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**PROBLEM AND THEMATIC CONTENT OF O.WILDE'S NOVEL  
"THE PORTRAIT OF DORIAN GRAY" AND ITS FIGURATIVE SYSTEM**

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**Abstract:** *The novel The Portrait of Dorian Gray was conceived by Oscar Wilde as an apotheosis to the art, beauty, and perfection that are supreme beyond our ordinary human lives. But this is what lies on the surface. In fact, the author invites the reader to discover the depths, not to read the novel disparagingly. After all, the novel is about philosophical and aesthetic problems: about human existence, about the role of art and the beautiful in human life, about the role of ethical and aesthetic in relations between people. Oscar Wilde shows that art can become the highest judge of conscience: in fact, not justice, but Dorian Gray himself carries out punishment on himself. Art itself is also called upon to discover the most beautiful things in life. With the help of art, a person can realize his own "I", see himself and the world.*

*The novel is precisely about the effect of art on the soul. True art cannot have falsity, the beautiful must be beautiful, and if it is not what it seems, it is short-lived. And so Dorian Gray's beauty - it wasn't real. No, it was as if it was real, but only externally. Internally, the beauty was corrupted and in the end, Dorian Gray does not endure such a double life. He really wanted to destroy only the portrait, but he destroys himself - and justice triumphs!*

**Keywords:** *aphorism, gibel, art, creation, image, myth, theory.*

The novel "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" as an embodiment of the writer's aesthetic ideas. It is impossible not to say about this novel both as a hymn to aestheticism and as an "aesthetic dystopia". In this novel O. Wilde most fully expresses the main positions of his theory of aestheticism. Twenty-five aphorisms of the preface in a concentrated form define the system of aesthetic views of the author [1]. "The artist is the one who creates the beautiful," states the first of the aphorisms. And indeed, the artist Basil Hallward created a beautiful portrait: "...on the easel stood the portrait of a young man of extraordinary beauty", "...the artist looked at the beautiful young man, with such art displayed by him in the portrait...".

But is it not this portrait - a beautiful creation of art - that creates the horrible monster that Dorian becomes? "...A cry of horror burst from the artist when he saw in the semi-darkness a ghastly face smirking mockingly at him from the canvas. There was something in the expression of that face that angered his soul, filling it with disgust. Good heavens, it was Dorian's face!" "You told me you had destroyed the portrait!" - says Basil a moment before his death. "That is not true. It destroyed me," replies Dorian before finally destroying his soul, and by putting these words into the mouth of his character, Oscar Wilde, perhaps without expecting it, refutes his first thesis [2].

"Those who find bad things in the beautiful are people who are spoiled.... Those who are able to see in the beautiful its high meaning are people of culture. They are not hopeless." - Wilde's next aphorism. But it too is destined to be refuted in the pages of the novel. Neither Basil, nor the more than perceptive Lord Henry perceives only Dorian's outer beauty, do not see the terrible soul of the hero. No one believes that Dorian is capable of committing a crime. Dorian's amazing beauty overshadows the eyes and James Vane, who, wanting to avenge his dead sister, could not realize his plan, simply not believing that such a beautiful young man could be so cruel and ruthless. And he, like Basil, pays for his mistake with his life.

"An artist is not a moralist," Wilde asserts, but the true artist Basil - only one of the novel's characters - tries to bring Dorian back to the righteous path: "Pray, Dorian,

pray!... a prayer of contrition will be heard, too," he says in a fit of horror when he sees the portrait[3]. In essence, Wilde did not deny the moral principles of society and the moral content of literature: he opposed only deliberate edification. The theme of morality in the novel remains open.

The next can be identified the problem of the relationship between art and reality. This problem takes a special, leading place in the work and in all the work of Oscar Wilde.

The close connection with art can be seen already in the name of the protagonist: "Dorian" (from English Doric") is an art history term that refers to the oldest monuments of classical antiquity. "

The theme of the relationship between art and reality runs through the entire novel. It is realized in many aspects, the main ones of which are the ratio of form and content (here we can give the example of Dorian Gray himself - his appearance and inner world); eternity and instant of the beautiful, art, the relationship of the creator and his creation, ethical attitude to art, the beautiful.

The problem of the relationship between the creator and his creation is interestingly depicted in the work. In the words of the artist Basil Hallward, "there are only two important moments in the history of mankind. The first is the emergence of new ways of depiction in art, the other is the emergence of a new image in it" [4].

Basil Hallward has created a portrait of his friend Dorian Gray, a perfect work of art. And from that moment on, the portrait and the sitter become indivisible (here, we see the close intertwining of art and reality). At first Dorian Gray does not see his beauty, then Lord Henry appears. In his words is a hymn to beauty, a warning that it will pass. "You have been given the marvelous beauty of youth, and youth is the only treasure worth preserving", "Youth will pass and with it beauty - and then it will suddenly become clear to you that the time of victories is past" [5].

When Dorian looks at the portrait, envy awakens in him, for it is beauty that is immortal. "If I could be forever young, and the portrait aged!"[6]. Dorian's thought materializes. And passes the division into form and content, which will lead to Dorian's death, his fall. Portrait and sitter (art and reality) change places. The portrait becomes the content, the inner, and Dorian becomes just a perfect form, a shell.

It is interesting to trace the correlation of form and content among the other characters of the work; we will talk about this further on. Thus, for Lord Henry, his soul, his essence becomes Dorian Gray, while he himself remains an external "decent" shell. For Dorian Gray, his real self is contained in the portrait, and he himself is only a humanized image. On the other hand, for Basil Hallward, the portrait becomes both form and content, because it contains his cherished dream, ideal, the absolute of beauty. In Sibylla Vane Dorian Gray loves only the external (the images of different heroines created by her): "All the great heroines of the world live in her! - admires Dorian, - she is more than one being". But this is how Dorian speaks of Sibylla at the beginning of their relationship, involved in the world of art and roles created by Sibylla, calling her a "Sanctuary". But soon he speaks to everyone differently, "I wish I thought she was ill," Dorian objected. - But I see that she's just cold and soulless. She is utterly changed. Yesterday she was a great artist. Today she is only a mediocre average actress," he says to his friends in a fit of despair, and this moment becomes a turning point in Dorian's fate. He chose form over substance, and by doing so he essentially killed Sybil and destroyed a part of his soul, initiating the monstrous transformation of the portrait.

The artist, according to the author's thinking, is the one who creates the beautiful. A critic is the one who is able to convey impressions of the beautiful in a new form or by other means. Perhaps because of this, "artists" value friendship, love higher for art, and "critics" are not able to look behind the shell, discard real feelings, being satisfied with what they see - theatrical, aesthetic. "Everything is much more realistic on the stage than life," says Lord Henry [7].

The highest as well as the lowest form of criticism, the author believed, is a type of autobiography. By depicting Dorian's biography, the writer raises questions that we look for answers to every time we open the novel.

"If this portrait were to grow old, and I always, remained young! I'd give my soul for it!" - these fateful words became fatal for the young, unusually handsome and untainted by vice Dorian Gray. From that very day not a single wrinkle appeared on the eternally youthful face and eternally pure soul of Gentleman Gray, and his portrait grew old and died. But there always comes a time to pay [8].

Dorian Gray goes into all sorts of trouble. He leads the most dissolute and immoral way of life imaginable, and only his charm and strangely not fading with the years of beauty make society does not turn away from him, although there is a lot of gossip about him. Decades pass, but he remains young and beautiful ... [9].

By driving a knife into the mutilated portrait, Dorian kills himself.

This affirms the idea of the eternity of the beautiful, the eternity of art (the portrait becomes the same as Basil created it). "As they entered the room, they saw the magnificent portrait of their master, in all the splendor of his marvelous youth and beauty, and on the floor with a knife in his breast lay a dead man in a tailcoat. His face was wrinkled, shriveled, repulsive. It was only by the rings on his hands that the servants recognized who it was."

With the death of his hero - paradoxically, perhaps unexpectedly for himself - Oscar Wilde removes the cornerstones from the foundation of Lord Henry's philosophical doctrine, forcing him to seek other life beliefs, truths "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" is a polygenre novel: it is a secular novella, a domestic-realist novel, and a novel depicting the life of high society (Lord Henry and Dorian Gray their domestic, buddy and club environment) and the life of London aristocratic bohemia; philosophical-allegorical novel-myth - such at which personified ideas act alongside people: Time, Beauty (or simply Beauty), Fate (or Fate), Genius, Science, Whose

names Wilde, according to medieval tradition, capitalizes (Time, Beauty, Fate, Genius, Science). First among them is the allegory of Pleasure (pleasure): addressing his new acquaintance, Dorian Gray, Lord Henry is philosophical: he proclaims a sermon in defense of life, youth, and the physical perfection of man, which is at the same time a flattering ode to Dorian's beauty. "A new hedonism is what our age needs, and you, Dorian, could be the epitome of it.

Hedonism (Gr. - pleasure) - philosophical and ethical theory, a type of anthropological naturalism, to some extent extra-historical reason and asocial view of man, which simplifies the motives of her behavior. Hedonism asserts that the highest good of life is pleasure, and it is also the sole criterion of morality. This, in turn, justifies moral and ethical relativism. From here the direct road to preaching and moralism and extreme individualism opens up, as it was, in fact, in Oscar Wilde's circle.

The founders of the current - the ancient Greek philosopher Aristippus (IV century BC), Epicurus (341 - 270 BC) and his followers (Epicureans) considered the absence of suffering and carefree - the ideal state of spiritual being of man - as the criterion of pleasure.

Philosophical hedonism of the Epicurean type advocated the restriction of man's everyday needs, her rationalism and self-dismissal from society and its problems.

Hedonistic motifs became widespread during the Renaissance. The philosophers of the Enlightenment - Hobbes, Locke, Gassendi - did not bypass them either. As a principle of life affirmation, hedonism is opposed to asceticism (from the Greek "ascetic - hermit, black man) - a voluntary restriction of the natural feelings of man, the desire to feel suffering, physical pain, loneliness. The ultimate goal of asceticism is to achieve freedom from everyday needs, the center of the spirit, ecstasy. As in hedonism, but by the opposite means!

Subjectively, both hedonists and ascetics strive for the highest good, for the attainment of truth, for their own happiness, they enjoy life - each in his own way. And

the pleasure of each of them - the desires of the hedonist and the suffering of the ascetic - act as the only possible measure of good and evil.

The paradox on which the conflict of Wilde's novel is based: the hedonistic heroes, the "theorist Lord Henry and the "practitioner" Dorian Gray - the favorite of Henry and Basil, their protégé on the stage of the theater of vice, the horrible scene of the murder of Basil Hallward by Dorian Gray (the hedonist kills the ascetic!) has a meaning broader than the lurid details of a crime novel: a trivial, purely English murder is given a symbolic and allegorical meaning: pleasure kills asceticism. But both actors in this bloody farce are criminal and anti-human - soul-destroying and blood-shedding. And the ideal of life - its golden mean - must be sought elsewhere, among other ideas.

In the detective part of the plot, this old friend of Dorian, one of the victims of his influence on people, in addition to will appear at the role of the devil's handmaiden.

Alan Campbell at one time graduated with honors from Cambridge University. Had his own research laboratory. He immersed himself in the study of biology - the science of man, his name has twice appeared in the pages of scientific journals. But his research was obscure, mysterious. He became an ascetic.

It is quite possible that the antipode of the hedonist Gray, ascetic Campbell, his lonely Faustian life paid tribute not only to science, but also saw it as a means of defense against the likes of his former friend. It may also have been an atonement for the sin which he no doubt regarded his friendship with Dorian as. But he had no luck in hiding from Dorian Gray in his fortress - laboratory [10] either.

Dorian cunningly lured him to his home (although Alan had long ago vowed not to cross its threshold), and did not let him out of there until he saved him - not released from the corpse, killed by him Basil Hallward. It was not without blackmail, either. Once again, hedonism triumphs.

But "again" does not mean "always". A vivid proof of this will be the finale of the novel, in which - debunking and hedonistic and aesthetic views of the author; the collapse of man, worshipping only pleasure and permissiveness

### **Conclusions.**

The novel "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" is the most famous and vivid work of Oscar Wilde.



In this section, by examining the novel, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. The novel "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" contains both the author's aesthetic worldview and debunking it on the example of the fate of the main character.

2. the problem of correlation between art and reality is sharply put in the novel, here the writer follows the thesis proclaimed in the "Intentions": "Life imitates art".

3. In addition to the above problems, the conflict of asceticism and hedonism - one of the central ones in the novel - occupies a special place. Its essence is that at first we see the superiority of hedonism in everything, but the finale of the novel radically changes their positions. By this the writer, in fact, rejects the principles of hedonism.

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