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**Dandyism in the work of Oscar Wilde**

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Autorka se ve své práci zaměří na problematiku dandysmu v prozaické a divadelní tvorbě Oscara Wildea. V úvodu práce nastíní podstatu dandysmu a popíše hlavní atributy tohoto společenského jevu a životního stylu viktoriánského období. Na základě ustavené definice bude následně sledovat, jakými způsoby se dandysmus odráží ve Wildeově díle (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*). Autorka své úvahy zasadí do širšího kontextu Wildeova života, esteticismu a dekadence konce 19. století. Práci završí kapitola, která z dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěry.

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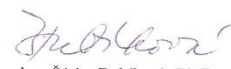
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## **ANNOTATION**

This work focuses on the signs of Dandyism in the literary works of Oscar Wilde and his own life. The theoretical part serves as an introduction to the topic of Dandyism in relation to Aestheticism, Decadence and the Victorian society. The analytical part focuses on the core features of a Dandy in more detail, which are then shown on Wilde's characters that indicate them, while discussing whether such characters can be considered true Dandies. Wilde's own life is compared to these instances as well.

## **KEY WORDS**

Oscar Wilde, Dandyism, Aestheticism, Decadence, Victorian society, Hedonism

## **NÁZEV**

Aspekty dandysmu v díle Oscara Wildea

## **ANOTACE**

Tato práce se zaměřuje na známky dandysmu v literárních pracích Oscara Wildea a jeho vlastním životě. Teoretická část slouží jako úvod do tématu dandysmu ve vztahu k esteticismu, dekadenci a viktoriánské společnosti. Analytická část se detailněji zaměřuje na hlavní rysy dandyho, které jsou následně znázorněny na Wildeových postavách, jež je vykazují, zatímco otázkou zůstává, zda mohou být považovány za skutečné dandy. Porovnání s těmito rysy je také Wildeův vlastní život.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Oscar Wilde, dandysmus, esteticismus, dekadence, viktoriánská společnost, hédonismus

# CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	7
1 INTRODUCTION .....	8
2 APPEARANCE AND WEALTH.....	12
3 SOCIAL LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY .....	20
4 PHILOSOPHY AND LIFESTYLE .....	28
5 CONCLUSION.....	35
RESUMÉ .....	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	41

# 1 INTRODUCTION

During the Victorian era, Britain noted a significant expansion and progress in almost every manner; gaining colonies around the world, having the largest navy, laying down railways, large numbers of people working in factories. The country, the society and living conditions changed significantly during the industrial revolution. As much as the industry was progressing forward, the same could not be said about the moral values of the era. The society was rigid and restrictive as for the behavior. Instead of developing, the Victorian ethics resembled puritanism with its focus on hard work, thriftiness, sexual repression, zero acceptance of criminality and modest lifestyle, as well as religion. Frankel explains this puritanism as the coming of repressive laws or the banning of Emile Zola's work.<sup>1</sup> In fact, with such an approach, the Victorian society took a step back. Despite the era's revolutionary technology and progress, people as individuals were being repressed even more.

Fin de siècle, as the end of the nineteenth century was called, was a time of social weariness, escapism and despair as a natural effect of the fast development and progression. This attitude was reflected in the literary world as well, called decadence in France and aestheticism in England. Artists reflected on their frustration in their works, going against the conventional rules of the society, some also decided to act on it.

Before Aestheticism and Decadence developed fully, there was a notable movement, the Pre-Raphaelites. Starting mid-century, these artists detached from the society's conventions and focused on the mood instead of the story, returning to medieval subjects, depicting female beauty and immersing themselves in introspection. They were interested not only in fine art, but also in literature, more specifically poetry, experimenting with form and technique. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had their own journal *The Germ*, which contained visual arts as well as literary entries, being a predecessor of the "little magazine" like *The Yellow Book* of the Decadents. One of the most notable members of the brotherhood was Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose Poems were largely criticized by Robert Buchanan, however, his critique attracted Walter Pater, who became a defender of the Pre-Raphaelites. Pater, being a disciple of Ruskin, wrote influential essays praising Rossetti's work and these theses then became important works of the Aestheticism. It was this movement that helped form the "art for art's sake" idea, which

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Frankel, ed., *The Picture of Dorian Gray: an annotated, uncensored edition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), by Oscar Wilde, 192.



was later the main thought of Aesthetes. The literary works of Pre-Raphaelites gained admirers among Aesthetes and Decadents, among whom Oscar Wilde belonged.<sup>2</sup>

What is now identified as the Aesthetic movement did not really function as an organized group with rules or a certain list of members at its time. According to some, the Aesthetes belonged to the Pre-Raphaelites, whose emphasis on bodily beauty was a strong influence for them. At first, there were notable figures like Charles Algernon Swinburne and Walter Pater, who identified with the Aesthetic way of thinking, and were largely influenced by French ideas and writers like Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier. The main thought these artists followed was “art for art’s sake”, meaning that art should not teach moral lessons, its purpose is to be beautiful and nothing else. Swinburne and Baudelaire crafted their poems to be aesthetically pleasing, merging the form with unconventional themes like sexuality or cruelty and violence. The Victorian society deemed literature and art to be a moralizing means of self-improvement and prompting the reader to do good, unlike these new poems. It is Walter Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* that is recognized as the manifesto of Aestheticism. In this book he claims that a wise person will fully devote their energy to the pleasure of lovely moments, which can be seen as a recipe for the Hedonistic pursuit of self-indulgence as well as a prompt to let go of the restrictive Victorian way of thinking.<sup>3</sup> As Jonathan Loesberg mentions, that itself cannot be seen as “art for art’s sake”, but rather “art for Hedonism’s sake”. However, as he continues, “‘Art for art’s sake’ does not refer to the content of art but to the way in which art is experienced.”<sup>4</sup> Wilde knew both Pater and Ruskin personally from Oxford and their ideas are mirrored in Wilde’s works.<sup>5</sup> His Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is another piece of writing that is seen as a summary of the Aesthetes’ thinking. It says, among others, that the artist is a creator of beautiful things, that no artist desires to prove anything or that no artist has ethical sympathies.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1890s, Aestheticism was connected to the term Decadence, sharing its roots and oftentimes being used interchangeably. The latter term was used for the mid-century movement in France, to which artists like Baudelaire, Verlaine, Gautier or Huysmans belonged.<sup>7</sup> From the

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<sup>2</sup> Dinah Roe, “The Pre-Raphaelites,” The British Library, published May 15, 2014, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-pre-raphaelites>.

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Burdett, “Aestheticism and decadence,” The British Library, published May 15, 2014, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/aestheticism-and-decadence>.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Loesberg, *Aestheticism and Deconstruction: Pater, Derrida and de Man* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 11–13.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul Riquelme, “Between two worlds and beyond them: John Ruskin and Walter Pater,” in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 125.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2003), 40.

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Burdett, “Aestheticism and decadence,” The British Library, published May 15, 2014, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/aestheticism-and-decadence>.

literary point of view, Decadence can be seen as counterpoetics of disruption, hesitations, contrarities and exhaustion, which was emergent at the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> The fictional book by Huysmans, *À Rebours*, is generally referred to as “the yellow book”, which signaled its controversial features just like any other French book of that nature. The magazine *The Yellow Book*, which was dedicated to literature, art and aesthetics,<sup>9</sup> took its color and was named after Huysmans’ novel, showing where its influence came from.<sup>10</sup>

A phenomenon that goes hand in hand with Aestheticism and Decadence is Dandyism. Despite Dandyism’s roots in the ancient Rome, it found its place in Britain during the Victorian era, as its philosophy and way of thinking are similar to the two movements mentioned before. Together with Aesthetes and Bohemians, a Dandy defies the society’s norms, but these three groups should not be confused with one another. Bohemians were highly romantic, which a Dandy is not, plus the former wear filthy clothes, something a Dandy would never do. For the Aesthetes, those would hide themselves from the society, while a Dandy would face it and confront it.<sup>11</sup>

A Dandy is a figure with many layers, and as Shore says,

Dandies vary in kind as well as in degree, there being some who play at dandyism in the days of their youth, such for example as Disraeli; others who are pinchbeck dandies, falling into the slough of overdressing, such for example as Charles Dickens, who was a mere colourist in garments. There are the born dandies, Brummel, D’Orsay, George Bernard Shaw for examples, [sic] the last of whom was born at least 200 years behind his time [...]. It is not necessary to be in the fashion to achieve the dignity of dandyism; GBS sets the fashion himself and is the only one who can follow it.<sup>12</sup>

As far as fashion goes, a Dandy never follows, only leads it, but not with the thought of attracting anyone of the opposite, or even his own, sex. His clothing only mirrors his superiority of mind.<sup>13</sup> As many kinds of a Dandy there are, it does not only consider their fashion choices, even though it is his clothing that makes him notable from afar. Nigel Rodgers adds an important layer to the description, “The fop and the flashily-dressed are always with us. The true Dandy – sardonic, aloof, independent – is a much rarer phenomenon. For him clothes are

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<sup>8</sup> Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix–xi.

<sup>9</sup> “The Yellow Book,” *Britannica.com*, accessed June 4, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Yellow-Book>.

<sup>10</sup> “The Yellow Book,” *The British Library*, accessed June 4, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-yellow-book>.

<sup>11</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?* (London: Bene Factum Publishing, 2012), 12.

<sup>12</sup> W. Teignmouth Shore, *D’Orsay: Or, The Complete Dandy* (London: J. Long, limited, 1911), quoted in “Shore’s ‘Complete Dandy’,” *Dandyism.net*, accessed June 6, 2018, <http://www.dandyism.net/shores-complete-dandy/>.

<sup>13</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 11.

merely the outward visible form of an inward self-discipline, never to be wholly relaxed.”<sup>14</sup> The personality of a Dandy plays a major role in his character, his looks are only a byproduct of his attitude. Phillip Mann claims that even though the decision to become a Dandy is conscious, the true Dandy disposition is innate. He says that there is no such thing as being a little bit of a Dandy, it would be the same as being a little bit pregnant.<sup>15</sup>

Dandyism origins in the ancient Rome with Gaius Petronius, who was the first man to be ever recognized as arbiter elegantiarum, a judge of elegance. It was not just his fashionable choices that would decide whether he could be a Dandy. Had in only depended on that, even Caesar or Alcibiades would be considered Dandies. It was Petronius’ lifestyle that proved that. He would sleep through daytime, immerse himself in pleasure at nights, and what other men gained by their hard work, Petronius won by idleness. Even his death was out of the norm; instead of waiting for an unfair execution due to Nero’s court intrigues, he broke a valuable vase that Nero craved to have and wrote an extremely long list of people that Nero had slept with. Afterwards he slit his wrists to show his independence from his ruler. As Rodgers adds, his departure was worthy of a Dandy.<sup>16</sup>

This example prepares the ground for all the following Dandies. At Petronius’ times, the term Dandyism did not exist, it came into play at the turn of the nineteenth century with George Brummell, a young English man from Mayfair. He offered something that attracted the most exclusive part of society; an example of how to live. Before he had to flee from England due to his debts, he changed the way of life for many for another century and a half. Not many revolutions’ impacts lasted this long.<sup>17</sup>

As was said before, there are many layers to a Dandy, the most significant ones are his appearance, aesthetic views and wealth, his relationships with his family, society and partners, and last but not least, the most significant part that is a prerequisite for a successful Dandy character, his philosophy and lifestyle. Those are discussed further in this work with more examples and details. What one needs to bear in mind at all times are Barbey d’Aurevilly’s words that a Dandy is almost impossible to describe and define,<sup>18</sup> however, a certain point can be made, as is the goal of this work, while illustrating such findings on Wilde’s fictional characters.

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<sup>14</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk: Taste and Melancholy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), 37-38.

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 16–17.

<sup>17</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 30–31.

<sup>18</sup> Barbey d’Aurevilly, quoted in Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 9.

## 2 APPEARANCE AND WEALTH

This chapter will look at a Dandy from the point of view on his appearance, material possessions and how he sees and deals with them. These instances are richly portrayed in Wilde's works, where Dandies make an appearance.

A Dandy is a notable figure that was easily recognizable in the English society. Their clothing and sense of fashion, however, was not their primary focus. As Nigel Rodgers remarks, "The Dandy never follows fashion. He may lead it, even if the followers fall away." But he does not do so to appease the opposite – or his own – sex.<sup>19</sup> Baudelaire, being himself a Dandy, said that the dress they wear is nothing more than just a symbol for their aristocratic superiority of mind, adding, "Dandyism is the last glimmer of heroism amid decadence, [...] a sunset; and, like the declining star, it is glorious, without heat and full of melancholy."<sup>20</sup> Phillip Mann explains a Dandy's dress in the following fashion:

The ideal of the dandy is cut from cloth. His independence is expressed through the refusal of any visible distinction except elegance; his self-admiration in his self-adornment; his superiority to useful work in his tireless pre-occupation with his costume. His independence, assurance, originality, self-control and refinement should all be visible in the cut of his clothes.<sup>21</sup>

Wilde, at first dressing as an Aesthete, influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and choosing rather pseudo-archaic clothing,<sup>22</sup> changed his appearance to that of a Dandy by 1890.<sup>23</sup> This was the time at which his Dandy characters were born in his works. The character of Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and his choice of clothing to mourn is imaginary dead brother illustrate his sense of fashion. He enters the scene, wearing a crepe hat band and black gloves,<sup>24</sup> for which Algernon mocks him.<sup>25</sup> Further in their conversation, Algernon comments on the absurd amount of time it takes Jack to change clothes, with such little result.<sup>26</sup> This comment correlates with Brummel, the first notable Dandy, who spent hours choosing his attire, despite the fact his style was plain.<sup>27</sup> Algernon's Dandy nature shows in their quarrel as well, as he responds to Jack's argument issuing his being a little over-dressed by saying that he makes up for it by being immensely over-educated.<sup>28</sup> In *A Woman of No Importance*, there is an instance

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<sup>19</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 159.

<sup>23</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 162.

<sup>24</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 703.

<sup>25</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 717.

<sup>26</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 718.

<sup>27</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 718.

of fashion discussion, when Lord Illingworth claims: “The future belongs to the dandy. It is the exquisites who are going to rule.” His son Gerald then implies he would like to dress well, but he gave up to the pressure of the society.<sup>29</sup> Lord Illingworth is his icon, as Gerald confessed to his mother, saying he is fashionable and he strives to be just like him.<sup>30</sup> Finally, Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband* utters the following words: “Fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear,”<sup>31</sup> and he is said to change his clothes multiple times a day.<sup>32</sup> In the stage notes, it is recorded he himself is wearing high fashion,<sup>33</sup> later in detail:

[...] in evening dress with a buttonhole. He is wearing a silk hat and Inverness cape. White-gloved, he carries a Louis Seize cane. His are all the delicate fopperies of Fashion. One sees that he stands in immediate relation to modern life, makes it indeed, and so masters it. He is the first well-dressed philosopher in the history of thought.<sup>34</sup>

There is one piece of clothing that is a reoccurring fashion symbol in Wilde’s works. That is a necktie. In the Victorian era, the style of one’s neckwear showed their social position; the higher the class, the subtler their tie was.<sup>35</sup> In Gerald and Lord Illingworth’s fashion discussion, the latter one utters: “The essential thing for a necktie is style. A well-tied tie is the first serious step in life.”<sup>36</sup> Algernon Moncrieff in *The Importance of Being Earnest* complains to Cecily about Jack’s fashion choices, saying he would not let him buy him clothes as he has no taste in neckties whatsoever.<sup>37</sup> That is not the only instance Algernon insults his neckwear, further in the story he utters, “I see Jack has got a new suit of clothes. They don’t fit him properly. His necktie is wrong.”<sup>38</sup> Also Dorian Gray, as he became London’s trendsetter, was “consulted on the wearing of a jewel, or the knotting of a necktie, or the conduct of a cane.”<sup>39</sup> The word Dandyism is also used directly in the text:

Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and Dandyism, which, in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him. His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that from time to time he affected, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied

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<sup>29</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 900.

<sup>30</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 914.

<sup>31</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1008.

<sup>32</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 941.

<sup>33</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 975.

<sup>34</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1008.

<sup>35</sup> “The Evolution of Ties, Scarves & Neckwear,” *Gentleman’s Gazette*, published June 8, 2016, <https://www.gentlemansgazette.com/evolution-neckwear-tie-cravat-scarf/>.

<sup>36</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 900.

<sup>37</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 701.

<sup>38</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 708.

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 194.

him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies.<sup>40</sup> Dorian's fashion influenced many young men who tried to copy him in every manner possible. However, he wished to become to his contemporary London more than a trend setter, craving to find a philosophy for a new scheme of life and fulfillment from pursuing the senses. Gaius Petronius, the author of *Satyricon*, is mentioned here as an arbiter elegantiarum of Neronian Rome.<sup>41</sup> Petronius fits within the picture of a Dandy, as was already said in the introductory part. In terms of fashion, Petronius became Nero's arbiter of taste.<sup>42</sup> It was no surprise that Dorian's style was copied, especially his ties, as Lord Henry mentioned that there was a young man who craved to meet Dorian immensely, and that "he has already copied his neckties."<sup>43</sup> Neckwear was such an important piece of clothing that Dorian spent a long time choosing his tie and scarf-pin when he was to approach Alan Campbell about the disposal of Hallward's corpse in the attic.<sup>44</sup> These characters and their delight in fashion show how important one's appearance is, however, it should not be understood that a Dandy is just someone who lives for their clothing, as will be discussed further.

Wilde's characters were not the only ones wearing fancy clothing, he himself had a refined taste. His style of clothing was described in *The New York Times* as follows:

His long and bushy hair crowded in front of his ears and nearly to his eyes, but it was brushed well off his forehead. He wore a low-necked shirt with a turned-down collar and large white necktie, a black claw-hammer coat and white vest, knee-breeches, long black stockings, and low shoes with bows. A heavy gold seal hung to a watch-guard from a fob-pocket.<sup>45</sup>

As was mentioned above, Dorian became a fashion consultant in London, that is a parallel to Wilde's life, whose American tour included the lecture called *The House Beautiful*, in which he, among others, advised people how they should dress. For example, he recommended no corsets for women, as that piece of clothing is not healthy, and his advice for men was to choose good sense and practicality.<sup>46</sup> Talking about male clothing, another one of his views was as follows:

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for us to do is to choose a notable and joyous dress for men. There would be more joy in life if we were to use all the beautiful

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<sup>40</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 193–194.

<sup>41</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: an annotated, uncensored edition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), ed. Nicholas Frankel, 191–192.

<sup>42</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 16–17.

<sup>43</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 297.

<sup>44</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 233.

<sup>45</sup> "Oscar Wilde's Lecture," *The New York Times*, published January 10, 1882, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1882/01/10/106239326.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Leon Litvack, "An aesthete in America," in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 42.

colours we can in fashioning our own clothes. The dress of the future [...] will use drapery to a great extent and will abound in joyous colour.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that fashion and appearance is not a Dandy's primary focus, they still pay a remarkable deal of attention to their looks and, becoming fashion trendsetters, advise others on how their attire should be worn.

The dress is, as was said before, only a symbol for a Dandy's superiority. Independence goes hand in hand with it and it plays a major role in his life, and that goes for his financial situation as well. If a Dandy is forced to work, his independent spirit will be shown in it.<sup>48</sup> As Baudelaire said, "The wealthy man [...] has no occupation in life but to chase along the highway of happiness, [...] who has no profession other than elegance, is bound at all times to have a facial expression of a very special kind."<sup>49</sup> In other words, "A Dandy does nothing. To be a useful sort of man has always struck me as something utterly hideous."<sup>50</sup> Wilde, in his lecture *The House Beautiful*, claimed that a man who only uses his hands to work, is only a machine.<sup>51</sup> Wilde's characters represent the life of the upper class, not having to work, organizing parties and enjoying the materialistic part of life. His plays revolve around socializing with highly-positioned people, mostly through social gatherings. At the beginning of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon mentions that he is "hard up"<sup>52</sup>, and the same phrase is used by Lord Darlington in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, saying that the only things to pay are compliments.<sup>53</sup> Self-indulgence is another major sign of a Dandy. Despite many famous Dandies going broke, they always looked polished,<sup>54</sup> and these characters are no exception. Since work is not their forte, they mostly inherit their fortune. As Jack explains, all the money he owns was inherited from his adopter<sup>55</sup> and he gets a large sum of money each year from his investments,<sup>56</sup> then he is perfectly rich, but his imaginary brother Ernest is not, sharing the characteristic lack of money with the two characters above, owing a large sum of money for his fancy dinners.<sup>57</sup> That is not perceived as a negative thing in a Dandy's world, as Algernon comments on his lack of resources: "You don't suppose I have got any money? How perfectly silly you are. No

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<sup>47</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 160.

<sup>48</sup> "Anatomy of a Dandy," Dandyism.net, accessed April 23, 2018, <http://www.dandyism.net/428/>.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Baudelaire, quoted in "Baudelaire's 'The Dandy'," Dandyism.net, accessed April 23, 2018, <http://www.dandyism.net/baudelaire-the-dandy/>.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Kevin H. F. O'Brien, "The House Beautiful': A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde's American Lecture," *Victorian Studies* 17, no. 4 (1974): 403, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826289>.

<sup>52</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 667.

<sup>53</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 774.

<sup>54</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 669.

<sup>56</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 682.

<sup>57</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 671.

gentleman ever has any money.”<sup>58</sup> The question of wealth is also discussed in *An Ideal Husband* between Lord Goring and Sir Robert Chiltern. Both sides of the coin are represented in their debate, as Sir Robert utters: “What this century worships is wealth. The God of this century is wealth. To succeed one must have wealth. At all costs one must have wealth,” but Lord Goring opposes that he could have been successful even without his money.<sup>59</sup> As shown above, both these points are valid in a Dandy’s world. The theme of wealth is also discussed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. On the topic of money, Lord Henry shares his opinion with Sir Robert. When his uncle claims that young people imagine that money is everything, Lord Henry answers, “Yes, and when they grow older, they know it.” He also adds that money is only for the people who pay their bills, and he never pays his.<sup>60</sup> Further in their conversation the origin of Dorian Gray’s fortune is revealed, that is through inheritance from his deceased parents.<sup>61</sup> These instances only prove that even if a Dandy is not by far the richest, he still refuses to work, as that is not the purpose of his life.

The subject of wealth is by no means limited to the amount of money these Dandies own. Their property is not restricted to only one house, they usually own more than one. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Lady Bracknell sums the importance of land owning, saying that land is either an investment or pleasure and that it gives one position. In their conversation, Jack answers he possesses both a town house and a country house with some land, but his income does not depend on it. As was mentioned earlier, his yearly pay comes from investments. However, if the land gives one position, then its placement and size matters as well. Lady Bracknell is curious how many bedrooms it has, but when she learns where Jack’s town house is placed, she is not pleased, as it belongs to the unfashionable side of Belgrave Square in London.<sup>62</sup> As the reader learns later, his country house is The Manor House in Woolton, Hertfordshire,<sup>63</sup> its size already apparent from its title. The setting of other characters’ properties might not be discussed directly, but thanks to the stage notes, or the scenery of the play, the upper-class life of luxury is obvious. The first act of *The Importance of Being Earnest* already spoils Algernon’s position, as it says, “Morning-room in Algernon’s flat in Half-Moon Street, London. [...] The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.”<sup>64</sup> Lord Darlington’s rooms are outlined through their furnishings,

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<sup>58</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 712.

<sup>59</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 978.

<sup>60</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 78.

<sup>61</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 80.

<sup>62</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 682.

<sup>63</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 691.

<sup>64</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 662–663.



“A large sofa is in front of fireplace [...] Table R. with writing materials. Table C. with syphons, glasses, and Tantalus frame. Table L. with cigar and cigarette box.”<sup>65</sup> Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband* also owns a London house, in Curzon Street, whose interiors are described as follows: “An Adam room, on the right is the door leading into the hall. On the left, the door of the smoking-room. A pair of folding doors at the back open into the drawing-room.”<sup>66</sup> Dorian Gray too owns multiple estates. His London-based house was inherited from his grandfather who raised him,<sup>67</sup> while he got his Selby property through his deceased mother.<sup>68</sup> Later on in the book, the number of buildings he owned grew. His properties were not limited to England only, as he co-owned estates in France and Algiers with Lord Henry.<sup>69</sup> There are instances in which his London house is depicted closer. The house contained a large hall of entrance, an octagonal library and,<sup>70</sup> an onyx-paved bathroom,<sup>71</sup> “a long-latticed room, with a vermilion-and-gold ceiling and walls of olive-green lacquer,”<sup>72</sup> and a west gallery,<sup>73</sup> among others. Lord Henry’s house is outlined slightly as well. It is based in Mayfair, a rich area of London, and Dorian finds himself in “a very charming room, with its high-panelled wainscoting of olivestained [sic] oak, its cream-coloured frieze and ceiling of raised plaster-work, and its brick-dust felt carpet strewn with silk long-fringed Persian rugs.”<sup>74</sup> Wearing fashionable clothing, owning a fortune and possessing multiple houses is not complete without luxurious interiors. Charles Baudelaire claimed that a Dandy is a man nurtured in luxury,<sup>75</sup> which is something that is abundant in Wilde’s works.

This area of expensive possessions, which is not being limited to furnishing only, is richly depicted in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with aesthetic values in mind, as Aestheticism goes hand in hand with indulgence:

Aestheticism penetrated all areas of life - from music and literature to interior design and fashion. At its heart was the desire to create “art for art's sake” and to exalt taste, the pursuit of beauty, and self-expression over moral expectations and restrictive conformity. The freedom of creative expression and sensuality that Aestheticism promoted exhilarated its adherents.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 814.

<sup>66</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1007–1008.

<sup>67</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 184.

<sup>68</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 81.

<sup>69</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 207.

<sup>70</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 146.

<sup>71</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 204.

<sup>72</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 198.

<sup>73</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 205.

<sup>74</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 92.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Dandyism.net, “Baudelaire’s ‘The Dandy’”, accessed April 29, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> “The Aesthetic Movement, Artists and Major Works,” The Art Story, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://www.theartstory.org/movement-aesthetic-art.htm>.

Dorian Gray was very fond of exploring new sensations through his possessions, a whole chapter is dedicated to this quest, set apart from the storyline completely. One of the areas he devoted himself to were jewels. He decorated his ball costume with countless pearls and spend hours admiring his wide set of gemstones. According to Wilde's words, life suddenly became exquisite in its pomp and decoration. It did not end there, he further studied embroideries and tapestries which he decided to accumulate from all over the world, as well as the best specimens of textile like muslin, gauze, satin and silk.<sup>77</sup> As Aesthetes were inspired by Renaissance,<sup>78</sup> Dorian's house did not miss that element. He decorated his library with Renaissance tapestries he had found in Selby.<sup>79</sup> These examples show which characters have the predisposition to be a Dandy from the materialistic point of view, however, that is not the only prerequisite for such a complex phenomenon, as has been already said.

Coming back to the lecture *The House Beautiful*, Wilde did speak about the decoration of people's homes, and unlike his own fictional characters, he advised others to not spend a fortune on their furnishings and decorations:

I do not ask you to spend large sums, as art does not depend in the slightest degree upon extravagance or luxury, but rather the procuring of articles which, however cheaply purchased and unpretending, are beautiful and fitted to impart pleasure to the observer as they did to the maker.<sup>80</sup>

Another major point he makes is that it is important to pursue individuality and the sense of pleasure through decorations, which correlates with the note about Aestheticism above. He promoted that objects that are not useful or beautiful should be got rid of. An ornament, as he calls it, should by no means be machine-made, rather it should represent how a man feels. When discussing materials, he advises which are the best ones, like marble, colored stones or red bricks, and in terms of colors, he likens them to music notes; one false color can destroy the harmony of the whole. He then proceeds to talk about the furnishing in great detail.<sup>81</sup> After his American tour, Wilde moved into his London house and left it in 1895 after one of his trials. He commissioned Edward Godwin, an architect, and James Whistler, to put what he preached into practice. Wilde wrote about his house, "I have a dining room done in different shades of white, with white cushions embroidered in yellow silk: the effect is absolutely delightful and the room beautiful," and regarding its placement, he noted, "The street that on a wet and dreary morning had vouchsafed the vision of Lady Macbeth in full regalia magnificently seated in a

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<sup>77</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 200–206.

<sup>78</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 159.

<sup>79</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 146.

<sup>80</sup> Kevin H. F. O'Brien, "The House Beautiful," 401.

<sup>81</sup> Kevin H. F. O'Brien, "The House Beautiful," 402-414.

four-wheeler can never be as other streets; it must always be full of wonderful possibilities.”<sup>82</sup> Wilde too, like Dorian Gray, had a collection of objects from different countries, for example oriental divans, Japanese prints and other Eastern touches. His writing room was adorned with red-lacquered woodwork and contained a statue of Hermes and paintings by Monticelli and Solomon. The drawing room had a blue ceiling with dragons, there were peacock feathers set in the plaster, blue and white curtains and Whistler’s Venetian studies on the walls.<sup>83</sup> His passion for interior decoration did not leave him even on his deathbed, where he claimed, “This wallpaper will be the death of me – one of us will have to go.”<sup>84</sup> Even though a Dandy lives in luxury, Wilde proved that money is not the factor as long as the interior is beautiful and makes its owners happy.

This chapter showed the fashion and materialistic setting of Wilde and his characters, which differed at some points, however, the aesthetic approach is something they all have in common. Even though money can buy the more luxurious possessions, its lack does not affect a Dandy, as long as their surroundings and themselves are beautiful.

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<sup>82</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Caroline McGhie, “Oscar Wilde’s house is up for sale,” *Telegraph*, published July 20, 2012, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/9415929/Oscar-Wildes-house-is-up-for-sale.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Caroline McGhie, “Oscar Wilde’s house is up for sale,” *Telegraph*, accessed May 5, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Caroline McGhie, “Oscar Wilde’s house is up for sale,” accessed May 5, 2018.

### 3 SOCIAL LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY

The topic of appearance and material wealth discussed in the first chapter sets a background for a Dandy and allows him to have a rich social life. This chapter will dive into his family relations, both relationships with his friends and their romantic partners, as well as his associations with wider public. This chapter will discuss whether Wilde's characters and himself as well show the signs of Dandyism regarding their relations.

As Nigel Rodgers mentions, a Dandy has no ancestors that he would respect or pay tribute to. But at the same time, his predecessors are not a hard-working middle class,<sup>85</sup> which he would banish automatically. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in a newly added chapter for the reviewed Lippincott's version, Lord Henry learns about Dorian's family from his uncle, who admits his parents' fate to be quite tragic. Dorian's father was shot shortly after marriage, and his mother, who could have chosen a better life, decided for passion that cost her life in the end. He was then raised by a gruesome man<sup>86</sup>, in an attic room, far from his sight.<sup>87</sup> The reader learns more about his ancestors further in chapter XI, thanks to their portraits hanging in Dorian's country house, it is curious that they are not to be found in his house in London. His predecessors like Sir Anthony Sherard, who was a lover of Giovanna of Naples, or Lord Beckenham, the companion of the Prince Regent, belonged to the upper class of society,<sup>88</sup> which agrees with Nigel Rodger's remark. As their infamous fates unfold to the reader, there is again a connection between the family one does not talk about, and the physical hideaway of their pictures. The reality then stays hidden in the background, like in this case, in the countryside. That relates to Nigel Rodger's note that "no portraits of dead grandees in periwigs or armour darken the walls of his house."<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, in terms of Lord Henry's family, there is no information on his parents, but that does not lessen his position by any means. What is known about his family is that he has an uncle and aunt, who make their appearance a couple times during the story. The already mentioned uncle, who shares information on Dorian's origin, is an old bachelor, living in the Albany in London, owning two large houses, and being a terror to his relations.<sup>90</sup> His aunt, Lady Agatha, keeps organizing parties and dinners for other members of the upper class, including Lord Henry.<sup>91</sup> The only known thing about his father is

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<sup>85</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock or Enigma?*, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 79-80.

<sup>87</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 184.

<sup>88</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 209-210.

<sup>89</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock or Enigma?*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 77-78.

<sup>91</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 85-87.

that he is alive and in contact with Lord Henry's uncle.<sup>92</sup> His silence about his family members speaks for itself. Never talking about them directly, he only disdains the older generation in general, saying, "I feel that whatever was good enough for our fathers is not good enough for us."<sup>93</sup> Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest* finds himself in a different situation, as he has no idea who his parents or predecessors were, all the way until the end of the play. When being interrogated by Lady Bracknell, he admits he lost his parents and was found in a hand-bag, and then adopted by Mr. Thomas Cardew, a wealthy man.<sup>94</sup> Jack was then made the guardian of the Mr. Cardew's grand-daughter Cecily, who was then the only person whom he considered a family.<sup>95</sup> At the end of the play, he learns he does have a family and finds out Algernon is his younger brother, and accepts the surname Moncrieff.<sup>96</sup> The only living family members of Jack and Algernon the reader learns about are their aunt and uncle, Lady and Lord Bracknell, and their cousin Gwendolen. In Act III, Algernon says their father died when he was a baby, and from the context it can be understood their mother deceased as well. Their father too belonged to the upper class, he was only known as the General.<sup>97</sup> Before learning about his actual family, Jack utters the following words at the beginning of the play:

What does it matter whether a man ever had a father and mother or not? Mothers, of course, are all right. They pay a chap's bills and don't bother him. But fathers bother a chap and never pay his bills. I don't know a single chap at the club who speaks to his father.<sup>98</sup>

Algernon reacts, saying that fathers are no longer popular, to which Jack adds that there is definitely not a man he knows who would walk with his father in public.<sup>99</sup> Algernon later strangely mentions that he and his father were never on speaking terms, as a result of his untimely death.<sup>100</sup> This discussion of theirs plays along the fact that a Dandy truly is not a family person. In *A Woman of No Importance*, Lord Illingworth too was not on good terms with his father.<sup>101</sup> Unlike these characters, Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband* is in contact with his father, Lord Caversham, and leads a conversation with him a few times during the play. Curiously enough it is the father who somewhat dismisses his relation to Lord Goring, whom he calls "sir", rather than his son. Despite the fact that Lord Goring calls Lord Caversham "father", he

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<sup>92</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 80.

<sup>93</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 99.

<sup>94</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 684–685.

<sup>95</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 669.

<sup>96</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 763–765.

<sup>97</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 767–768.

<sup>98</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 686.

<sup>99</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 686–687.

<sup>100</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 768.

<sup>101</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 888.

treats him in their conversations like anybody else, that is from distance, which can be seen from his parent's approach as well, when he utters at the beginning, "Has my good-for-nothing young son been here?"<sup>102</sup> In Act IV, Lord Goring has a similar view to Jack's, saying, "Fathers should be neither seen nor heard. That is the only proper basis for family life. Mothers are different. Mothers are darlings."<sup>103</sup> Lady Markby supports this point when speaking about the men in clubs, "There are so many sons who won't have anything to do with their fathers, and so many fathers who won't speak to their sons."<sup>104</sup> After getting advice from his father, Lord Goring claims that he should only pass it on, not seeing the use of good advice for himself.<sup>105</sup> Lord Caversham, after all his failed attempts to change Lord Goring's behavior, claims that he has absolutely no influence over his son.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, even though Lord Goring is still actively speaking to his father, his approach to him and the idea of parents in general stays the same as in the previous instances, staying within the Dandy borders as well.

A Dandy has a very characteristic approach to love and feelings for another person. According to Barbey d'Aurevilly, "to love, that is to desire, is always to be dependent, to be a slave to one's desire [...]. The moment a Dandy falls in love, he is no longer a Dandy."<sup>107</sup> Philip Mann adds, "'I prefer not to' – is also characteristic of the dandy's love life, or rather his lack of one. The dandy is not a misogynist; he merely defies the dependency and vulnerability that love implies for him."<sup>108</sup> This statement plays along the fact that a dandy is an independent individual, as d'Aurevilly confirms.<sup>109</sup> This exact state of mind is what Lord Henry teaches Dorian through Gray's short but intense relationship with Sibyl Vane. Unlike Basil, he approves of his infatuation with the young actress, as it not only pleases his own curiosity, which is, according to his Hedonistic philosophy, in order, but also helps him form Dorian's personality. This immoral influence is then exactly what he proceeds to do, and further on regards Dorian to be his own creation.<sup>110</sup> After Dorian's elated sharing of the news, Harry executes his philosophy regarding relationships,

People who only love once in their lives are really the shallow people. What they call their loyalty, and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy [...] or their lack of

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<sup>102</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 941.

<sup>103</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1036.

<sup>104</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1000.

<sup>105</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 967.

<sup>106</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1039.

<sup>107</sup> Barbey d'Aurevilly, quoted in Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 12.

<sup>108</sup> Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk*, 48.

<sup>109</sup> Dandyism.net, "Anatomy of a Dandy," accessed December 16, 2017.

<sup>110</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 128.

imagination. Faithfulness is to the emotional life [...] simply a confession of failure.<sup>111</sup>

He therefore is not against love, or as he says, against being in love with love,<sup>112</sup> but rather with the way other people think of it. Regarding marriage, Harry advises Dorian to never marry, claiming that men only marry because of boredom, women out of curiosity, and both end up being disappointed.<sup>113</sup> Lord Henry, being married himself, does not live by the common rules of marriage, he instead claims he only has a slight recollection of being married,<sup>114</sup> believing that the deception the other one is necessary. His wife plays along, and when they occasionally meet, they try to deceive the other one with their absurd stories.<sup>115</sup> Another one of Lord Henry's remarks is,

The real drawback to marriage is that it makes one unselfish. And unselfish people are colourless. They lack individuality. [...] I hope that Dorian Gray will make this girl his wife, passionately adore her for six months, and then suddenly become fascinated by somebody else.<sup>116</sup>

Dorian, being a Dandy in training, does not have such solid opinions like Lord Henry does, this affair being only a lesson through which Harry showed him his point of view. After leaving Sibyl and seeing the portrait change for the first time, Dorian's conscience made him decide to be good again, to not let Lord Henry mar his personality again. However, when learning about her death, Harry keeps pushing his philosophy forward.<sup>117</sup> As long as Dorian felt deep love and remorse for the girl, he could not be considered a Dandy. On the other hand, seeing Lord Henry's calm attitude towards the tragedy and love life, it is obvious who the true Dandy is.

Despite Sibyl being a minor character in the story, she played an important part. Finding Sibyl shallow after her terrible acting, Dorian then blames her for killing his love like she killed the art she used to give form and life to.<sup>118</sup> Shortly after that, she dies herself. This incident could be seen as a connection to the Aesthetic way of thinking. The followers of the Aesthetic movement did not think art should only be a creative discipline, but rather a part of daily life.<sup>119</sup> Reading Wilde's Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, claiming an artist is a creator of beautiful things, while concealing himself,<sup>120</sup> one can see that as soon as Sibyl revealed herself

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<sup>111</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 99.

<sup>112</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 99.

<sup>113</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 96.

<sup>114</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 132.

<sup>115</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 76.

<sup>116</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 132–133.

<sup>117</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 149–159.

<sup>118</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 143.

<sup>119</sup> The Art Story, "The Aesthetic Movement, Artists and Major Works," accessed December 16, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 41.

and stripped herself naked of her art, she failed her mission as an artist in this point of view, having no further value for such Aesthetes like Dorian or Lord Henry.

In *An Ideal Husband*, when Lord Goring is about to enter the scene, his stage notes, among others, say that it would annoy him if he were considered to be romantic. He also says so about himself shortly after, “I am not at all romantic. I am not old enough. I leave romance to my seniors.”<sup>121</sup> This utterance might correlate with Lord Henry’s quote about men getting married out of boredom. His following view also shares a similarity to Harry’s opinion. When asked about Mrs. Cheveley, Lord Goring admits he knew her so little he got engaged to her once, but it only lasted for nearly three days.<sup>122</sup> Engagement means nothing to a Dandy, just like Lord Henry said he had no memories of being engaged whatsoever,<sup>123</sup> Lord Goring takes it lightly as well. When he learns another man proposed to Mabel Chiltern on the same day as him, he grunts, “What conceited ass has been impertinent enough to dare to propose to you before I had proposed to you?”<sup>124</sup> as if engagement was just a game. Attempting to persuade Lord Goring to get married, his father and him discuss affection between two people. Lord Caversham claims it comes in married life, that is why it is not up to his son to choose a woman himself, to which Lord Goring replies, “In married life affection comes when people thoroughly dislike each other.”<sup>125</sup> He is at the same time very self-conscious about his approach, saying, “If we men married the women we deserved, we should have a very bad time of it.”<sup>126</sup> Lord Darlington in *Lady Windermere’s Fan* does not see marriage as anything of major importance either, calling it a game that is going out of fashion, while a modern husband is to him a mere “odd trick”.<sup>127</sup> Regarding relationships between a man and a woman, he at first offers friendship to Lady Windermere, saying she might want a friend later on,<sup>128</sup> but when she needs his friendly advice, he responds, “Between men and women there is no friendship possible. There is passion, enmity, worship, love, but no friendship. I love you.”<sup>129</sup> Unlike other characters in Wilde’s works, Lord Darlington’s personality changes significantly from a Dandy to a sentimental romantic, getting rid of his wit and attitude for the sake of love. This shift only shows that what Barbey d’Aurevilly said was true; a Dandy and love do not mix.

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<sup>121</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 949–951.

<sup>122</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 982.

<sup>123</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 127.

<sup>124</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1041.

<sup>125</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1017–1018.

<sup>126</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1039.

<sup>127</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 779.

<sup>128</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 775.

<sup>129</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 804.



Wilde's own marriage sets an example how much a Dandy cares about his wife. In 1884, two years after marrying Constance Lloyd, Wilde was seduced by his friend Robert Ross, which started a string of homosexual affairs, forcing him to lead a double life.<sup>130</sup> As Richard Ellmann notes, "He [Wilde] was now able to make his experience of marriage and counter-marriage the center of his career in prose."<sup>131</sup> Wilde's thoughts on marriage and relationships are then mirrored in his works as was shown above, offering an insight into the writer's way of thinking.

A Dandy's relations to the society are very distinctive. When it comes to a Dandy's company, he only surrounds himself with people he regards highly.<sup>132</sup> At the same time, they are welcomed by a larger society, for the fact that they are different and unafraid to challenge others:

The great dandies of old days, Brummell, Lauzun, and the rest, were everywhere welcomed because they made themselves disagreeable to so many people. There is a kind of popularity which is acquired by an attitude provoking unpopular. Men and women are attracted by the courage which despises and disregards their feelings.<sup>133</sup>

This setting is exactly where Dorian, together with Lord Henry Wotton, were to be found most often. Dorian was showered with cards, invitations or tickets.<sup>134</sup> In the reviewed and expanded version published by Lippincott's, the society these two characters mingled with is developed more in depth. Unlike the original, uncensored version, which mostly tells the reader they only visited some clubs in the town, the newer edition dives into their relationships further. In the same chapter where Lord Henry learns about Dorian's background, he then joins him at Lady Agatha's place, where influential people are to be found. This introduction to Dorian's past could serve as a prologue to the following part, so that the reader knows Dorian does belong to the society Lord Henry brings him to. Apart from those already mentioned, people like the Duchess of Harley, Sir Thomas Burton, who is a Radical member of Parliament, or Lord Faudel are seated at the table. During such meetings, if matters of common life are discussed, they are spoken of philosophically.<sup>135</sup> The fact that their society was enclosed for the elite only, is then signified by the "reality entering the room in the shape of a servant".<sup>136</sup> After Dorian's finding out about the changing portrait and embarking on his corrupting adventures, he still does not neglect the society. "He would [...] have the most celebrated musicians of the day to charm his

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<sup>130</sup> Nicholas Frankel, ed., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 132.

<sup>131</sup> Richard Ellmann, quoted in Nicholas Frankel, ed., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 132.

<sup>132</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 11.

<sup>133</sup> "Social and Literary Dandyism," Dandyism.net, accessed December 15, 2017, <http://www.dandyism.net/social-and-literary-dandyism>.

<sup>134</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 145.

<sup>135</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 85–93.

<sup>136</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 91.

guests with the wonders of their art. His little dinners, in the setting of which Lord Henry always assisted him, were noted as much for the careful selection and placing of those invited.”<sup>137</sup> Despite Dorian’s dark escapes to pursue the senses, and the fact that he was despised by the society and became the object of evil rumors, there were still many onlookers who adored him for what they believed him to be.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, when Dorian was on his own in Nottinghamshire, he was present among young men of his own rank.<sup>139</sup> This only shows Dorian’s progress and development as a Dandy. All the other characters in Wilde’s plays too only speak to chosen members of the upper class, as nobody else truly is present in those works.

A place where these characters are to be found quite frequently are clubs, which again hints at the idea of enclosed society. There are multiple reasons for a man to belong to a club; it can be for political motives or because of their social aspiration. “The commonest and the most reasonable is to have the privilege of mixing in the society of men of one’s own status, profession, calling, tastes, or pursuits.” The London clubs are mostly situated around Pall Mall, St. James’ Street, St. James’ Square or Piccadilly. These places offer more luxurious services than hotels or homes for the average man.<sup>140</sup> As Nicholas Frankel notes, clubs served to make useful connections, it was also a way for unmarried men to enter the proper society.<sup>141</sup> A club is a place where Lord Henry often dined with Dorian Gray, Pall Mall and Mayfair being mentioned in connection with the young men attending these clubs who craved to copy Dorian’s fashion.<sup>142</sup> The way that Dorian was seen by the members of such clubs is shown in the following manner, “For, while he fascinated many, there were not a few who distrusted him. He was very nearly blackballed at a West End club of which his birth and social position fully entitled him to become a member.”<sup>143</sup> This instance agrees with the perception of a Dandy by the society, being both loved, yet hated, and surrounding himself with only the ones of his own rank. Likewise, Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, hints at the manners of his rank when speaking about family relationships.<sup>144</sup> Algernon too mentions being a member of a club a few times.<sup>145</sup> Lord Darlington attends a club as well, together with his friends.<sup>146</sup> In *An Ideal*

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<sup>137</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 190.

<sup>138</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 188.

<sup>139</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 207.

<sup>140</sup> “London Club’s in the nineteenth-century,” A Victorian.com, accessed May 19, 2018, [http://www.avictorian.com/london\\_clubs.html](http://www.avictorian.com/london_clubs.html).

<sup>141</sup> Nicholas Frankel, ed., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 142.

<sup>142</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 194.

<sup>143</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 208.

<sup>144</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 686.

<sup>145</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 690, 701.

<sup>146</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 822.

Husband, Lord Goring is pronounced a result of Boodle's Club,<sup>147</sup> Lady Markby mentions the clubs in St. James' Street and the relations of their members later on.<sup>148</sup> All these instances prove how important the choices of society and relations are to a Dandy. The people who he associates with help him form his personality and maintain his position.

As Nicholas Frankel says, Wilde too was a member of a club, one called Albermarle [sic] Club, whose members were both men and women. Unfortunately, at the time of Wilde's trials, its popularity declined.<sup>149</sup> The club was situated in Mayfair, welcoming aesthetes, artists and intellectuals,<sup>150</sup> and formed under James Stansfeld, a Member of Parliament.<sup>151</sup> This society that Wilde attended was not consisting of any random people, but rather those of his own position and aspiration. Knowing his way around the setting of such a club, he could insert the atmosphere into his works easily.

This chapter shows how important and different relations a Dandy has. From all these instances it can be seen that he decides to act with a certain distance from all the other people, being it his own family, partners or friends. Just like in Lord Darlington's case, as soon as emotions or feelings are present, a Dandy loses his reserved attitude, which is truly undesirable for such characters.

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<sup>147</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 950.

<sup>148</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1000.

<sup>149</sup> Nicholas Frankel, ed., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 142

<sup>150</sup> "The Albermarle Club," TGC, published June 28, 2017, <http://traditionalgentlemensclubs.com/the-albemarle-club/>.

<sup>151</sup> "All That You wanted to know about The Albermarle Club," View GB, accessed May 19, 2018, <http://viewgb.co.uk/all-that-you-wanted-to-know-about-the-albemarle-club/>.

## 4 PHILOSOPHY AND LIFESTYLE

Apart from his looks and way of socializing, an important part of a Dandy's character that should not go unnoticed is his philosophy and way of seeing life. This chapter will discuss a Dandy's lifestyle, life for pleasure and the Decadent in him, while setting an example with Wilde's characters that meet such criteria and discussing whether or not they can be qualified as true Dandies. Also, it will be shown how Wilde's life was affected by his Dandy features.

As was already mentioned, a Dandy is not just a man with delight in clothing. The spirit comes from the inside, it is the wit and courtesy that a Dandy carries that form his personality.<sup>152</sup> The wit mostly means talking paradoxically, lightly about serious topics and seriously about light ones.<sup>153</sup> Phillip Mann mentions that a Dandy does not separate form from authenticity. Instead, he sees them both as one.<sup>154</sup> He also adds, "The dandy's philosophically determined idleness, his complete self-absorption and his coolly analytical nature rather predispose him towards pathological melancholy."<sup>155</sup> What is especially true for Wilde's characters is the fact that a Dandy contradicts himself, negating all the rules he made for himself,<sup>156</sup> as was already shown in Lord Darlington's opinion on friendship between men and women, and more instances will be illustrated below. Since there are countless topics these Dandies discuss, only so many can be mentioned for the purposes of this work.

In conversations with others, a Dandy is not afraid to go against the opinions of others and permanently challenge their view of the world. For example, Lord Henry challenges the stubborn Victorian mentality with the following words,

I believe that if one man were to live his life out fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream – I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism [sic], and return to the Hellenic ideal, to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal, it may be.<sup>157</sup>

Dowling describes that for Victorian liberals Hellenism was "the means of rescuing England from the uniformity and stagnation of industrial modernity."<sup>158</sup> The maladies of medievalism therefore may represent the rigid Victorian society with which Wilde did not agree. This Victorian way of thinking is portrayed in the situation Lord Illingworth finds himself in, as he

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<sup>152</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Dandy: Peacock, or Enigma?*, 11.

<sup>153</sup> Dandyism.net, "Anatomy of a Dandy," accessed May 25, 2018.

<sup>154</sup> Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk*, 14–15.

<sup>155</sup> Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk*, 50–51.

<sup>156</sup> Dandyism.net, "Anatomy of a Dandy," accessed May 25, 2018.

<sup>157</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 94.

<sup>158</sup> Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 98.

goes against the other people discussing the secret of life. Others mention that it is to take things easily, to never have an unbecoming emotion, or to resist temptation, to which he answers it is not only life's secret, but its aim, to be always looking for temptations. As the conversation continues further, Lord Illingworth only speaks more and more philosophically, without any explanation despite his words being misunderstood by others.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, in his dialogue with Duchess of Berwick, Lord Darlington utters, "Life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it." After her request for a clarification, he only answers, "Nowadays to be intelligible is to be found out."<sup>160</sup> Similarly, in the stage notes for Lord Goring, it is mentioned he delights in being misunderstood, which gives him a post of vantage.<sup>161</sup> It is therefore obvious that a Dandy has no need to explain himself, he either speaks wittily or not at all. If a Dandy ever lowers himself to define his philosophy for those who do not understand, his sense of superiority would be gone.

A major theme in a Dandy's life is living for pleasure. Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest* claims that pleasure is the only thing worth going anywhere for,<sup>162</sup> and Lord Goring says that there is nothing else to live for other than pleasure.<sup>163</sup> This pursuit of senses is then heavily shown in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where Lord Henry teaches Dorian the new Hedonism, something their century needs to be saved from the harsh revival of puritanism, which only served the intellect.<sup>164</sup> The aim of Hedonism was experience and focusing on such moments of life. It is approached almost religiously in the following words,

The true nature of the senses had never been understood, and [...] they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a new spirituality.<sup>165</sup>

As Lord Henry tells Dorian at the beginning, "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul."<sup>166</sup> Dorian comes to this definite conclusion as well after reading the book Lord Henry sent him, embarking on a quest to explore pleasure. On the other hand, Dorian could not handle the sins he had committed, attempting to drown his memories in opiates,<sup>167</sup> instead of searching for a deeper philosophy like Lord Henry is prone to do.

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<sup>159</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 908–909.

<sup>160</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 780.

<sup>161</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 949.

<sup>162</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 664.

<sup>163</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 953.

<sup>164</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 195.

<sup>165</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 194.

<sup>166</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 65.

<sup>167</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 258–259.

To Harry, Dorian was a mere experiment for his own amusement. At the beginning, Lord Henry speaks of influence and its scientific immorality, claiming,

To influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed.<sup>168</sup>

Despite his own words, he proceeds to do exactly that, making Dorian his creation, going against what he had claimed, which is understandable from a Dandy's point of view. Dorian became a scientific study, in which Lord Henry could watch the fusion of soul and senses, passion and decay.<sup>169</sup> The decay showed in the marred portrait Dorian used as a mirror for the level of corruption that Lord Henry had implemented. In fact, Dorian could only work with what Lord Henry had inserted into him, not having a clue how to deal with a situation if Lord Henry was not around, resulting in a premature end. This inability to resolve his own matters and committing suicide points at the fact that Dorian was nothing more than a vessel for Lord Henry's corrupting thoughts, not being able to create his own philosophy, and therefore not grasping the potential he had been shown and failing becoming a Dandy. This only shows that a real Dandy is created within, a certain type of personality is a pre-requisite for successfully dealing with life's hardships.

When connecting the search for pleasure and the rigid Victorian society, in many cases, these Dandies lead a double life to pursue their cravings or escape their obligations. In that era, many famous figures, who were part of the high society, led a double life; polished on the surface, but scandalous in privacy.<sup>170</sup> In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the topic of double life is one of the major themes, which both Jack and Algernon pursue, calling it Bunburying. Bunbury is Algernon's fictional friend, whom he uses as an excuse to escape to the country, similarly to Jack, whose imaginary brother Ernest lives in London, where Jack runs when he needs to flee from his country life. Algernon especially recommends such double life when it comes to marriage, as without these escapes, the married lifestyle is horribly tedious.<sup>171</sup> Later he also claims that a person needs to be serious about something, just like he is about Bunburying, when they want to have any amusement in life.<sup>172</sup> *The Picture of Dorian Gray* takes double life to another level. The portrait itself can be seen as an aid to pursue the senses, since it ages and gets more horrendous with each Dorian's act. He comes back to it to marvel

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<sup>168</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 61.

<sup>169</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 108–111.

<sup>170</sup> "Victorian Era Duality Double Standards," Victorian Era, accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-duality-double-standards.html>.

<sup>171</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 669–676.

<sup>172</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 742.

at the corruption of his soul.<sup>173</sup> This could be seen as a way of double life as well, having a place to escape and enjoy one's sins in privacy. Dorian also owns a country house, as was discussed before, and as he proceeds in his quest, he starts using it for his pursuits of pleasure,<sup>174</sup> as well as escaping to a tavern near the Docks for long periods of time, under a fake name.<sup>175</sup> However, his actions were not held completely secret, as the club members and Basil knew about what was going on during such escapes, but Dorian did not mind.<sup>176</sup> The death of Basil Hallward also did not stop him from showing up at a party at Lady Narborough's,<sup>177</sup> which shows how easily he could switch between the sides of his double life; cutting off the hideous deeds of privacy and walking in public as if everything was in order. This event resembles the death of Sibyl Vane, whose passing was also partially of Dorian's doing, after which he was able to go to the Opera without any remorse.<sup>178</sup> The difference between these two events is that he had shortly mourned the actress before Lord Henry showed him his view of death, saying, "There is something to me quite beautiful about her death. I am glad I am living in a century when such wonders happen."<sup>179</sup> Dorian then develops this thought further when talking to Basil, "A man who is a master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure."<sup>180</sup> Such an approach reflects Connolly's idea quite closely: "As the pleasure fades into the past it will leave behind only a sense of nostalgia, and this nostalgia can be converted into art, and, once so converted, all sense of guilt attaching to the pleasure is washed away."<sup>181</sup> Even though Dorian could switch between his hideous deeds and polished life among his peers, his actions were not entirely thought through, mostly only acting on a whim. On the other hand, when it comes to the emotionally reserved Lord Henry and his double life, whatever happened in the villa in Trouville he had shared with Dorian, or in their house in Algiers, was never found out.<sup>182</sup> This might be another sign that Dorian was not managing his possibilities well, unlike Lord Henry. Leading this double life was sometimes necessary, since so many acts were considered criminal at that time. Then a Dandy does not have many choices to chase temptations if they could bring him doom when exposed.

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<sup>173</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 191–192.

<sup>174</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 220.

<sup>175</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 191.

<sup>176</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 219..

<sup>177</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 246.

<sup>178</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 157.

<sup>179</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 160.

<sup>180</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 167.

<sup>181</sup> Cyril Connolly, quoted in Phillip Mann, *The Dandy at Dusk*, 58.

<sup>182</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 206.

Such doom was awaiting Wilde after his affairs with men and young male prostitutes, as well as his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, whose father found out about their closeness. Much like Lord Henry and Dorian, he had been to France and Algiers with Douglas, after which they spent prolonged periods of time in Wilde's rented houses outside of London. When separated, Wilde wrote letters to his lover, who was careless enough to let them be found by his father, Marquess of Queensberry. It was in the club that Wilde belonged to when he was exposed by Douglas' father for being a sodomite.<sup>183</sup> As Wilde claimed at his trial that the aim of his life was to realize himself through pleasure rather than pain,<sup>184</sup> his philosophy shows the Hedonist in him, therefore he falls under the Dandy label in this view as well, however, due to his infatuation and carelessness, he failed to hide his double life, just like Dorian.

One of the most obvious symbols of Dorian's corruption is a yellow book that he was given. One of the possible explanations for the use of a yellow color is the decadent book *À Rebours* by the French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, to which Wilde pays tribute, making Dorian go in the steps of Huysmans' antihero and experience life through experiments.<sup>185</sup> As Frankel notes, Wilde was heavily interrogated about the connection of this yellow book with Huysmans' novel, "a seminal work of French *Décadent* literature. *À Rebours* revolves around the inner life of its reclusive antihero, Jean Des Esseintes, an aesthete and homosexual." While Wilde claimed that the inspiration was not direct, a suggestion for the fictional book came from it.<sup>186</sup> Wilde described the imaginary book in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as follows,

The style in which it was written was that curious jeweled style, vivid and obscure at once [...] that characterises the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Décadents*. There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as evil in color.<sup>187</sup>

This connects the idea of Dandyism to Decadence. A Dandy, who always stands out, both in his looks and opinions, challenging the society and norms, in fact is a Decadent, sharing his cunning philosophy.

To a Dandy, the experience of pleasure is tied to youth and beauty. As Baudelaire writes, "these beings have no other status but that of cultivating the idea of beauty in their own persons."<sup>188</sup> Likewise, Lord Illingworth mentions that one should only sympathize with the joy,

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<sup>183</sup> Keith Miller, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), 15–17.

<sup>184</sup> "Testimony of Oscar Wilde on Cross Examination (April 3, 1895)," Famous Trials, accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.famous-trials.com/wilde/346-literarypart>.

<sup>185</sup> Ellis Hanson, "Style at the fin de siècle," in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 155.

<sup>186</sup> Nicholas Frankel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 184–185.

<sup>187</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 184–186.

<sup>188</sup> Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Dandyism.net, "Baudelaire's 'The Dandy'," accessed May 27, 2018.



beauty and color of life,<sup>189</sup> adding that youth is the most wonderful thing in life, having a kingdom waiting for it.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Lord Goring claims that youth is art,<sup>191</sup> and Lord Henry takes this thought way further, saying that beauty is the wonder of wonders, the true mystery lying in the visible, not the invisible. He connects the idea to youth, talking about it in a comparable manner, uttering that there is nothing like youth, which is the only thing worth having, and that it is way easier to pursue pleasure as long as one is young.<sup>192</sup> At one point, Lord Henry contradicts himself, which is no surprise, first mentioning that Genius lasts longer than Beauty, blaming it on over-education,<sup>193</sup> while later he claims the opposite, saying that Beauty is superior to Genius, which cannot be even questioned, having its divine right of sovereignty.<sup>194</sup> The idea of youth and beauty then connects other two main parts of a Dandy, those being the delight in fashion and the search for temptations, making a natural link between the two through the means of a Dandy's philosophy.

Since a Dandy does not work, as was discussed in the first chapter, it is tied to his lifestyle and philosophy as well. Working with the same statement from Baudelaire,<sup>156</sup> it is fact that they do not contribute to the society in any useful way and take pride in it. When being talked about by Lord Caversham and Mabel Chiltern, Lord Goring's idleness is discussed. After his father calls him a good-for-nothing, Mabel Chiltern opposes, but at the same time develops his point further, saying, "He rides in the Row at ten o'clock in the morning, goes to the Opera three times a week, changes his clothes at least five times a day, and dines out every night of the season. You don't call that leading an idle life, do you?"<sup>195</sup> Lord Goring then connects his idleness to youth, answering his father's question why he does not try to do anything useful in life uttering, "I am far too young."<sup>196</sup> Lord Illingworth ties his thought of life of leisure to youth as well, claiming that he would do anything to be young again, apart from exercising, getting up early, or being a useful member of society.<sup>197</sup> In a similar manner, Lord Henry's uncle talks to him about Dandies' idleness in general, saying, "I thought you dandies never got up till two, and were not visible till five."<sup>198</sup> As for Wilde's own life, in his Oxford days, he only liked to seem as an idle man and a dilettante, trifling with his books, but not many people knew about

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<sup>189</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 861.

<sup>190</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 898.

<sup>191</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1038.

<sup>192</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 66–68.

<sup>193</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 55.

<sup>194</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 67.

<sup>195</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 941.

<sup>196</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 1038.

<sup>197</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 898.

<sup>198</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, 78.

his hard work to achieve his academic degree.<sup>199</sup> From these instances it is obvious that not only does a Dandy not work, but he also refuses to be useful to the society whatsoever, or, like in case of Oscar Wilde, at least loves to pretend to do so to keep his image.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to say there are many sides to a Dandy, who is difficult to put into a box. However, his philosophy, worldview and lifestyle are what distinguish him from other people. If one does not naturally have the Decadent attitude in himself, it is hard to think of him as a real Dandy, just like Dorian Gray. That character, despite being close to being a Dandy in many instances, could not deal with the life Lord Henry showed him on his own, which defies the nature of a Dandy. This only proves that a Dandy is not just a man wearing clothes, that is only a byproduct; it is the personality that makes it happen.

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<sup>199</sup> David Hunter-Blair, quoted in Merlin Holland, introduction to *Complete works of Oscar Wilde*, by Oscar Wilde (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2003), 14.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As was said earlier, a Dandy is a complex character that is hard to both define and describe. A person who might identify as a Dandy does not follow the exact same set of rules like another one, there are many kinds of Dandies, however their core features remain the same. Dating back to ancient Rome and Petronius, the ground was prepared for this phenomenon to start, and was then embraced by George Brummel, who became the first person to be identified with the label Dandy.

One might want to say that a Dandy is just a person wearing extravagant clothes, but that statement is not completely true. Had it been like that, the whole world would be polluted with Dandies. However, such a person is way more complicated than what can be seen on the surface. They do find fashion and clothing delightful, but that is just a byproduct of their inner setting. There is a certain condition one must have in their character, something that is not reproducible. It is the calm mind, which is able to deal with tough situations, the bravery to confront the society's conventions, the lack of romance in one's character, an unshakable character in any possible scenario. The fact that this prerequisite cannot be imitated or acquired is mirrored in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Lord Henry, toying with Dorian for his own scientific purposes, drags him into the Dandy lifestyle and opens the world of sensations for him. The inability to deal with life's situations without Lord Henry's witty advice only shows that even though Dorian became the fashion consultant of London, the major part of a true Dandy was missing. Therefore, the incompetence to come up with solutions on the spot that would not be driven by emotions only left him for doom. Unlike Dorian, Lord Henry survived all of the challenging situations, putting his swift wit to use. This philosophy of a Dandy is not something that can be fully described. The one thing that all the Dandies discussed have in common is their contradictory words, going against the conventional way of thinking, sometimes even themselves. Their way of thinking goes hand in hand with Decadence, showing opposition to the current situation and the firm social norms.

Romance is something that a Dandy cannot afford. With his calm attitude, emotions or love do not take place in his world. If a Dandy shows romantic behavior, he loses himself, the main part of his character is gone. This is what happened to Lord Darlington; he did not manage to keep his distance and fell in love with a woman. His character then dissolved the more he adored Lady Windermere. Other characters managed to retain their aloofness even though they were to get married. Marriage was not a matter of love, as was shown in more cases throughout Wilde's works, it was perceived as a dreadful occasion that nothing good comes out of. This

distant attitude remains also towards a Dandy's family members. Mostly they are not on speaking terms, but when they are, their relationships are not warm either. Most of the characters discussed show their opinions on parents in general, sometimes also their cold behavior towards them.

Although a Dandy does not allow himself to get emotionally invested in anything, the pursuit of sensations is something he devotes himself to. Thanks to the rich life of the upper class, he can immerse himself fully in experimenting with pleasure. Dandies lead an idle life and pursue Hedonism as a rebellion against the way the Victorian society worked. This Decadent lifestyle was their only occupation, money was not something they would have to worry about. Living in abundance and attending parties is a major part of a Dandy's life, as the fictional characters of both Wilde's drama and prose demonstrate. When not escaping the polished lifestyle to pursue pleasure, they socialize with people of their own rank in clubs or at parties. Dandies possess the aristocratic superiority of mind, they would not relate to anybody below themselves. Wilde's plays are always only in the chosen setting, never touching on the low life.

As was already mentioned, Dandies do not have to work, usually inheriting their fortune from their predecessors and gaining money through investments. Even though they might be wealthy, money is not their biggest concern, and some might even end up in debt, like some of the characters.

Overall, even though most of the characters discussed are true Dandies, it only shows how diverse their personalities can be, and how important the main features are. It proves that Dandyism comes from within and that the fashion only mirrors their characters. If any of the core values of a Dandy is violated or not met, the person is no longer a Dandy, just like Dorian Gray or Lord Darlington, who lost themselves in emotions and romance.

When it comes to Oscar Wilde himself, it appears that his life and attitude is mirrored in his works to a certain extent. Wearing extravagant clothes, advising people on the fashion choices and interior decoration, while leading a double life full of forbidden acts and being a member of a club full of members of his own rank show his own Dandy nature. As was said above, a Dandy does not work, but when he has to, his work reflects his Dandy personality, which Wilde mastered well, putting his own philosophy into his works of fiction. Despite being married, his wife Constance became largely neglected when he found himself a young lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. However, just like Lord Darlington, Wilde was so infatuated with Douglas, that he became thoughtless of his own actions, which led to their relationship being

discovered and Wilde being put to prison. This only proves how important it is for a Dandy to not cross a line that would interfere with the Dandy image he had built for himself.

Such are the most conspicuous features of a Dandy, all of which make appearance in Wilde's fictional works and his own life as well. A Dandy is a complicated person with rules made and broken by themselves, however, the core remains unchanged.

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá dandysmem v literárních pracích Oscara Wildea, a to v jeho jediném románu *Obraz Doriana Graye* a divadelních hrách *Jak je důležité mítí Filipa*, *Bezvýznamná žena*, *Ideální manžel* a *Vějíř lady Windermereové*. Zároveň jsou znaky dandysmu uvedeny do kontextu Wildeova vlastního života, aby byl vytvořen ucelený obraz, jak jeho osobní život souhlasil s myšlenkami, jež vložil do svých prací.

V teoretické části, která slouží jako úvod do viktoriánské Anglie, je nejprve obecně nastíněno, jak technologie doby postupovala hbitě vpřed. Totéž se ale nedá říci o normách tehdejšího myšlení, které by se daly považovat za zpátečnické. Přirozeně se začal tvořit protiproud sestávající z umělců, kteří odmítali svoji vlastní dobu. Takzvaní Prerafaelité se ve svých pracích vraceli do doby středověku, zajímali se o krásu lidského těla a nádheru umění jako takového, které v jejich době bylo všeobecně využíváno jako pomůcka k vedení počestného života. Tento spolek propagoval přesný opak, tedy myšlenku toho, že umění existuje pouze pro umění a nemá poskytovat žádnou morální oporu. Z jejich snažení tak vznikl spolek estétů, mezi jehož významnými figurami byli Walter Pater a Oscar Wilde. Především tyto dva autoři se zasloužili o ucelení této filozofie. Pater se svojí *Renaissancí: studií o umění výtvarném a poesii* a Wilde se svojí předmlouvou k *Obrazu Doriana Graye* tak shrnuli myšlenky tohoto hnutí. Zároveň je v této kapitole zmíněna provázanost esteticismu s francouzskou dekadencí. Tyto dva jevy se prolínají s dandysmem, ústředním tématem této práce. Ten je obecně představen i z historického hlediska, díky kterému se dají určit základní rysy dandysmu. Dandy není jen člověk se zálibou ve výstřední módě, je mnohem více než jen to. Kdyby každý člověk v extravagantním oblečení byl považován za dandyho, pak by se za takového dandyho mohl považovat každý. Tento jev ale vychází zevnitř, z osobnosti člověka, z jeho filozofie a způsobu myšlení. Teprve to se odráží ve vnějším světě, tedy i v módě.

V analytické části práce je téma dandysmu rozebráno více do hloubky a nejvýznamnější rysy jsou pak ukázané na postavách děl Oscara Wildea a v mnohých případech i na životě jeho samotného. Dandy je postava mnoha druhů a každý je odlišný, každopádně existují charakteristické rysy, jež sdílí. Ty jsou v této části rozděleny do tří kapitol.

Nejprve je předmětem vzhled a bohatství. Dandy, postava vyšší třídy společnosti, nemusí pracovat, své peníze získává dědictvím nebo skrze investice, ale nejsou pro něho prioritou. Totéž platí i pro majetek, dandy se neomezuje pouze na jednu nemovitost, zpravidla jich mívá více. Většina postav zmíněných v této práci tyto požadavky splňuje. Nemají zaměstnání a o své finance se nestarají, a to ani v případě, že je mají. Ti, kteří nepatří mezi

nejbohatší, stále dokáží proplouvat životem bez starostí, s lehkostí a stále zvládají vypadají dokonale. Peníze jsou pro ně pouze způsob, jak si užívat života dosyta, ne složka nutná k přežití. Co se módy týče, dandy ji nikdy nenásleduje, pouze vede. I přes svoji extravaganci má nespočet obdivovatelů, stává se jejich módním konzultantem. Vzhled je pro dandyho již důležitějším tématem, výběr oblečení mu zabírá notnou chvíli, musí vypadat reprezentativně za každé příležitosti. Například lord Goring se převléká několikrát denně, styl Dorian Graye chtěl mít téměř každý a Algernon rád kritizuje Jacka za jeho volbu svršků. Wilde se ve své době také stal významnou ikonou módy, jedna z jeho přednášek, *The House Beautiful*, se kromě výzdoby interiéru zabývá také oblékáním, a to žen i mužů.

Další kapitola se zaměřuje na vztahy dandyho, a to jak na ty s rodinou a přáteli, tak i životními partnery. Jak již bylo řečeno, dandy je příslušníkem vyšší třídy a také v ní zůstává. Odmítá se pohybovat mezi spodinou, ta se nestává ani předmětem jeho konverzací. Dandy se obklopuje vybranými lidmi, velmi často je členem různých klubů, kde se jemu podobní lidé, kteří jsou na stejné úrovni, pravidelně scházejí. Většina postav diskutovaných v této práci kluby navštěvuje, mimo to se také hojně účastní večírků či je sami pořádají, znovu ale jen pro vybranou společnost. Rodina mnohdy do těchto kruhů nepatří, nejhorší reputaci v očích Wildeových postav mívají otci, kteří dle nich vyšli z módy a neměl by se s nimi vůbec nikdo zahazovat. Lord Goring je jako výjimka se svým otcem v kontaktu stále, ale nebere jeho slova na vědomí. Co se partnerství týče, dandy není romantik. Nedere se do vztahů ani manželství, a pokud je ženatý, nevnímá to jako pozitivní zkušenost. Lord Henry otevřeně zrazuje Doriana od manželského života, pro něho samotného je to jen další povinnost, i přesto ale se svojí ženou nežije typicky, vídají se pouze občas a vzájemně o sobě vědí minimum. Jakmile se dandy stane romantikem, ztrácí svoji původní image, což se stalo lordu Darlingtonovi, který se zamiloval do lady Windermereové. Jeho chladný charakter dandyho se tak ztratil, nadále z něho už byl jen dobře vypadající muž s vřelými city.

Životní styl dandyho a jeho způsob myšlení jsou předmětem poslední kapitoly. Jelikož dandy nepracuje, jeho jediným životním posláním je hledání požitků. Mimo zmínek života pro rozkoš v ostatních Wildeových dílech je takovéto vyhledávání slasti vzato do detailu v *Obrazu Dorian Graye*, jelikož hédonismus je jeden z hlavních způsobů korupce Dorianova charakteru. Zde se ale potvrzuje tvrzení, že pravý dandy se tvoří uvnitř. Dorian, který ve spirále svých požitků nedokázal zachovat chladný přístup a jednal na základě emocí spíše než mysli, sám sebe odsoudil k předčasnému konci, na rozdíl od lorda Henryho, jenž se svým odstupem od pocitů dokázal z jakékoli situace vyjít s lehkostí. Správné nastavení mysli je pro dandyho kritické. Bez citové angažovanosti je pak schopný jít svými tvrzeními proti typickému myšlení

společnosti a vyzývat tak její zatvrzelé vzorce. Častokrát jde dandy i proti svým vlastním předchozím výrokům, opět ale díky svému důvtipu dokáže své okolí zmást.

Kvůli tvrdě nastaveným normám společnosti většina takovýchto postav vede dvojitý život, aby se vymanili buďto ze svých společenských závazků, nebo aby mohli vskrytu užívat rozkoše. Ve společnosti nastavené na počestnost, skromnost a slušnost by dandy se svými počiny často neobstál. Na svoji nepozornost takto doplatil i sám Wilde, který ve své posedlosti mladým lordem Alfredem Douglasem byl obviněn, a nakonec i odsouzen za sodomii.

Takové jsou ve shrnutí pouze základní rysy dandyho, jež se v pracích Oscara Wildea hojně objevují, ale vzhledem k tomu, že každý dandy si pravidla sám tvoří, a i jako správný dekadent porušuje, existuje mnoho způsobů, jakými se niterný dandysmus projeví na povrchu.



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