movie. Musical instruments such as violin, bass and piano are mainly used here.

⁵⁷ Aimee Mollaghan, *The Visual Music Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 28.

⁵⁸ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008), 267.

4 MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

The Picture of Dorian Gray is the only novel written by playwright and novelist Oscar Wilde. He is one of the greatest writers of the 19th century. He was born in Ireland, but for most of his life, during the Victorian Era, he lived in London. During Wilde's life, he always longed for attention and recognition but without a positive response. This changed with his relocation to Oxford, where his intellect and fashion style attracted the professors and his classmates, who greatly admired his work and an unconventional way of thinking. Joining Magdalen College and learning Latin and Greek became one of the best experiences of the novelist's life.

The most crucial time of his life was the year 1891. Not only that *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* and *A House of Pomegranates* were published, but concomitantly the sole novel ever written by Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was announced. Like Dorian Gray, its creator also led a controversial and extravagant life by maintaining a homosexual relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. The turning-point occurred when Wilde was charged for indecency and was sent by a court to prison in Wandsworth. In the letter that he wrote during his captivity, Oscar Wilde depicted his life's two main occasions: First, sending him to Oxford by his father. Second, when society sent him to prison. Considering the current situation, the released Wilde renamed himself Sebastian Melmoth on his good friend Robert Ross's recommendation.⁵⁹ The last few years of his life, Wilde settled in Paris, living in obscurity and poverty. In the end, the novelist, dramatist, and leader of the aesthetic movement died of meningitis in a hotel room.

Wilde was not afraid to express his opinion and that makes his works so special. Despite his views, lifestyle, people still admire and respect him. He died at a fairly young age, and even though his books have been published over a century ago, his work still has a great influence on our generation.

The overall goal of this chapter is to compare Oscar Wilde's most famous book *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with its film adaptation "Dorian Gray" directed by Oliver Parker. The first part focuses mainly on the literary-historical context of the book. Furthermore, the chapter describes the main differences between the two sources and finally outlines their main differences.

⁵⁹ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 380.

4.1 Historical background of the Picture of Dorian Gray

Literature in the late 19th century could be considered the Decadent movement, which proclaimed that art and morality are two different things, and a book should be a source of beauty and art, not for educational, political, and religious purposes.⁶⁰ This statement was contrary to social beliefs because the book was only a tool for self-realization and self-education. According to that fact, the book was unwelcomed and the target of criticism in its time. Wilde's text contains decadence elements, such as prostitution, occultism, drugs, alcohol, and other characteristics typical of bohemian and mainly immoral life. The non-traditional content was the reason why the novelist earned so much hatred because the text should have included real and true content. That means in a moral way.⁶¹

Realism prevailed the decadence, which emphasized reality. That means the author's works consisted mainly of experiences from their own lives. This is contrary to Oscar's novel because it consists mainly of fictional features. Professor Peterson presents a compelling opinion in the article *Style and Art in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: Form as Content*, where he states that, according to Wilde's aesthetic philosophy, the novel is an art mainly because it does not describe the real world.⁶² All in all, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* represents all the topics that were for aristocrats non-acceptable in the 19th century. About which few dared to talk or write so openly. Moreover, from the novel's context, we can infer that Basil Hallward had romantic feelings for Dorian, which was undesirable since homosexuality was utterly illegal and prohibited.

Decadence is not the only thing that influenced the novel. We can also notice the similarities between Dorian Gray and Goethe's Faust. Both men want more than life offers them. They long for eternal life and are willing to sell their souls to the devil to achieve that. While Dorian request beauty, Faust yearns for knowledge. The battle between good and evil, morality and sin. Gray's first sin occurs when he is cruel to Sybil Vane, breaks her heart, and all these actions lead to her death. All in all, the relationship ends as severely as Faust's with Gretchen because both girls are determined to end their lives out of sheer despair.⁶³

⁶⁰ Beibei Guan, "Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism," Volume 07, Issue 02 (February 2018): 25, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v7i2.1331>.

⁶¹ David Deidre, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18.

⁶² John Peterson, "Style and Art in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: Form as Content," *Victorian Review* 25, no. 1 (Summer 1999), 2.

⁶³ Richard Ellman. *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Random House, 1988), 430.

4.2 Comparative analysis

The main difference between the book and the film can already be noticed in the genre. While the book is a novel that has some philosophical intent, the film is a horror film that aims to arouse fear and tension in the viewer.

Starting with the visual side of the film, it is known that the storyline of the book takes place in the 19th century when the Gothic style prevails in Victorian London. Therefore, the costumes, furniture, and equipment must fit the time. For example, during the Victorian Era, women wore corsets, hats, dresses, and petticoats. These elements appear in the film adaptation, so we can say that the director adhered to the time according to those facts. Both, the book, and the film take place in London during the Victorian Era.

In terms of characters, there are more main characters in the film adaptation than in the book version. While in the book the most famous characters are Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward, Lord Henry, and Sybil Vane, the filmmakers decided to add to the film version another character and it is Lord Wotton's daughter Emily. She is a feminist, fights for women's rights and has the same behaviour as her father. Emily is a second woman who Dorian fell in love with. Thanks to this woman, Dorian tries to change her behaviour and become a better person. The paradox is that Henry doesn't want his daughter to start something as immoral as Dorian, even though it was he who taught Dorian such a way of life. Emily then tries to save Dorian from the burning ground at the end of the film, but Dorian decides to face her sins and lets the woman go. Dorian then dies and Emily is so mad at her father that she moves out and doesn't talk to him. This part of the story, when Dorian falls in love with his friend's daughter, does not appear in the book.

As for the story, the film begins with a scene in which Dorian throws a dead body into the water, this scene does not appear in the book. The plot in the book version begins in Basil Hallward's studio, where the men converse about a portrait of Dorian that the painter has just finished. While in the film Dorian met Henry at his time at the party, in the book version they met in the studio of Basil. This fact remains the same in both sources. It is already clear from the book version that Basil has romantic feelings for Dorian and has a weakness for the young man, but there has never been any affair between them. However, Parker was not afraid to point out the relationship between the men, and in the film version, a scene appears where the two men kiss each other.

Another love scene now appears in the film is between Sybil and Dorian. The young man falls in love with a charming actress whom he meets in a pub, and they spend the night together. Sybil has a show and Dorian misses it because he and Henry go to a brothel. Dorian realizes that he is not ready for married life yet. He goes to the theatre and breaks up with her. This act breaks Sybil's heart, and she commits suicide. The book describes this scene a little differently. Here, Dorian meets Sybil in the theatre and is completely captivated by her acting. After a woman falls in love with him, she loses her acting talent and Dorian is upset and an argument arises between them. The next day, he finds out that the woman has committed suicide. The main idea of this story remains the same, but Finlay and Parker have adapted it more to the time of the 21st century.

In the film, the Gothic elements are foregrounded. As was mentioned earlier, the book has a more philosophical purpose. Wilde was one of the artists behind the aesthetic movement in the 19th century. He believed that the book should also be a source of art that describes a fictional unrealistic world, not just for political or educational purposes. As for the portrait, it is also considered that the picture of Dorian stands for the dispute between reality and fiction.⁶⁴ All these facts point out that, the director and screenwriter did not intend to include the aesthetic purpose of the book to the screen. The main purpose of the film is to entertain the audience without any secondary meaning. That is why some scenes such as this with Sybil is changed to make it more suitable to the 21st century. According to the book, when Sybil becomes 'reality' and she is not the idea of perfection anymore, she loses her transformative power and Dorian gets bored. This is an implicit comment on Wilde's aesthetics.

One of the main symbols that appear in Wilde's work is the so-called Yellow Book, which Dorian received from Henry as a gift. This is a short French story whose main theme is pleasure. Dorian is literally engulfed by this book. He gets it shortly after his mistress Sybil Vane commits suicide and Dorian feels responsible for the act. However, after reading the Yellow Book, he completely changes his view of life and begins to do immoral things. Parker completely omitted the symbolism of the Yellow Book in his work.

Parker decided to adjust the scene of Basil's death. While Dorian himself took care of the removal of the body in the film, Dorian sought the help of his long-time friend Alan Campbell in the novel. Alan will provide Dorian with chemicals to get rid of the body. In

⁶⁴ Arsto Nasir Ahmed, "The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Philosophical Reading" *Journal of Raparin University*, Vol. 3, no. 9 (December 2016): 17-18.

the film, Dorian throws Basil's body into the river. So, in the book, only Alan knows that Dorian killed the painter and no one else has any information about Basil's death. However, in the film, Henry tries to find out who killed his friend. Then, thanks to a bloody scarf he finds on the ground near Dorian, he finds out that he is behind his death. The filmmakers decided to add another plotline into the film, when Henry investigates the murder of his friend. The main reason for this usage is to create another twist in the film, which will keep the audience in suspense, so that the watching is still enjoyable. Again, this fact states that the film only seeks to make the film successful and entertaining, without any secondary meaning.

The death of James Vane is also different. In the book, one day Dorian decided to go to the forest with a hunting company. There, his companion accidentally shot a man hiding in the bushes instead of a hare. This man is James Vane. In the film, this scene takes place differently. Dorian comes out from the church and James starts shooting at him. Dorian runs to the dungeon, where the men get into a conflict and Vane crashes the train. Thus, the main idea of when James dies remains the same in both sources, but it takes place differently. Again, this scene was created to graduate the suspense in the audience.

The most important scene is when Dorian dies. The book describes a moment when Dorian tries to improve his bad deeds and change his behaviour. After some time, when he leads a moral life, he goes to look in the attic to see if the appearance of the painting has changed in any way. At that moment, he finds that none of his good behaviour has improved the painting. On the contrary, the man in the painting was even more disgusting than before. So, the only option is to get rid of the portrait completely and a knife is thrust into the picture. He doesn't realize it will kill him. In the film, Henry finds out that Dorian killed Basil. Henry throws a lamp at the painting and the attic starts to burn. Henry locks Dorian in the attic, trapping him there. Emily arrives and tries to save Dorian. He decides to stay out of love for her and Henry takes Emily out of the house. Dorian could get off the ground because he had the key, but out of love for the woman, he decides to stay and stabs and dies. Here is one of the biggest differences between the two sources. In the film, Dorian dies in the eyes as a hero who voluntarily decides to end his life for the woman he loves, while in the book he dies as a man without any self-realization.

The movie differs from Wilde's story in many aspects. The filmmakers have preserved the main idea and symbols of the book, such as the immortality, the picture that interacts with Dorian's soul, flowers, Basil, Sybil, and James's death, and finally the destruction of the portrait itself, but the rest of the narrative is solely the work of the director

and screenwriter. Parker's film adaptation turns out to be scary, but in the end also a romantic story, in which a man can give up everything, his immortality and life, for the woman he desperately loves. All in all, the film in comparison to the book tries to entertain the audience and uses psychological ways and cinematographic tools to achieve the best result to satisfy the audience without any secondary intent as it was in Wild's novel.

4.3 Internet Movie Database

IMDB is an acronym for Internet Movie Database. This website provides information about movies or TV shows. Not only that there is information about the story, characters, or actors, but it also provides information about the production, director, screenwriter, and filming itself. The website also includes movie trailers, excerpts, and photos from various scenes. Producing a trailer is one of the ways how support the project and how to gain more money for creating the movie.⁶⁵ On this website, *Dorian Gray* presents a 1:32-minute trailer for the film, which captures the main parts of the story. There is also brief information about what the story is about, what actors appear here and what roles they were assigned to. It also contains information about director Oliver Parker, screenwriter Toby Finlay, and informs that the film was inspired by Oscar Wild's novel. Moreover, there is a rating that shows how successful the film is with the audience.

As for *Dorian Gray*, this film was rated quite well by the audience. The film received a rating of 6.2/10. These ratings are averaged over the overall evaluation of viewers and critics. Focusing on the selected feedback from critics, they evaluated the film primarily positive. For example, *Digital Spy* considers the film adaptation as very successful and the choice of actors interesting and properly selected.⁶⁶ Another critic, *The Film Critics United* also finds this film enjoyable, but they criticize the character of Dorian Gray, who in their opinion the filmmakers did not capture as hedonistically as it should be.⁶⁷

As part of the audience evaluation, there are people who consider the film adaptation to be very successful, however, there are also opinions where the audience is not a big fan of this processing. For example, the respondent "nyc10012" fully expresses her opinion about the film in her words: "There's not a single thing inherently wrong about adapting old stories

⁶⁵ Ryan Maureen A., *Producer to Producer: A Step-by-step Guide to Low-budget Independent Film Producing* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2010), 45.

⁶⁶ Ben Rawson-Jones, "Dorian Gray: Can Colin Firth and Ben Barnes do justice to Oscar Wilde's classic tale of debauchery and eternal youth?" *Digital Spy*. Last modified September 9, 2009. <https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a176514/dorian-gray/>

⁶⁷ Christopher Armstead, "Dorian Gray." *Film Critics United*. Accessed April 20, 2022. <http://filmcriticsunited.com/doriangray.html>

in new and surprising ways. Unfortunately the writers removed all of the original class and gender subtext in the original story and then added naked ladies. Really that's all there is to this adaptation.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, the user “Claudio_carvalho” brings up that: ““Dorian Gray” is an enjoyable version of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When I was a teenager, this novel was one of my favourites; I do not recall details of the book, but I liked this adaptation a lot that has a wonderful cinematography, great acting and a good screenplay.”⁶⁹ Which is the opposite view than the one mentioned by the previous user.

Dorian Gray received many good but also bad reviews from both and critics. In terms of technologies used, camera movements, special effects, music choices and environments, these steps were very well evaluated and processed. Most respondents focus mainly on the structure and plot of the film. In the comments, the audience often compare the film adaptation with the book, because when the film is based on a book, people already have certain expectations from the film before the film itself is released. This may also be the reason why most of the bad reviews come from the people who have read the novel before watching the movie.

⁶⁸ Nyc10012, “Did the screenwriters even read the original story by Wilde?” Review of Dorian Gray, IMDb.com, last modified February 17, 2010, https://www.imdb.com/review/rw2208911/?ref_=tt_urv

⁶⁹ Claudio_carvalho, “Enjoyable Version of Oscar Wilde's Novel,” Review of Dorian Gray, IMDb.com, last modified April 30, 2011, https://www.imdb.com/review/rw2422159/?ref_=tt_urv

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to compare the book version of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with its film adaptation *Dorian Gray* and to describe the process of how the filmmakers transferred the novel to the screen, that results in creating the film version that not entirely follows the Wilde's idea of aestheticism and focus mainly on entertaining the audience with enjoyable and exciting storyline.

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part deals mainly with the description of the film adaptation. The next part describes the setting in which the story is set. In the following section, an analysis has been made that discusses how the plot of the book has been translated into the film adaptation. The last chapter is devoted to the comparison between the book and the film.

The first part focuses on the director of this film adaptation himself, Oliver Parker, who, with the help of his film crew, transformed one of the most famous British novels into a screen adaptation. This book is about a young man who sacrifices his soul for beauty and immortality by doing immoral deeds.

In the following chapter, the Mise-en-scène analysis was used. The main purpose of this analysis is creating the set and costumes for the filming. From the facts gathered, it was found that the film and the book are set in the 19th century during the time of Queen Victoria. This fact is supported by the costumes, materials, means of transport and social behaviour that are typical of the period.

The third chapter is the core part of this thesis. It deals primarily with the analysis of the film itself. Here a shot-by-shot analysis was used, which focuses on the different parts of the shot and the different techniques that were used to achieve the stated goal. This chapter is divided into three parts: preproduction, production, and post-production. Pre-production includes setting the scene for the shoot, casting the actors for the lead roles, lighting, and finding locations for the shoot. The production deals with the filming itself. Through proper camera movement, it is possible to create a hidden meaning through which the filmmakers try to evoke emotions in the viewer. Once all the images are shot, the work moves to post-production, which must put all the collected material together. Here, the technology is mainly used to edit images, create special effects, and add music and sound. Post-production thus creates the final version of the film.

The last chapter describes the difference between the book version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its film adaptation *Dorian Gray*. It appeared that characters and key

moments from the book are also portrayed in the film. However, unlike the book, where Dorian does not achieve any self-reflection and dies alone, the film ends with a romantic gesture where the young man sacrifices himself for the love of the woman he loves.

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