

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY Oscar Wilde

The Plot

The protagonist is Dorian Gray, a young man whose beauty fascinates a painter Basil Hallward, who decides to portray him. Once the picture is finished, Dorian, expresses a wish of eternal youth (desiderio di eterna giovinezza): the portrait would absorb all the sign of age while he remain forever in his youthful perfection. The wish comes true (il desiderio viene esaudito), over the years while the portrait grows old and ugly (diventa vecchio e brutto) while Dorian's appearance remains unchanged.

Dorian lives only for pleasure, making use of everybody and letting people die because of his insensitivity. When Dorian, totally corrupt and evil, sees the corrupted images of the portrait decides to destroy the portrait and begin a new life. But in doing so he kills himself. The portrait is magically restored to its original image of Dorian's youthful perfection while the real Dorian's features in death become those of a hideous (orribile), disgusting old man.

Narrative Technique

The story is told by an third-person narrator. The settings are vividly described and the characters reveal themselves through what they say or what other people say of them (typical technique of drama).

Allegorical meaning

Is an allegorical story with a Faustian theme. The myth of Faust is the story of a man who sells his soul (vende la sua anima) to the evil so that all his desires might be satisfied (ogni suo desiderio deve essere esaudito).

Wilde believes on the Renaissance idea of correspondence existing between the physical and spiritual realms: beautiful people are moral people, ugly people are immoral people. So in "The picture of Dorian Gray" the picture is the dark side (il lato oscuro) of Dorian's personality and records (registra) the signs of time, the corruption, the horror and the sins (peccato) of Dorian. Picture is symbol of the immorality of the Victorian middle class and Dorian apparently pure and innocent is symbol of bourgeois hypocrisy.

The picture restored to its original beauty means that the art survives peoples, is eternal.