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استاد راهنما:

دکتر بهرام بهین

استاد مشاور:

دکتر ابوالفضل رضانی

پژوهشگر:

مهدیه طبقچی خیابانی

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Simply, seven years passed from the day I stepped in this faculty as an immature person. Now, it is time to leave; fortunately or unfortunately, with a burden of knowledge and experience whose bitter-sweet taste seems to stand the test of time.

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Abstract

Since the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's only novel, there has been a great amount of criticism both for and against the work, naming it an influential and brave step towards the freedom of marginalized tendencies. The great extent of the inevitable influence the work imposes on the reader is undeniable; critics have variously evaluated the work from different perspectives; however, these studies have largely targeted the thematic aspects of the novel, and little serious attempt has been made to examine this great work structurally. As a result, the narrativity of this novel still remains untouched. Applying a narratological approach, the present thesis examines the spatiotemporal structure of the novel. The analysis indicated that place, space, and time function as tools for Oscar Wilde to convey meaning and enhance the reader's understanding of the characters and their actions in the novel. In fact, much of the meaning or the effect the author intends to converse through each action, character, or dialogue is firstly embedded in a proper and effective spatiotemporal setting. The analysis ascertained a well-set spatiotemporal structure in the narrativity of the novel which results in (1) Ekphrasis, (2) Characterization, (3) Concretization, (4) Reader manipulation, and (5) Primacy effect. According to the thesis, these five elements dramatically construct the influential nature of this great novel.

Key Words: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, spatiotemporality, narratology, novel.

Dedicated to
My father, the god of care,
My mother, the goddess of love,
And my grandmother, the goddess of patience...

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Introduction

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) is an outstanding Irish Victorian figure who is known for his poems, fairy tales, and remarkably for both his comedies and only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. His pen was and still is fascinating; his readers have always recognized the absorbance his writings have saliently proved. Besides his authorship, Wilde was a socially active character; he worked for magazines, women, and fashion. Margaret Diane Stetz in "Bi-social Oscar Wilde and Modern Women" writes,

Comfortable or uncomfortable, the experience of meeting Wilde, of dealing with him both socially and professionally, and even of allowing oneself to be surveyed and judged by him, was ... part of the very fabric, so to speak, of life for "modern" women, particularly for would-be women authors (518).

The image in mind for Wilde stands appropriately contradictory. His exquisite costume had become part of his personality for Londoners of the day. To the public he is the "dandified 'prince of paradox'" while scholars find him a radical writer (Wright 359). Christine Ferguson reports "increasing willingness to acknowledge Wilde as an important evolutionary thinker" (65). The proof for such radicalism in this writer stands in the courage of criticism and the frankness he shows in his essays, plays, short stories, and his novel addressing the conservative Victorian age of him. Unlike the dandified image of this author, the men of his era experienced a serious and stone-like man who recklessly criticized whatever was taken a more for the others. In every work of this Irish writer, stand cynical remarks of English men, manners, mores, and 'allusions'. Nicholas Mirzoeff writes "[h]is transhistorical analogy between the Jews and the Irish created an affiliation between the two categories of minority to catch the attention of sympathetic readers" (53). However, his attempts to bring such minorities into the public and especially into the literary world created considerable furiosity for the majority, as well. That is why considering his

Irishness¹, frankness, cynicism, dandyism, and the complexities of his private life, Wilde was a man of love and hate for the public of his era. But in 1987, Richard Ellmann, a literary critic and biographer published his book *Oscar Wilde* which freshened the views of this author to a large extent. In his sophisticated manner, Ellmann alerted that the critics have gone astray in their dogmatic treatments regarding Wilde and the ignoramus estimations of his life which had changed his novel into a mere evidence of his 'poisonous' thoughts. Ellmann's book caused a revival of readings and reconsiderations of Wilde in which he was no more taken as a public infamous character, but as a writer whose depth and breadth stretched beyond the Victorian judgments of the time. Leckrone in "Misremembering Wilde: Oscar Wilde, His Critical Legacy, and His Critics" writes,

Ellmann's work helped breathe new life into Wilde studies by testifying that his literary achievement and true complexity of character deserved to be taken seriously. Along with a number of other critics writing in 1980s, furthermore, Ellmann sought in earnest to rescue the figure of Wilde from sensational, ultimately tedious, taint of obscurity and scandal that seemed so tenaciously attached to him in the cultural memory of much of his century (n.p.).

It was under the influence of critics like Richard Hermann that moving further in time and reaching the growing movements like feminism and queer studies, Wilde became one of the central key subjects, whose works were engaged in every critical discussion on a variety of topics, namely aestheticism, dandyism, ethics, and decadence.

Among the wide range of studies on Wilde stand the attempts which have been made in order to identify his very self within his works and it must be admitted that it has been successful to a

great extent. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, for instance, maintain that "what is remarkable about Wilde is the flagrant way in which he staged his private life. ... Wilde was presenting himself as a pyrotechnical display: flamboyant, unpredictable and socially dazzling" (5). Even considering the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde personally confesses that "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be- in other ages perhaps" (Letters, 352, qtd. in Gillespie 2007, 388). Thomas Wright believes Wilde's "attempt to transform his life into a work of art and dramatize his philosophy within it" fascinates the readers and critics a lot (359).

Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was first published as the lead story in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in June, 1890; later it appeared as a novel in 1891. The work, exactly like the author himself, has received different and sometimes paradoxical evaluations and remarks. It was initially dispraised for a variety of issues like its 'bad influence', 'poisonous ideas', and 'immorality' which were all examined against the moral touchstone of the time. Not long after, the book was (mis)used against Wilde as evidence for his corruption at the court. However, moving further, critics changed their perspective and a more literary and artistic evaluation of the novel replaced such non-literary criticism; resulting from that, for the present readers and critics *The Picture of Dorian Gray* stands beyond the traditional prejudiced assessments. Referring to such paradoxical assumptions of the novel, Liebman writes,

Until the 1980s, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was generally considered to be deeply flawed novel. To some critics, it was simply badly written. To others, it was hopelessly confused, reflecting Wilde's uncertainty and irresolution. To still others, it was negligible or, at best, second-rate because it was merely an expression of the 1890s, in which case it was historically important but otherwise unworthy of critical attention. Within the last

two decades, however, many readers have called *Dorian Gray* a great book. Indeed, its most recent critics have treated the novel as if it were neither the product of Wilde's confusion nor merely a period piece. Its irresolution is taken to be an expression of Wilde's understanding of the human condition. And *Dorian Gray's* broader philosophical concerns are assumed to be those of a moralist who is fully aware of the failure of Victorian (or in fact, any conventional) morality and is exploring the consequences of its demise (296).

The novel revolves around a young boy, Dorian Gray inhabiting in his luxurious house in London inherited from his unkind grandfather. Introduced to a conservative artist, Basil Hallward and a witty immoral talker Lord Henry Wotton, this "exceptional youth is moulded or moulds himself" (Murray 2). Basil Hallward paints a portrait of Dorian which is appreciated by all as his masterpiece. While Dorian is still mesmerized by the beauty of him depicted in the portrait, Lord Henry bitterly reminds him that the passage of time will turn the portrait to his enemy, since he grows old, and his beauty fades away, while the portrait stands unchanged.

Following a Faustian wish², Dorian wishes to remain young while his portrait would bear the burden of time; astonishingly this wish comes true. Moreover, Dorian realizes that whatever sin he engages in writes itself on the portrait, and Dorian himself remains as innocent as his pure days. Taking advantage of this transference, he engages in any possible adventure, pleasure, and sinful deeds. The novel describes the process Dorian gets through to the end of his life with the burden of his wish.

The novel was highly criticized for its anti-Victorian mores, and so many readers and critics declared that the whole novel was intended to address what Wilde wished to publicize but did

not dare; consequently, he has got assistance from an artistic fashion to lecture his poisonous ideas to the public³. In fact, this one-way look at the novel prevented it from being appreciated for its various aspects for a long time.

As noted above, within the 21st century criticism, alongside with his works, Wilde has been increasingly studied in various fields, to add to the above given list one can also include psychoanalysis, nationalism, hedonism and so many other divert and variant fields. Among his works, particularly speaking about *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, through a quick review of the criticism on the work, it becomes evident that the novel seems attractive mainly regarding its three major male characters, aestheticism, hedonism, homoerotic themes, immorality, and new sensation. Although it is admitted that these fields address the major issues of the novel, over-highlighting these trends has marginalized the artistic significance applied to the narrative structure of the work.

As soon as typing the phrase *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on the net engines one will be provided with so many books and articles on Wilde's biography, the dandy characters, ethics, and morality considerations of the novel; but one can hardly come across any papers on the techniques the author has artistically applied to the narrative of the novel. This must be regarded as an unkind and unjustifiable negligence regarding this notable literary work.

As one of the most memorable Victorian masterpieces, the significance of this novel should not exclusively be traced within its themes and what its author intends to convey⁴, or propagate as the wide scope of the current readings of the work indicate. This has not only left the novel's assessment incomplete, but also has turned the novel into an unreadable work for those societies in which queer tendencies are prohibited⁵.

Unlike the current readings of this literary work, I believe, one should search for the success of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the way it is presented to the reader or technically speaking how it is narrated to him. Exactly at this point we should try to get help from narratology to analyze and discover the narrative techniques applied to the narrative of the novel. A brief look at the history of criticism on this work indicates that there have been very few considerations of the role narrative plays in the success and the influence the novel has already established since its publication.

After the recognition of the existent gap in the literature of the criticisms and readings of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as discussed above, this thesis aims to focus its attention on narratological aspects of the novel, as a fictional narrative⁶, in order to identify the narrative techniques the author has applied to the novel to make it more influential for its readers and absorb them within its fictional world.

As mentioned earlier, the common researches on Wilde and his works have mainly focused on the thematic aspects of the works. The narrative art of this great author has been neglected to a great extent. This negligence does not seem justifiable, since greatness of an author is more assessable through analyzing how he narrates than what he intends to narrate.

The significance of this thesis lies in the fact that this century- long negligence is considered in it. Such narratological study of his work would reveal the greatness of this author's art. A narratological approach to the narrativity of this great work would be remarkable due to the opportunity it provides to have a more profound understanding of this author's writing style and would open fresh views of this great author and his masterpiece and its narratological structure.

Regarding the increasing variety in branches categorized under narratology as a covering title, the present thesis particularly aims to examine the impact of two concepts of "spatiality" and "temporality" as tools in the hands of Wilde in order to convey his intended meaning and enhance the reader's understanding of the characters in the novel through an implicit direction he draws on his reader's mind.

Through a brief look at the initial sections of the novel's chapters, it is easily realized that they all begin with a description of place, space, time or a combination of all. In this thesis, I will argue that these descriptions are applied in each chapter's opening in order to create the author's intended feelings in his readers. Consequently, preoccupied with these spatial or locative descriptions, the readers are skillfully manipulated to conceptualize the perceived in accordance with what the author intends them to do, rather than reaching an independent perception and conception. The thesis shows that much of the meaning or the effect the author intends to converse through each action, dialogue, or character is firstly embedded in a proper and effective spatiotemporal description. Based on the purpose the present thesis aims to answer research questions like:

1. How can we read the novel from a spatiotemporal perspective?
2. If so, how are these two elements traceable in the structure of the novel?
3. What are the functions of these spatiotemporal employments?

Regarding the approach of the present thesis the three key terms are briefly defined below:

Narrative

Narrative still remains difficult to define, and different critics have defined this term from different perspectives. For Gérard Genette, a narrative is simply a sequence of events. Gerald

Prince, in an elaborated fashion defines it as "the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence neither of which presupposes or entails the other" (4). According to Monika Fludernik (1996), narrative has traditionally been "(a series of) action(s) [as] the prime constituent of narrativity" (15). Accordingly, at least two events have to be transformed from fabula (event Sequence: story level) into syuzhet (presentation: narrative level).

To put it simplified, Martin Mcquilian in *The Narrative Reader* provides his readers with some meanings which can be useful in grasping the concept, such as "a recounting (process and product , verb and noun) of one or more real or fictional events by one or more narrators to one or more narrates." (323); bringing a more comprehensive definition, Mcquilian later continues:

Narrative is a fundamental expression of the question of being as a moment of presence (narratives help humans to imagine themselves existing in a 'now' because narratives claim to relate in the present a 'past-now' recovered through the narrator's telling). Narrative is both process and consequence of this temporal structuration (324).

Fludernik in *An Introduction to Narratology* (2009) provides a definition of narrative which to great extent includes all the above mentioned definitions under its umbrella. She writes,

A narrative is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose center there are one or several protagonists ... who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed action. It is the experience of those protagonists that narrative focuses upon, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists (7).

James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz in their introduction to the great book of *Theory and Interpretation of Narrative* write that "[n]arrative is often treated as a representation of a linked sequence of events, but we subsume that traditional viewpoint under a broader conception of narrative as itself an event—more specifically, *a multidimensional purposive communication from a teller to an audience*" (3).

All of the given accounts of narrative give the impression that a narrative is an event which retells (by at least one narrator) at least two connected actions taking place in their specific temporal and spatial boundaries to some readers who can put themselves in the fictive situation by the techniques the narrator uses in order to visualize the retold story.

Place/ Space/ Time

Referred to as temporality and spatiality of a narrative, the concepts are applied to narratives in order to demonstrate the explicit and implied local and temporal techniques within the narratives which play a significant role in their process. One of the issues to be clarified is to differentiate between place and space. Place refers to locations like rooms, houses, or streets which turn into spaces as they are perceived. Mieke Bal writes "[t]hese places seen in relation to their perception are called space. That point of perception may be a character, which is situated in a space, observes it, and reacts to it" (133).

Generally speaking, spatial and temporal presentations of a narrative constitute a significant part of it, and carry considerable meanings with them if they are rightly identified and interpreted.

These concepts, as the basic elements of a narrative text, are thoroughly expanded in the Literature Review section.

Primacy Effect

Emma Kafalenos in her article entitled "Effects of Sequence, Embedding, and Ekphrasis" defines primacy effect as "our tendency to accept as valid the information we are initially given, even when that information is contradicted later in the same passage" (266). Having its root in the psychology of man, this technique is achievable through different narratological methods, and is used for several purposes mainly for suspense and uncertainty. Primacy effect creates certainty in the reader which maintains with him even after it is shattered by the very narrative text in a later part of it. In chapter three of the present thesis, I will deal with this technique, and I will demonstrate how spatial and temporal elements are employed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

As mentioned, Wilde is at first a famous poet, playwright, essayist, and the author of many fairy tales and short stories, who only wrote one single novel about which he says, he "first conceived the idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth – an idea that is old in the history of literature, but which I have given new form" (quoted by Ellmann 311). This may cause the sharp eyes to criticize me for choosing his only novel among his so many other works, a novel which according to Wilde himself is not an invention but an adaptation of an old form. As a defense for my selection, I would like to refer to the nature of the genre the selected work has: novel. Although narrative texts extend beyond novels and include short stories, as well as even some poetic subgenres, novel possesses a higher potential for narrative analysis in comparison to other genres. Furthermore, analyzing this long narrative text can surely result in the discovery of a vast number of strategies which can probably be attained only partially in this author's other shorter narrative texts.

This research is a qualitative, library and Internet- based research. I have frequently used websites devoted to this author such as www.oscholars.com which was a great help through my research. Besides the available libraries such as Tabriz Central Library, and Tabriz Azad university library, I also used online libraries such as www.questia.com, www.jstor.org , www.library.nu, www.bookfi.org , and www.online.sagepub.com .

After grasping the sketch of the thesis, it is crucial to provide a theoretical basis for how space and time have been treated in the field of narratology through history. Regarding narrativity, there are two distinct concepts in the study of literature, one referred to as "classical narrative theory" in which only a text is regarded as a narrative in which there exists a "mediating authority" (Schmid 1), called narrator who mediates between the author and the reader in order to present reality through his own prism in an indirect way. In this view, specific features of communication must be present in a text to make it a narrative, in which a text without a narrator can never be regarded as a narrative.

The second concept refers to a structuralist study of narrative in which "the defining characteristic of narrative is not a feature of discourse or communication but rather a feature of what is narrated". Structuralists believe that narratives "contain a temporal structure and represent changes of state". It was this structuralist view in which T. Todorov coined the term "narratology". Since both classical and structuralist views of narrative are partially incomplete, though very helpful, in the present literary studies a mixture of both is practiced (Schmid 1-2). Among the variety of issues and fields studied under the umbrella of narratology (the study of narrative), there is a recent increasing interest in the concepts of time and place in narrative texts. The developing understanding of these two notions is perceivable through a brief look at books

being written in the past few decades which by and large have devoted at least one chapter to discuss spatiality and temporality in narrative.

One remarkable point regarding these two concepts might lie in tracing the history in order to examine man's estimations of these two notions. Unlike the present evaluations of these concepts which prove to have an identical estimation of them, moving back in time shows a kind of priority of time over space. "As a form of telling, narrative exists in time: a narrative takes time to tell and tells about a sequence of events in time." (Friedman 193). As Wegner puts it, the belief in statements like this encouraged the critics, "especially beginning in the latter part of nineteenth century", to privilege "temporality and history over space" and this idea resulted in the overemphasis on time and a consequent marginalization of space as an empty container "which, once established, seems to remain constant". This perception of the dynamicity in time and fixity of place and space in literary texts continues its "devaluation of space" to quote Wegner, until Bakhtin offers the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (180).

Unlike the Enlightenment, Cartesian and Kantian notion of spatial fixity, "over the last twenty-five years" a new "attention to the productions of space has entered into literary studies from a number of different dimensions:" widening from colonialism and postcolonialism regarding "European domination over space" to "feminism and gender studies" where "body" and "embodiment" have gained central focus (Wegner 180-1).

To put it in a nutshell, it was not that much long ago, when literary men found "time" dynamic, progressive, and altering, as in narratives in which a story begins in one specific temporal setting, and when it comes to a conclusion it ends in an inevitably different temporal setting from that of

the beginning; on the other hand, no narrative necessitates a change of spatial setting from its beginning to its final moment. A narrative may take place in one single spatial setting; however, it no way entails a dynamic temporal setting. The long belief in this had created an unequal weight between time and space, in which space gained no significance, since it was or could be a fixed and neutral element in narratives. The debates on "The modernist time" and "the postmodern space" grow to the extent that Fredric Jameson points out that "[u]nder these circumstances, the best we can do in the way of synthesis is to alert ourselves to the deformation of space when observed from the standpoint of time, of time when observed from the standpoint of space" (698).

Later, trying to redefine space, Gerald Prince maintained that a text might stand in two positions regarding place: it may not include any spatial element at all, which may indicate the unnecessary nature of space; on the other hand, it may engage in spatial elements in which case one question should be answered: Does any significance lie in the mentioned spatial element? Although in his assumptions of spatiality, Prince reminds us of place and space as possible elements of narrativity, it seems not much importance is attributed to them yet, compared to the 21st century views of these notions.

For example, Teresa Bridgeman in her comprehensive chapter entitled "Time and Space" maintains that a narrative provides the readers with "an alternative" world with its specific temporal and spatial structures. As she simply puts it, in a narrative, two important points are to be considered; first, events and actions unfold in time, and readers are constantly moving backward and forward in the fictional temporality of the narrative; second, characters "move around, inhabit and experience different places and locations" (52) which carry the partial meaning and significance of the narrative.