

## Oscar Wilde - The picture of Dorian Gray

The passage is taken from the second chapter of the book, and it describes the scene when Dorian sees his portrait for the first time.

Hallward, the painter, stops painting and looks at Dorian for a long time, nervously, and then he cries that the portrait is finished.

Lord Henry comes closer to see the painting and congratulates the painter for the great work.

While Lord Henry expresses all his admiration and his joy towards the painting, Dorian Gray keeps looking at the picture listlessly, but then he manages to recognise himself in the portrait and he sees its beauty.

The main character is so focused on the painting that everything else seems vague; Dorian thinks about Lord Henry's panegyric on youth - which is in a previous part of the book - and starts wondering about the time when his astonishing beauty, frozen in the picture, will vanish in real life.

Dorian is afraid of becoming dreadful, and these thoughts hurt him badly in spite of the compliments received by Hallward.

Hallward feels offended when he sees Dorian crying, because he fears Dorian doesn't like the picture.

Luckily, Lord Henry interrupts Hallward and asks him if he could buy the portrait, but Hallward answers that the portrait is Dorian's.

The two of them are interrupted by Dorian who, still fixing the portrait, expresses his disappointment because of the fact he is going to grow old while the picture will remain beautiful forever.

This moment of full, desperate awareness is followed by exclamations by Dorian, who cries he would give his soul in order to stay in the physical conditions illustrated by the painting.

Considering the rhetorical devices used in the passage, we can highlight the simile used to describe his pain: "a sharp pang of pain struck through him like a knife"; the metaphor used to describe his eyes: "his eyes deepened into amethyst, and across them came a mist of tears"; the simile used to describe his feelings: "he felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart".

The extract is based on a “double” revelation that strikes the protagonist: when he sees the portrait first he feels filled with joy because he recognises himself in it, but afterwards his mood changes, in fact he realizes that he will lose the beauty that will be carried by the painting forever.

We can connect this element to two important works from different periods: Dorian’s last words express his wish as Dr. Faustus in Marlowe’s work; then we can link Wilde’s view of art with Keats’ one, because the Romantic author wrote in his poem “Ode on a grecian urn” about the freezing power of art, in fact artworks last forever while human beings grow old and die.