

The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Abstract

This research paper is a study of the aesthetic use of symbols in Oscar Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) which was published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890. The aim of this paper is not to cover all the symbols in the book, but to offer an explanation of the most significant symbols in the work which add depth and beauty to the text, hoping that this study will help the readers to achieve some aesthetic insight into the text of the novel. The novel's focus on sensual love and physical pleasure that undercuts Victorian aesthetics and values of order and rationality brought much criticism and heated arguments on both the book and its rebellious author.

The paper begins with an introduction that highlights the social values and the aesthetic concept of the Victorian people. But contrary to their expectations, Wilde used extraordinary ideas and symbols to undermine the Victorian code of values. This conflict led to the discussion of the themes of moral decadence, caste system, corruption, crime, and hypocrisy which were popular in the Victorian era. The study explores Wilde's creative method in dealing with the moral and the social issues of his society in a superb style which distinguishes him from his predecessors. The book's violation of Victorian traditional values helped it achieve the status of a valuable modern aesthetic text. Wilde's nondidactic method creates aesthetic feeling in the reader by using wonderful setting, unusual symbols, extraordinary characters, floral imagery, and sublime figurative language.

Keywords: Victorian traditionalism, moral decadence, aesthetic value, artistic symbols, creative method.

I. Introduction

Although Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was a great philosophical novel, it was unwelcomed by book reviewers. They strongly criticized it believing that it offended the moral sensibilities of people through violating the moral codes of the Victorian age, which was known for its conservatism and conventionalism. Traditional Victorian values or moral codes were considered as Victorian aesthetics in art and literature of the time. Among the values that were of great importance for Victorians were order, rationality, chivalry, virtue, self-confidence, and self-controlled behavior. Literature and art of the time had to express such values in theme, style, characterization, and technique. A literary work which failed to express Victorian values was not counted as Victorian literature. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an example of that literature which focused on sensual love and physical pleasure that undercuts Victorian aesthetics and conventional values. As a result, it is not considered an aesthetic work according to traditional Victorian standards. However, it is certainly a valuable aesthetic text which breaks the Victorian cultural values through giving superiority to the individual over society, sensation over reason, and youth and beauty over everything else. Such a work can be considered as a modern work that is ahead to its time in its principles, subject matter, and writing style.

II. The Aesthetic Use of Symbols in the Novel

Undoubtedly, Wilde was influenced by the French Symbolist movement. This is reflected in the symbolist experimentation of the novel and in its recurring images of flowers, colours, and allusions to other texts and in its focus on small objects. In this way, Wilde introduced an avant-garde work to his audience's Victorian expectations, causing much shock (Gifford 2011, p. 32). According to (Gifford 2011, p. 33) the main influence of the French symbolist movement and the French symbolists on Wilde was a stylistic influence:

Contemporary accounts of the style [of Symbolism] thus stress its likeness to jewelled ornamentation, brilliantly hard yet reified and atomistic. Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, for example, finds the 'poisonous' yellow book [Á Rebour] to be written in 'that curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterizes the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Symbolistes*'.

Gifford (2011, p. 34) thinks that Wilde rejected the conventions of Victorian society and the literary traditions of the age by writing a novel in which the protagonist is not engaged in commonplace matters such as dangerous love affairs and murders. Wilde presents *Dorian Gray* to his readers in a manner that makes it difficult to understand whether *Dorian* is a villain or a protagonist. The plot is complicated and the reader cannot decide whom to love and whom to hate. It is unlike the conventional narrative form which opens with a crime or a transgression

and closes with an eventual punishment for criminals. It is in short unlike those stories in which the good wins and the bad loses. Thus, it is possible to say that the novel is presented in a form that is different from its predecessors. In this novel, a semi-ghost character “Dorian Gray” plays a major role and commits many crimes and transgressions mysteriously which shows the novel as a mystery novel. Yet, it is difficult to hate him because of his good appearance and hypocrite character. In addition, the plot includes violence and sex crimes such as murder, hypocrisy, selfishness, homosexual relationships and sex with many partners or strangers. But readers never see a court conviction for the crimes of Dorian to learn a lesson from it. Readers only see a spiritual punishment which is a deep regret that Dorian himself feels for his sins and his evildoings.

Moreover, Gifford (2011, p. 35) explains another difference of this novel from the traditional plots of previous works:

In previous works, nearly all homosexual characters (or those implicitly gay) would receive moral condemnation and punishment. For Wilde, Basil is perhaps the only likeable and morally sympathetic character in the novel, and the reader is most surely meant to understand his murder as a crime and as an evil act, not as a justified punishment.

Symbolism is an important beautifying element which is used widely in the novel and adds up to the aesthetic value of the novel. Symbols are usually objects, colours, or characters which represent certain ideas or concepts in a literary work. Cudden explains that the symbol “is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something else.” He also states that “A literary symbol combines an image with a concept (words themselves are a kind of symbol)” (1977, p. 671). The significance of using symbols in a literary work is to grasp the reader’s interest to understand the author’s aim of using the symbol. In addition, it helps writers to express an idea, an intention, or feeling on something or a subject by using a symbolic word.

It is clear that symbolism plays an essential role in the novel. Wilde begins the story with an aesthetic background of a beautiful garden which serves as the symbol of beauty, purity, and a natural setting that is different from the sordid reality. In chapter one of the novel, the speaker describes the garden in a way that creates an aesthetic feeling in the reader through depicting a fantastic setting:

The two young men went out into the garden together and ensconced themselves on a long bamboo seat that stood in the shade of a tall laurel bush. The sunlight slipped over the polished leaves. In the grass, white daisies were tremulous. (Wilde 1891, p. 8)

III. Dorian’s Picture as an Aesthetic Symbol of Appearance and Reality

Some of the most important symbols in the story are the portrait, the yellow book, the flowers, the theatre, and the opium den. The portrait or the picture of

Dorian Gray deserves undivided attention because it shows the upper-class interest in art and their great artistic possessions. It is an important part of the plot which communicates with Dorian Gray throughout the narrative and thus it symbolizes his soul and consciousness. In addition, it shows the consequences of Dorian's immoral behavior and mirrors his corrupted soul. While, Dorian's face remains young and beautiful, the portrait grows old and ugly. The more sins he commits, the more damage and signs of corruption appear on the portrait. This obliged Dorian to hide this masterpiece of Basil Hallward in a secret room in order to hide the reality of his own soul. The following quotation explains the changes that happened to the portrait and shows Dorian's reaction to it:

Yet, it was watching him, with its beautiful marred face and its cruel smile. Its bright hair gleamed in the early sunlight. Its blue eyes met his own. A sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him. It had altered already, and would alter more. Its gold would wither into grey. Its red and white roses would die. For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin. The picture changed or unchanged, would be to him the visible emblem of conscience. (Wilde 1891, p. 78)

Baldwin (1999, p. 10) thinks that the portrait is a major symbol in the novel and like a "magical mirror" reflects Dorian's increasing fall into debauchery.

This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul. And when winter came upon it, he would still be standing where spring trembles on the verge of summer. When the blood crept from its face, and left behind a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes, he would keep the glamour of boyhood. Not one blossom of his loveliness would ever fade. Not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of the Greeks, he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous. What did it matter what happened to the coloured image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything. (Wilde 1891, p. 89)

IV. The Yellow Book as an Aesthetic Symbol of Moral Decadence

The yellow book is another most obvious symbol in the novel. It is a French yellow bound decadent nineteenth-century novel *À Rebours*, meaning "Against the Grain" or "Against Nature" written by Joris-Karl Huysmans. Lord Henry sent it to Dorian Gray as a gift after Sibyl Vane's death. Dorian Gray deeply indulges in the philosophy of the book and lives it as stated, "for years, Dorian could not free himself from the influence of this book. Or he never sought to free himself from it" (Wilde 1891, p. 105).

Thus, the book has many connotations. It is mainly the symbol of corruption and it represents Lord Henry's negative influence on Dorian Gray. It also

represents the damaging influence of art over the individual. In addition, the yellow bound books in French were generally considered as very sensational and controversial to the moral codes of the society. For this reason, they were notorious for promoting sexual and philosophical deviance. The availability of this French book in the novel represents the influence of the French literature on Oscar Wilde. Baldwin (1999, p. 10) confirms that the “yellow book” represents a demonic force and it reflects Lord Henry’s continuing influence on Dorian Gray.

V. The Theatre, the Opera and the Violin as Artistic Symbols

In the novel, the theatre serves as a symbol of escapism. It is a place that Dorian, Henry, and Basil enjoy. According to Baldwin (1999, p. 10) “The theatre run by Mr. Isaacs is a fantasy world for Dorian, who seems incapable of dealing with Sibyl as a real person.” Thus, the theatre helps them to forget the problems of life, their own inner struggles, and to express their love for art. It also represents a stage of life or a small example of society where most characters play their own roles in their personal life dramas. Sybil plays her role as Juliet and Dorian as Romeo, and Henry as devil, but Basil as the good man and victim of circumstance.

Baldwin (1999, p. 10) thinks that the Opera and the violin that Dorian plays are also major symbols in the novel. He states that “The Opera where the singer Patti performs, is the essence of Aestheticism” and “The violin is a symbol of manipulation” which shows that Lord Henry plays Dorian like a violin.

VI. The Opium Den as a Symbol of Oblivion

The opium den can be considered as another significant symbol in the novel. It is located in a distant and derelict section of London. Usually, the downtrodden people spend their time at this place and use opium in an attempt to forget their difficult life and suffering. This drug makes them unconscious or sleepy. Thus, the place represents a quiet resort or a clinic for them. Strangely enough, this place is also Dorian’s favourite site where he finds rest of mind and the opium helps ease his painful sordid mind. He usually visits the opium den in order to forget about his crimes by losing consciousness through taking opium as stated “The hideous hunger for opium began to gnaw at him. His throat burned, and his delicate hands twitched nervously together” (Wilde 1891, p. 154). Baldwin (1999, p. 10) believes that “the opium den represents the depths of depravity and excess.” At the same time, the darkness of the opium den represents the darkness that Dorian feels in his soul and mind. In addition, the shabby opium den represents the miserable life of the downtrodden people. It is a place where criminals forget about their crimes and old sins because of noticing new sins there. Wilde (1891, p. 153) writes about this place: “There were opium-dens, where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new.”

VII. Symbolism of Characters in the Novel

Wilde presents his characters symbolically in the novel. Lord Henry represents aesthetics which stands opposite to ethics and religion. In contrast, Basil Hallward represents ethics, religion, and Everyman. While Lord Henry attempts to influence Dorian Gray with his hedonistic philosophy and encourages him to follow his desires, and have sensual pleasure, Basil Hallward aims to protect Dorian Gray from Lord Henry's evil influences. Henry's influence is tempting because it gives priority to pleasure and self-indulgence, but Basil's influence is weak because it requires self-control and repentance. Thus, Dorian Gray deserts Basil Hallward, but befriends Lord Henry who tells him about the difficulty to resist temptation and the possibility to yield to it. All these details about the forces of good versus evil and worldly pleasure versus Judgment Day best clarify that the story is quite allegorical. Liebman (1999, pp. 297- 298) writes on the opposing theories of Lord Henry and Basil Hallward in the following passage:

The views of Basil and Henry can be understood in terms of the relationship between their theory of cosmic justice and their concept of morality. Basil believes that the universe is a moral order in which God (or at least Fate) punishes evil and rewards good; that the self is (or can be) unitary and autonomous; and that art-as well as human conduct in general can (and should) be guided by a moral code in which sympathy and compassion are primary values. This moral position leads to the gestures of melodrama (the inevitably unsuccessful-and therefore sentimental-pursuit of love, fame, or revenge), the disappointment of unrequited love, and suicide prompted by disillusionment. Henry's beliefs are based on the assumption that there is no moral order (the universe is purposeless and indifferent to human needs); that the self is not only multiple, but at war with itself and driven by forces beyond its control; and that morality is arbitrary and relative. This moral position leads to a withdrawal from human engagement, the pursuit of pleasure (both sensual and intellectual) as a distraction from disillusionment, and the manipulation of others for one's own enjoyment and edification.

James Vane is another symbolic character who represents patriarchy and male protection for the female members of his family. He appears as a ghost to threaten Dorian and promises revenge if Dorian deceives his pretty young sister Sybil Vane. His big body represents his strength, courage, and male power. He also represents the monster of Dorian's life or the Angel of Death who always moves around him for the right time to take his spirit:

"You wrecked the life of Sibyl Vane," was the answer, "and Sibyl Vane was my sister. She killed herself. I know it. Her death is at your door. I swore I would kill you in return. For years I have sought you...." "You had better confess your sin, for as sure as I am James Vane, you are going to

die.’ There was a horrible moment. Dorian did not know what to say or do. (Wilde 1891, p. 158)

Wilde’s style is so unique that he even did not forget the difference between the civilized and the country people. By using contrast, he presents symbolic characters such as Hetty Merton and Dorian Gray to show the difference. Hetty represents the kindness and the simplicity of country people while Dorian Gray represents both culture and corruption of civilized people. Dorian describes Hetty for Lord Henry:

Hetty was not one of our own class, of course. She was simply a girl in a village. But I really loved her....We were to have gone away together this morning at dawn. Suddenly I determined to leave her as flower-like as I had found her. (Wilde 1891, p. 173)

Dorian Gray’s beautiful appearance also has tremendous symbolic significance. Wilde presented the main character as perfect in appearance, but decayed and damaged in soul. Here, Dorian’s beauty and youth represent the superficial beauty and perfection of the Victorian society which was in opposite decayed in the core. Even though the Victorian society was a prosperous society, it still had a dark side and faced many problems such as limited job opportunities for women, prostitution, murder, fraud, child labour, and poverty of the underclass. In the novel, Wilde refers to Whitechapel to hint at the unhappy life and poverty of the underclass people who were living in East London during the Victorian era. Gillespie (2007, p. 37) defines the area as “an economically depressed area of London, now notorious for the Jack the Ripper murders.” But, Lord Henry as a symbol for the upper-class Victorians expresses his opinion about the suffering and slavery of poor people of Whitechapel:

‘I can sympathize with everything, except suffering.’... ‘I cannot sympathize with that. It is too ugly, too horrible, too distressing. There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain. One should sympathize with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life. The less said about life’s sores the better.’.... ‘I don’t desire to change anything in England except the weather.’... ‘I am quite content with philosophic contemplation. But, as the nineteenth century has gone bankrupt through an over-expenditure of sympathy, I would suggest that we should appeal to science to put us straight. The advantage of the emotions is that they lead us astray, and the advantage of Science is that it is not emotional.’ (Wilde 1891, p. 37)

Here, Henry’s opinion supports Wilde’s aesthetic philosophy which is to think of beautiful things only and to search for beauty and pleasure in life. At the same time, his opinion also hints at how the upper-class Victorians thought of the problems of the poor and how careless they were to change anything of the condition and put an end to their suffering. In addition, Henry’s support for science

and reason and ignorance of emotions again represents that of the Victorian power and conventions.

VIII. Symbolism of Flowers in the Novel

The symbolism of flowers occupies a wide space in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Flowers are powerful symbols which appear throughout the novel. The first paragraph of the book begins with the descriptions of ‘the rich odour of roses,’ and ends with ‘the heavy scent of the lilac and the delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn.’ In fact, Dorian Gray seeks solace by burying his head in lilac-blossoms as (Wilde 1891, p. 21) writes:

Lord Henry went out to the garden, and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as if it had been wine. He came close to him, and put his hand upon his shoulder. “You are quite right to do that,” he murmured. “Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul.”

Pearson (2011, p. 2) thinks that by burying his face in lilac-blossoms to seek solace Dorian shows his acceptance of Henry’s philosophy and because lilac symbolizes love, thus the situation symbolizes Dorian’s love for Henry’s ideas.

In addition, flowers symbolize beauty and their short life shows how beauty can fade with time. They can also be an example of the perfect beauty of nature and a source of spiritual joy for people. This line ‘Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses’ (Wilde 1891, p. 23) shows the damaging effect of time on beauty. The following quotation highlights the lifespan of flowers and their short life:

The common hill-flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. (Wilde 1891, p. 23)

The description of many types of flowers such as (roses, lilac, narcissus, laburnum, daisy, clematis, orchid, etc.) shows that Wilde used the technique of floral imagery in his novel for aesthetic purpose. Pearson (2011, p.1) writes that the petals of flowers referred to by Dorian Gray represent a communication tactic that was very popular in the Victorian era:

Other than the fight for liberty, equality, and fraternity, the people of prerevolutionary France planted a seed for a more gentle [sic.] movement: The language of flowers. A widely popular communication tactic in the Victorian era, the language of flowers applies meanings and emotions to individual flowers that, when combined, produce a hidden message for the intended receiver.... A bouquet consisting of balm, which represents

sympathy, and purple verbena, which represents regret, could be an apology derived from sympathy for hardship and regret for the causing of that hardship.

According to her, Wilde used the Victorian language of flowers in his novel in order to describe his characters and hint to future scenes. She believes that in the first chapter Wilde introduces Basil Hallward's studio with roses as an extension of Basil's character. In addition, she explains that in the Victorian era and even today roses represent love and thus, Wilde aims to reveal Basil's amorous character and his initial capacity for love.

Likewise, she believes that in the same page of chapter one, Wilde introduces Lord Henry Wotton, an influential, devilish, and hypocritical character in the novel. She thinks that Wilde places a laburnum plant close to him. In fact, laburnum is a poisonous plant with yellow flowers and its recipients should be fearful of its negative connotation, which suggests that the recipient should be abandoned by society. She states that by placing a laburnum in the initial appearance of Lord Henry Wotton, Wilde attempts to disclose the character of Henry Wotton. As such, the laburnum symbolizes "Henry's poisonous effects and how some higher societal circles, due to his poisonous tongue and ideas, forsake him" (Pearson 2011, p. 2).

Pearson (2011, p. 2) states that Wilde used flower imagery to describe the beauty of Sibyl Vane. This is clear when Dorian uses the phrase flower-like face to praise the beauty of Sibyl as he states: "Harry, imagine a girl hardly seventeen years of age, with a little, flower-like face" (Wilde 1891, p. 45). Moreover, she thinks that Wilde also used the language of flower to foreshadow certain events, because the sweet scent of lilac coming from the garden and spread through the studio foreshadows the coming of Dorian to Basil's Studio. Also, lilac symbolizes first emotions of love and thus it represents Basil's one-sided love for Dorian.

Furthermore, Pearson (2011, p. 2) writes that Lord Henry's description of Dorian's physical appearance as being made out of "ivory and rose-leaves" and that, "he is a Narcissus" (Wilde 1891, p. 7) shows that Gray is compared to both the rose and the narcissus flower. Narcissus which came from the Greek myth symbolizes self-love. Thus, the flower foreshadows Gray's tragic flaw of self-love and pride which will cause his downfall. As such, the rose symbolizes love, and shows that Henry is interested in Dorian's physical appearance.

According to Pearson (2011, p. 2) Wilde again used the language of flowers in the first chapter when Basil Hallward and Henry go to the garden. While walking together, Henry plucks a daisy from the grass (Wilde 1891, p. 9) and shreds it before Basil reveals his secret about the portrait and before he describes his first sighting of Dorian Gray. Pearson assumes that the daisy represents Basil's innocence and that in Henry's view point Basil is an innocent man, but Henry's discard of the daisy symbolizes the destruction of Basil's innocence. While standing in the garden, near them the "wind shook some blossoms from the trees, and the heavy lilac-blooms, moved to and fro in the languid air" and "Lord Henry felt as if he could hear Basil Hallward's heart beating, and wondered what was

coming” (Wilde 1891, p. 9). Symbolically speaking, lilac represents the stirring of love and the lilac bush which sways to and fro represents Basil Hallward’s heart beating. As such, the language of flowers reveals Basil’s homosexual inclinations. Moreover, Basil describes his first sighting of Gray in a way that he unintentionally reveals and confesses his romantic admiration for him:

When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. (Wilde 1891, p. 10)

Pearson (2011, p. 3) thinks that Wilde used the language of flower to help readers understand the events surrounding the death of Basil Hallward. Throughout the novel, Dorian Gray is recognized as having flower-like traits. However, this situation shows Gray as a Victorian flower with external beauty, but a hidden side as well. This means that like a Victorian flower which has a hidden message, Gray has a hidden personality as well.

Although Dorian Gray always had a flower-like appearance despite his corrupted behavior, no one realized the truth of his corrupted soul until Basil unveils Dorian’s portrait. The portrait has become aged, ugly, and badly damaged to represent Dorian Gray’s devilish soul. Furthermore, Pearson (2011, p. 3) thinks that Wilde implemented the language of flowers to unveil Dorian’s corrupted soul and to send a final ‘good bye’ to Basil as a character in the story. She also believes that Gray’s rejection of white orchids has a hidden message and meaning:

See Harden personally, and tell him to send twice as many orchids as I ordered, and to have as few white ones as possible. In fact, I don’t want any white ones. (Wilde, 144)

Pearson believes that white orchids symbolize beauty, love, refinement, and purity in the Victorian era. Thus, Gray’s request for orchids, but not white orchids represent the depths of his corruption and his loss of these good qualities in the climax of the story. Also, with the death of Basil, Gray loses his best friend.

Poppy flower is also part of flower symbolism which was a familiar language to Victorians. Dorian’s thinking about sowing poppies in his garden is to forget his suffering over Sibyl’s suicide. He feels guilty of being the cause of her decision because he was merciless toward her and rejected her rudely. Thus, poppy symbolizes forgetfulness and drugged sleep (Wilde 1891, p. 85). In addition, asphodel flower that Dorian mentions in chapter eight symbolizes the death of his love for Sybil and that he buried this romance in the underworld as he says “I had buried my romance in a bed of Asphodel” (Wilde 1891, p. 85).

When one looks deeply at Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is possible to say that the aesthetic values flow from the text. This is because the reader can experience aesthetic pleasure from Dorian Gray's beautiful portrait, from the beautiful flowery setting of the novel, and also from Wilde's flowery and superb style of writing. One can also experience sensual pleasure from Dorian Gray's carefree lifestyle. The portrait shows that the role of the artist is not only didactic, but an artist can derive pleasure from his/her work and do something beautiful or paint only to show beauty of a person or an object regardless of the ethical standards or principles of his time.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, a deep critical examination of Wilde's unprecedented innovative and unconventional inventive novel shows that the novelist uses various types of symbols in an aesthetic manner to strengthen his writing style and to add more depth and beauty to the text. The novelist creatively presents Dorian Gray, the main character of the novel with his picture in a symbolic way.

The aesthetic quality of the book lies in its celebration of beauty and sensual pleasure. These two are controversial values to the traditional Victorian values of virtue, hard-work, and religious faith. The book breaks such values and releases the human soul of Victorian seriousness and conservatism. It is a courageous step toward using art to praise the aesthetic feelings and values that were ignored during the period. It perfectly paints Dorian Gray's life and celebrates beauty and pleasure as essential and the highest human values.

The Picture of Dorian Gray has all the aesthetic qualities of coherence, complexity, creativity, balance, aesthetic experience, aesthetic pleasure, beauty, and perfection. Even though Wilde has put more emphasis on form rather than the content, the text is still well balanced because he has not ignored its content and paid enough attention to both of them. In spite of all the aesthetic values of theme and style, only a professional reader or an artist can realize the value of the book as a vital work of art and literature. Yet, it is difficult for an ordinary reader to evaluate the said aesthetic values of the work. An ordinary reader may only focus on the moral character or the ethical issues of the work.

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جماليات استخدام الرموز في رواية أوسكار وايلد "صورة دوريان غراي"

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المستخلص

يعرض البحث الحالي دراسة في جماليات استخدام الرمز في رواية اوسكار وايلد الوحيدة، والموسومة "صورة دوريان غراي" (1891) التي نشرت في مجلة ليبينكوت الشهرية عام 1890. لا يهدف البحث الى تغطية كل الرموز الواردة في الرواية، بل الى تقديم شرح لأبرز وأهم الرموز والتي أضفت عمقا وجمالا للنص، أملين أن يساعد ذلك القراء للوصول إلى تبصرات جمالية في الرواية. تركز الرواية على الحب الحسي واللذة الجسدية التي تتقاطع مع القيم الجمالية الفيكتورية وقيم النظام والمنطق التي تسببت في الكثير من النقد والجدل المحتم بشأن الرواية وكاتبها المتمرد.

تبدأ الدراسة الحالية بمقدمة تسلط الضوء على القيم الاجتماعية والمفاهيم الجمالية لدى الفيكتوريين. وعلى خلاف توقعاتهم، استخدم وايلد افكارا ورموزا غير مألوفة لتقويض منظومة القيم الفيكتورية. فأدى هذا الصراع الى مناقشة ثيمات التفسخ الاخلاقي، والنظام الطبقي، والفساد، والجريمة، والنفاق التي تفاقمت في العصر الفيكتوري. لذا فإن الدراسة الحالية تستكشف منهج اوسكار وايلد الابداعي في التعاطي مع القضايا الاخلاقية والاجتماعية لمجتمعه بأسلوب رائع تفرد به عن اسلافه. إذ أن ابتعاد الكتاب عن القيم الفيكتورية التقليدية ساعده في تحقيق مكانة رفيعة بين النصوص الجمالية الحديثة. كما أن طريقة وايلد غير الواعظة تبعث على شعور جمالي لدى القراء عبر استخدام زمكان رائع، ورموز خارجة عن المألوف، وشخصيات غير تقليدية، وصور زاهرة، ولغة بلاغية شامخة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقليدية الفيكتورية، الانحدار الاخلاقي، القيم الجمالية، الرموز الفنية، الطريقة الابداعية.