

**Power and Beauty Relations in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon**

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Abstract

This thesis endeavours to explore the enchanting power of beauty and its history. This thesis aims at examining the enchanting power of beauty on selected characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. It further aims at examining the effects of possessing the power of beauty on the characters that possess it, namely Dorian Gray and Lady Audley. This thesis particularly focuses on the descriptions of the portraits of the protagonists in the two novels, on their effects on whoever looks at them and on the complex relationship between pictorial representation, beauty and truth. Furthermore, the significance of beauty in the two novels will be discussed inside the framework of Victorian Aestheticism. To carry out the research this thesis addresses the following questions: What is the significance of beauty, and what is the extent of the power of beauty in *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*? How is beauty represented in the portraits of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray? What is the relationship between outward and inward beauty in these portraits?

Keywords: Beauty Mystique; Beauty; Kalokagathia

INTRODUCTION

“And Beauty is a form of Genius – is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation” (Wilde, 2006, p.22).

Beauty has always been an issue that is both being praised and seen as secondary. Although beauty was once seen as a cosmic value, which is the evidence of having a good and beautiful soul, afterward it has been trivialized from time to time. An attempt has occurred to destroy the significance of beauty. There was a time when a pretty face was associated with stupidity. However, the sense of a beautiful appearance was strongly connected with a beautiful soul, intelligent mind, and the idea of an ideal person as a friend or partner. Beauty was associated with truth and goodness for a long time, and that has made the significance of beauty more powerful than ever before.

Having an interesting and mystique power, beauty has been the subject of many kinds of research and studies. The meaning of ‘beauty’ occupied the minds of philosophers for ages, and the power of a beautiful appearance is included in many literary works either directly or indirectly. As the Aesthetic movement occurred, beauty became not only an outcome but also an aim of any artwork. The beautiful women portraits that Pre-Raphaelite artists created paved the way for Aestheticism as a new sense to aim at nothing but beauty in the creations of humanity. Pre-Raphaelite portraits women served not only as a start-up of the Aesthetic Movement but also served as a uniting force of beauty and truth. The portraits, which look just like a documentary of a real moment, could also be a uniting force for the association of beauty with truth as suggested by the Romantic poet John Keats in his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

RESULTS

The power of beauty, the relationship between inward and outward beauty, the equalization of goodness and beauty, the relationship between pictorial representation, beauty and truth in the novels *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) are examined. In addition to the former studies about both novels, the quasi-magical effect of the beauty on the ones who possess it is analysed and the portrait of Dorian Gray is assumed to be a Pre-Raphaelite portrait in this thesis. Even though, the portrayal of beauty, and the portraits are analysed before in different studies, this dissertation offers a look to beauty as a quasi-magical power and also examine the portraits as Pre-Raphaelite portraits that reflects both the sitters' soul and appearance at the same time.

DISCUSSION

Humankind has always longed for beauty. The charm of a beautiful person, a beautiful flower, a beautiful apple, or a beautiful odour cannot be denied, no matter how much the meaning of beauty differs depending upon personal experience. It is a phenomenon that makes such a strong impression that philosophers, writers, artists from all around the world made beauty a part of their studies or art. The power of beauty, the meaning, and the relativity of it, and the requirements of a true and ideal beauty became among the most important research subjects on beauty. Even though the cosmic power of beauty was underestimated time and again, it must be stated that to understand beauty itself, its power and to be aware of its magic have always been and will always be important.

Aesthetic relations are perhaps as socially significant as class relations, gender relations or race relations, despite, or perhaps because of, their non-institutionalized status. Aesthetic relations are so taken-for-granted as to be invisible. Yet, 'facism' and 'beautyism' may be as problematic as other 'isms' and the ideologies in the stigmatization of minorities. (Synnott, 1990b, p.67)

But, what is beautiful? "Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing." (Santayana, 1896, p.33) Beauty can be described as the form that gives pleasure. It is the form that pleases the soul, and it can be found in anything. Throughout the history, philosophers tried to find an answer to the question 'what is beautiful?'. To find a better answer to the question, thinkers

equalized beauty with other notions. The goodness equated with beauty is the most important one for this dissertation. The words *kalokagathia* and *beauty mystique* are the words that comes from the equalization of beauty with goodness.

In the word combination *kalokagathia* (καλοκαγαθία), the concept of *kalos* (καλός) means “beautiful”, it is not by chance that it comes first. For a long time, it showed the priority purpose of education to each Greek, that is, the achievement of physical beauty with a sort of erotic “aura”. The second place in this word combination takes the concept of *agathos* (αγαθός) that means “good” or “valorous”, “valour” (αρετή) in the knightly sense, highlighting the moral purpose of education (Bazaluk, 2017, p.7).

Kalokagathia is the ideal man in whom moral and physical beauty unite. With the idea of *kalokagathia*, the concepts of beauty and goodness became integrated. In time, the word beauty started to create a halo effect in the eyes and minds of people. “Plato believed there was a biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. That is, everything that is beautiful is good and everything that is good is beautiful” (Riegel, 2014, p. 143). However, to accept that everything that is beautiful is good can be fatal, as will be shown in the following. *Kalokagathia*, the ancient Greek concept of ‘the good and the beautiful’ gave rise to the idea of what Anthony Synnott called the Beauty Mystique, which is basically seeing “Physical beauty ... as a symbol of moral beauty and goodness” (Synnott,1990a, p.407). According to Synnott (1990b), who mentions the beauty mystique frequently in his writings, even “our everyday language indicates the prevalence of the beauty mystique. We might say that someone ‘looks good’, ‘looks divine’, or is ‘divinely beautiful’: phrases which neatly equate beauty, goodness, and God. Conversely the phrases ‘as ugly as sin’ or ‘looks like hell’ equally neatly equate ugliness, evil and the devil” (Synnott, 1990b, p.55).

In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, we encounter a character who is evil but also beautiful. Her golden hair, bright blue eyes, dark brown eyebrows and eyelashes, rosy lips, and beautiful face are frequently and in detail described throughout the novel. Lady Audley’s remarkable beauty attracts the attention of people anywhere she goes. Lady Audley is a woman who experiences all the advantages of the beauty that she has. Yet, to keep these high and luxurious living conditions that she gained through her beauty, she is ready to kill. Thus, she possesses an extremely beautiful appearance and a dangerous personality. But although she is both beautiful and dangerous, she is not a femme fatale. She is selfish, greedy and violent, but she conceals these characteristics from her environment. Thus, she presents herself to her environment as beautiful, innocent and child-like. She is described as “childish, helpless, babyfied little

creature” (Braddon, 1997, p.111). Thus, Lady Audley’s beauty is not like the beauty of Helen of Troy or Medusa. Lady Audley’s beauty is angelic, heavenly, and innocent, like that of the Virgin Mary. It is a beauty described as “unearthly” (Braddon, 1997, p.254). Her childlike beauty seems to render her weak and in need of help and guidance. However, this makes her even more attractive in the eyes of men and thus gives her even more power over them than she already yields by means of her beauty. Her angelic beauty is more powerful than the seductive beauty of a femme fatale. Lady Audley wants to be perceived as naive and fragile, i.e. as a woman who needs male protection. But her apparent innocence is only a cover for a number of guilty secrets in her life.

“Beauty and the face are, as we know both by experience and from scientific research, extremely powerful symbols of the self” (Synnott, 1990b, p.67). Thus, it is generally thought that a beautiful appearance is the reflection of a pure, beautiful soul. In the same way, an ugly appearance is thought to be the reflection of an evil soul. It is believed that if one does evil things, it will appear on one’s face. Yet, Lady Audley’s face retains its beauty despite her evil soul. Lady Audley’s beautiful face is a mask that hides her wicked soul and evil personality. Even though she is known as innocent, she is a liar. She looks helpless and fragile. Yet, inside her beautiful appearance, there is a potential killer. At the beginning, she looks like a woman who needs protection and high living standards as she was weary of poverty. Lady Audley is a woman who thought that she had been abandoned by her husband. In an era in which opportunities for women were very limited, the reader might think that her acts could be justified by her difficult social and economic circumstances. However, she appears to be an evil person, a beautiful devil towards the end of the novel. When Lady Audley realizes that her evil plans are about to be revealed she thinks of killing Robert Audley. She mutters “Will anything stop him – but death?” (Braddon, 1997, p.236). After thinking about killing him, she actually tries to kill him by setting Castle Inn, where Robert Audley stays, on fire. Thus, she causes the death of Luke Marks. She also attempts to kill her first husband after he threatened to reveal her secret. Throughout the novel, Lady Audley continues to commit crimes to keep her real identity secret. Her beauty serves as a curtain for her evil soul and wicked crimes. Because “The innocence and candour of an infant beamed in Lady Audley’s fair face” (Braddon, 1997, p.43), nobody has ever suspected her of harmful intentions and actions. Whenever she is suspected or accused of being untruthful or malevolent, her husband defends her. He is completely under the spell of her beauty and cannot fathom or even imagine a possible incongruity between his wife’s physical appearance and personality. Even when Robert Audley reveals all her guilty secrets

and crimes, Sir Michael Audley seeks to protect and defend her. Sir Michael Audley exclaims: “Lucy! Tell me that this man is a madman! Tell me so, my love, or I shall kill him!” (Braddon, 1997, p.275). This quotation shows the power of Lady Audley’s angelic beauty over her husband. It is shocking to see that Sir Michael Audley is willing to kill his nephew in order to protect his marriage (rather, the illusion of this marriage). It can further be argued that her beauty is just an illusion, because beauty without harmony is not beauty, as Plato suggested: “Neither does the beauty of man depend on the soul alone, or the body alone, but upon the harmony of both” (Grube, 1927, pp.274-275).

Dorian Gray has an “extraordinary personal beauty” (Wilde, 2006, p.5). His beauty is described in the book many times. Lord Henry compares Dorian to “young Adonis who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose leaves” (Wilde, 2006, p.6). While Shakespeare described the beauty of the young man like a “‘map’ for all beauty, for all ages.” (Ma, 2016, p.112) we see that Oscar Wilde also described Dorian Gray’s beauty as universal, timeless and classical. Lord Henry likens Dorian Gray to the young Adonis and Narcissus. Thus, like Shakespeare’s “Fair Youth”, Dorian Gray can be considered as an icon of male beauty. His beauty attains a myth-like quality and status. In fact, it is no exaggeration to claim that Dorian Gray has become a myth (the same can be said of his creator, Oscar Wilde). In general, his beauty makes him attractive to most people he encounters. What is more, they do not only feel attracted by Dorian, but also trust him. In fact, he impresses his environment as innocent and virtuous. “One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world” (Wilde, 2006, p.17). He is thus depicted as an angelic creature. The association of Dorian with the angelic, pure and otherworldly is strengthened by the frequent use of the word ‘worship’ with regard to Dorian.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the situation is a little more complicated than it is in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. The approved idea of “The nastier people become, the uglier they look” (Synnott, 1990b, p.58) is still valid in this story. The uglier Dorian’s character becomes the uglier he looks but not the way it happens in real life. With the acceptance of Dorian’s wish, his face retains its beauty and the painting gets ugly as the time passes and as his soul gets more wicked. “His finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair” (Wilde, 2006, p.17) make almost everyone think that he is a good person. “There was something in his face that made one trust him at once” (Wilde, 2006, p.17). His beauty deceives everyone. After Dorian Gray’s cruel behaviour toward Sibyl Vane, he finds out that the expression of him on the portrait is changed, and he clearly sees the cruelty on his face. In the novel, Oscar Wilde

raised the question of the power of physical appearance and how it affects other people and also the possessor of beauty and its concomitant power.

Throughout the novel, various characters express their admiration for Dorian's physical appearance and seemingly virtuous character and pure soul. The soul is a highly abstract and complex concept. As it is abstract one cannot see the soul – neither other people's nor one's own. Thus, even though people think that they know each other very well, it is a delusion. Basil Hallward thinks that he knows Dorian. Yet, he is mistaken when he says that Dorian “would never bring misery upon anyone. His nature is too fine for that” (Wilde, 2006, p.67). Also, Lord Henry thinks to himself “It was delightful to watch him. With his beautiful face, and his beautiful soul, he was a thing to wonder at” (Wilde, 2016, p.51). Both Basil Hallward and Lord Henry are under the effect of Dorian's beauty. How could they know that Dorian's soul is beautiful? Basil and Lord Henry could see only the part of the soul that Dorian wanted to show. By looking at Dorian's beautiful appearance, they interpret his soul or expect it to be a beautiful soul. Maybe it is because human nature yearns for harmony in everything. Because of their expectations, they become victims of the halo effect of physical beauty. Even though Dorian has a beautiful angelic face, his soul is the opposite of it. In the case of Dorian, appearance and reality are incongruent. Dorian Gray never feels guilty about Sibyl Vane's death even though he realizes that she committed suicide because of his cruelty. Basil states that “with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvellous untroubled youth – I can't believe anything against you” (Wilde, 2006, p.127). However, afterwards Dorian kills Basil Hallward and pitilessly and cold-bloodedly coerces a friend of his who is a chemist to dissolve every part of Basil Hallward's dead body.

Whoever looks into Dorian's beautiful angelic face cannot fathom or imagine him to be evil and wicked. When Dorian tells the truth about himself to a girl, she does not believe him, because she believes that beauty is identical with goodness: “He had told her once that he was wicked, and she had laughed at him, and just answered that wicked people were always very old and very ugly” (Wilde, 2016, p.184). The common and rather wide-spread belief that beautiful people are good protects Dorian during his entire life. For example, it saves him from being killed by Sibyl Vane's brother. Dorian knew that “his beauty had been to him but a mask” (Wilde, 2006, p.185) that he put on his wicked soul. As it is known “Society, civilized society at least, is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment of those who are both rich and fascinating” (Wilde, 2016, p.120). Dorian lived a protected life. Dorian's appearance and his place in society make people think that he is virtuous. Basil Hallward thinks that “Sin is a thing

that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed" (Wilde, 2016, pp.126-127). Yet, he did not know that Dorian had found a way to conceal his true sinful self from the world.

By using the power of his eternal, and pure beauty, Dorian Gray starts to go after what is beautiful and what gives pleasure. Besides his lifestyle being hedonistic, it is also aesthetic. He lives the lifestyle without borders as he has his beauty that serves as a mask. Dorian falls in love with his own beauty and also trusts that his beauty will never fade away. As a consequence, he lives a life in which he becomes insensitive to others, and follows the aesthetic in anything. He follows anything or anyone that is beautiful uncontrollably, and inconsiderately of all the outcome.

Despite Wilde's publicly advocating the principles of aestheticism, Dorian's demise illustrates Wilde's recognition that aestheticism needs to be properly controlled. While the pursuit of beauty and happiness in life is always Wilde's ideal, he also implies that the consequences of one's actions must be thought out and the impact of one's decisions, beyond oneself, must also be carefully considered before acting on any impulse (Duggan, 2008, p.67).

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Lady Audley's Secret* the reader witnesses the reality of the separation of internal and external beauty. Throughout the novels, the reader experiences that "It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness. A handsome woman talks nonsense, you listen and hear not nonsense but cleverness. She says and does horrid things, and you see only charm. And if a handsome woman does not say stupid or horrid things, you at once persuade yourself that she is wonderfully clever and moral" (Tolstoy, 2012, p.259). Like in the words of Tolstoy, in both novels there are characters who are impressed by the beauty of the protagonists and believe that they are good and moral people. However, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Lady Audley's Secret* show that physical beauty and being virtuous, in other words, that body and soul can be incongruous and should therefore be considered separately.

There is no doubt that beauty gives immense power to its owner. It can facilitate friendship, love, popularity, success, and being respected. A beautiful person can make many things happen by impressing other people. Its power and effect on others, and its ephemeral nature make beauty become a byword. Everyone wants to have beauty, admires it, aspires to it and talks about it since the very beginning of humanity. Even though the perspective towards beauty changes depending on time and place, one thing does not change: its enchanting power. Legendary beauty has always kept its place in myths, children's stories, novels, and history. Generally, the power of beauty on other people is the first thing that comes to mind. Till Dorian

Gray and Lady Audley realize the curse of their beauty, they both use their power of beauty on others throughout the novels. They both use their power of beauty in different ways as they both have different motives. However, both of the characters end up hating their own beauty. For it is a truth that the enchanting, magical power of beauty affects the person who owns it too. The myth of Narcissus is one of the best examples of the power of beauty on the one who owns it. Beauty can be a curse on the beautiful person and while casting a spell on other people, the beautiful person might also fall victim to their own beauty, as, tragically, happened to Lady Audley and Dorian Gray.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley's beauty has such a powerful effect that she is described like a witch who bewitches everyone around her, mostly her husband. Her beauty is described in various parts of the novel. Apart from her physical beauty, constituted by her golden curls, blue eyes and fair skin, moreover her charm is described. "Miss Lucy Graham was blessed with that magic power of fascination by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile" (Braddon, 1997, p. 7). Even her apparent weakness and helplessness have a bewitching effect on people, especially on men, as Sir Michael Audley's daughter Alicia remarks: "She may bewitch every man in Essex, but she'd never make friends with my dog" (Braddon, 1997, p.84). In addition to the quasi-magical effect of Lady Audley, she is likened to a witch a couple of times.

Even her innocent and childlike manners are seen as bewitching. Her every move, glance, and even her existence are described as a spell on people. Lady Audley's domination over her husband is very conspicuous. "So complete was the dominion which Lady Audley had, in her own childish, unthinking way, obtained over her devoted husband" (Braddon, 1997, p.45). Especially her power over Sir Michael Audley is on such a scale that she says "It is coming – it is coming; I can twist him which way I like. I can put black before him, and if I say it is white, he will believe me" (Braddon, 1997, p.223). This brings to mind notions such as witchcraft and white and black magic. The idea of a witchlike effect and spell-like power of Lady Audley's beauty gets stronger as even after her husband learns about the truth, he still cares about her comfort and safety. After Sir Michael Audley learns the truth he tells Robert Audley: "Will you take yourself the duty of providing for the safety and comfort of this lady, whom I have thought my wife?" (Braddon, 1997, p.284). After learning about so many lies that his wife told him, that he is still thinking about her safety and comfort might seem surprising. However,

It is not surprising that when people are described or presented as physically attractive they are rated as having more desirable personality characteristics, a higher occupational, more likely to

be happily married, pleasant and of higher status. This has been found to be true in courtroom decisions: attractive defendants were judged less guilty and received less severe punishment than less attractive defendants (Alcock & Sadava, 2014, p.242).

Like Lady Audley, Dorian Gray experiences all the advantages of his extremely powerful angelic beauty. The reader gets the impression that his beauty is a spell over the people who see him. It makes people like, love, and trust him and, what is even more, it makes Basil Hallward worship him. Basil Hallward says: "I have always been my own master; had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray" (Wilde, 2006, p.9). In another part Basil says that "As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me" (Wilde, 2006, p.14). The reader sees throughout the book that there is nothing special about Dorian Gray's personality before and after the influence of Lord Henry. Before Lord Henry's influence over him, he is a boy who knows little and has little self-confidence. He has a weak character and can easily be influenced by people who have a strong personality. The influence of Lord Henry makes Dorian Gray indifferent to other people's joy and sorrow. It is possible to say that there is a halo effect on Basil Hallward and that Basil Hallward is blinded by the beauty of Dorian Gray. "Basil Hallward worshipped him" (Wilde, 2006, p.17). Yet, no doubt that this worship is because of Dorian Gray's beautiful appearance. Basil Hallward confesses to Dorian's quasi-magical influence over himself time and again. He says "I was dominated, soul, brain, and power by you" (Wilde, 2006, p.97). Dorian serves as Basil Hallward's muse. He is precious because of his beauty. The beautiful Dorian gives Basil, who values beauty, inspiration and an aim in life: To create beautiful works of art. Dorian's beauty is ultimate beauty like the one of Adonis, according to Basil. Basil never believes anything against Dorian and trusts him blindly.

It is not only Basil Hallward who Dorian Gray bring a magical effect on with his extraordinary, innocent, pure beauty. It affects most of the people he encounters, and most of these people do not believe any negative rumours about him. His beauty serves as a mask that conceals the wickedness of his soul and protects him. It magically makes people believe in him and trust him.

Reflections have always had a mystic side. From the oldest version of the mirror, which is water, to the obsidian, bronze and glass mirrors, reflectors have always been associated with witchcraft, superstition, misfortune and the spirit world. Painting something or someone as it really is can be regarded as capturing the moment and keeping it forever on the canvas. This way of thinking leads to the conclusion that, when a portrait is painted, it is like keeping that person on the canvas forever and making the sitter immortal in a way. In many aspects, portraits

and mirrors are considered almost equal. It is known that mirrors reflect the image clearly. In a sense, portraits are also the reflections of the sitters or whatever is painted. However, the portraits and mirrors resembling one another because they reflect an image is not the only common point. There is another common characteristic that makes portraits and mirrors mysterious and sinister in some cultures. Portraits and mirrors are believed to reflect not just the visual side of people, but also their spirituality or character. Thus, there arose a belief “that mirrors and portraits have agency and that they are gateways into the spirit world.” (Pease, 2017, p.190). That is why “many of the world’s cultures have bias against mirrors, a distrust of portraits” (Pease, 2017, p.190). There is a couple of reasons for this distrust. In some paintings, the visual effect of the portrait makes the spectator feel as if the portraits’ eyes were following them. Some paintings make the viewer feel as if the painted person was real; thus, seeing that painting is like meeting the person who is painted. The spectator can make a guess about the sitter’s thoughts or life. Thus, a portrait does not reflect only the sitter, it also tells about his or her soul. It is as if the painting has a life of its own. Yet, the painter and his style are important to make the paintings mirror-like. One of the most successful painters who drew portraits like magic mirrors were the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Pre-Raphaelite paintings are known to have a smooth surface, intense colors and many details. By taking those features of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings into consideration, paintings are very much like mirrors, especially Pre-Raphaelite portraits. The faces on the canvas of Pre-Raphaelite portraits are very suggestive. As it is stated before, the character, feelings, desires, life, and thoughts of the person on the canvas can be pondered upon and interpreted because the energy of the person is reflected in the painting like in a mirror. Moreover, the Pre-Raphaelites’ truth to nature of what is painted makes their portraits like mirrors that always tell the truth. According to Pease (2017), “If the artist does too a good job on the portrait, he can literally enter the spirit world, give the portrait a life of its own, and put the sitter and/or the viewers in mortal peril” (p.190).

In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, it is clearly stated that the portrait of Lady Audley was painted by a Pre-Raphaelite painter. However, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there is no such information given. Yet, it is possible to make inferences. Dorian Gray’s statement “There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of its own” (Wilde, 2006, p.100) can make the reader think that the portrait might be a Pre-Raphaelite one. The painter Basil Hallward’s truthfulness to nature, his love of and lust for beauty, the intense colors and details that he used make the painting realistic and vivid. Therefore, it can be argued that Basil Hallward is probably a Pre-Raphaelite painter. Furthermore, in the novel, Basil explains that he used Realism as a method which is also used

by the Pre-Raphaelites. When Basil Hallward talks to Dorian Gray about his love for Sibyl Vane, Basil says: “if she can create the sense of beauty in people whose lives have been sordid and ugly ... she is worthy of all your adoration, worthy of the adoration of the world” (Wilde, 2006, pp.70-71). In another part he says “An artist should create beautiful things” (Wilde, 2006, p.12). His praising beauty and giving great importance to it shows that Basil Hallward values and appreciates beauty. In both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Lady Audley’s Secret* “the role of the artist is to capture the inner essence of the sitter by portraying his or her bodily likeness” (Pease, 2017, p.190). The Pre-Raphaelite portraits of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray reveal the truth about their soul which is hidden under their beautiful appearance.

As mentioned before, the concepts of kalokagathia and the beauty mystique can be interpreted as suggesting that the physical appearance of a person is an expression of the state or quality of their soul, i.e. physical appearance is regarded as the mirror of the soul generally. In this way, beauty is thought to be the reflection of a pure and good soul, whereas ugliness is seen as the reflection of an evil soul. To interpret the appearance of a person and to come to a conclusion about them, the face is likely to give the most important clues to a person’s character, personality or state of soul (pure and virtuous or corrupted and evil, and states in between these two poles). By looking at somebody’s face, it is possible to know about a person’s “age, gender, and race ... health... moods and emotions.” (Synnott, 1989, p.607). Moreover, “the face indicates ... character and personality.” (Synnott, 1989, p.607). Most importantly, by looking at somebody’s face, one can decide whether someone is beautiful or ugly. Thereby, one’s face provides a lot of information and, besides, gives the onlooker a lot to think about and speculate upon. In both novels, there is a portrait of the protagonist. These portraits raise questions about art and truth, representation and perception. It can be argued that while the beautiful Lady Audley and the handsome Dorian Gray are generally perceived as pure and virtuous, their portraits reveal their true character like magic mirrors. In both novels, the writers display “the difference between what is intuitively expected and what is true” (Pease, 2017, p.197).

In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, the first point to touch upon is the resemblance of the portrait to Lady Audley. When Alicia talks about the portrait to Robert Audley for the first time, she says: “There is her own portrait, too, unfinished, but wonderfully like” (Braddon, 1997, p.54). By making this statement, Alicia confirms that the person represented in the portrait is almost as close to Lady Audley’s appearance as a reflection in a mirror. When Robert Audley sees the painting, he thinks that the painting looks like Lady Audley. Yet, he also notices some oddness about her facial expression. He describes it as “It was so like and yet so unlike” (Braddon, 1997,

p.57). He adds “I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediæval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in this portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend” (Braddon, 1997, p.57). Till that time no one had seen Lady Audley with this particular facial expression because she had not shown people that she could be the woman in the painting. The source of the oddness was the fact that the portrait reflects not only her appearance but also her soul. The contrast between her appearance and soul made Robert think that there is an oddness about the painting. Robert Audley does not like the painting because he thinks the expression does not fit the beautiful Lady Audley. However, Alicia thinks that “sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and is able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes” (Braddon, 1997, p.58). Alicia was aware of the fact that they have never seen Lady Audley like she is in the painting. Yet, she thinks that the wickedness reflected in the portrait is inside her and that the painter saw that part that was true. Lady Audley reveals the expression that Robert Audley saw in the painting a couple of times throughout the novel. She displays a horrible expression and a mysterious, sometimes mocking and triumphant smile, and cruel lines, when she tries to convince her husband that Robert Audley is mad, and when she talks to Robert Audley while Sir Michael Audley is ill, and also when she locks up Robert Audley in the Castle Inn before she sets fire to the house. The repeated appearance of this kind of expression on Lady Audley’s face throughout the novel strengthens the idea that the portrait of the Pre-Raphaelite painter reveals the truth about the sitter.

When Robert Audley sees the portrait of Lady Audley, he points out that the “lady’s portrait stood on an easel covered with a green baize” (Braddon, 1997, p. 56). The painting’s being covered is not a simple act, it has a connection with the idea of portraits resembling magic mirrors. In Japanese culture, “Mirrors ... are believed to attract evil spirits. Therefore, traditionally, in Japan a mirror is kept covered when not in use” (Pease, 2017, p.192). Like the unblest mirrors that are kept covered, in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, it is stated that the painting is covered with green baize. It does not mean that the portrait of Lady Audley was haunted or cursed. However, it was a mirror of her soul. At first, the reader might think that the painting is covered because it is unfinished. However, at the end of the novel, the portrait is described as covered again, this time with a curtain. The act of covering the painting strengthens the idea of the painting as a mirror in the novel. The portrait of Lady Audley does not have a perpetual connection with her life throughout the novel. However, while the painting is unfinished, Lady Audley’s smile is described as wicked. After it is finished, her smile is described as mocking.

This implies that she looks down upon the people whom she deceives. After the painter finished the portrait of Lady Audley, i.e. her soul, the portrait stays the same. It does not change according to her misdeeds and sins. However, as pointed out above, it reveals Lady Audley's tendency to use everybody she encounters for her own purposes.

In the novel, it is Robert Audley who draws attention to the strong similarity of Lady Audley's portrait to the characteristic features of Pre-Raphaelite painting. He makes the following remark about Lady Audley's portrait: "No one but a Pre-Raphaelite would have painted hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown" (Braddon, 1997, p.57). Lady Audley's hair is a vital component of her beauty and of the power she possesses through it. A similarly conspicuous emphasis on a woman's hair can be found in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* portrait. According to Karoglou's "Dangerous Beauty: Medusa in Classical Art" (2018), "Rossetti quotes from the Walpurgis Night scene of Goethe's *Faust* (4206-II) when Lilith makes her sole brief appearance and Mephistopheles warns Faust of Lilith's dangerous beauty, especially her ensnaring hair." (p.45) About this painting, Rossetti wrote the following lines: "Beware of her hair, for she excels/ All women in the magic of her locks/ And when she twines them round a young man's neck / She will not ever set him free again." (The Met, n.d.) The locks that are drawn in the portrait are very important because as it is mentioned before hair is not just hair but means more than the hair itself. "Women's hair, particularly when it is golden, has always been a Western preoccupation, for the Victorians it became an obsession." (Gitter, 1984, p.936) It has "rich and complex meanings, ascribing to it powers both magical and symbolic" (Gitter, 1984, p.936). While it can be associated with female purity, youth, power and beauty, Gitter in "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination" (1984) points out that "Golden hair is linked with wealth and female sexuality and it is the ideal vehicle to express their notorious and ambivalent fascination with money and female sexual power" (p.936). Women's hair can symbolize various properties. "At the same time, golden hair became the crowning glory of the mythologized Victorian grand woman" (Gitter, 1984, p.936). Thus, golden hair is a very powerful, enchanting, magical, and effective part of the person who owns it. In the portrait of Lady Audley, her shimmering curls are painted in a realistic and vivid manner, and that makes the painting mirror-like and lifelike in the novel. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley's hair is not something that is mentioned only when her portrait is described. Her hair is described as "the most wonderful curls in the world – soft and feathery, always floating away from her face, and making a pale halo around her head when the sunlight shone through them" (Braddon 1997, p.9). There is a clear halo effect that arises from

her hair and beautiful appearance. Her hair makes her seem as if she is an angel. Yet, her hair is just as dangerous as Medusa's serpent hair for the characters in *Lady Audley's Secret*. After a glimpse into her eyes and seeing the perfect combination in her appearance, she captivates and bewitches. After seeing her childish, angelic beauty almost nobody believes that she is an evil person. In this way of thinking, Robert Audley can be likened to Perseus who is "young, brave, and handsome hero sets off to slay a hideous and wicked monster" (Karoglou, 2018, p.6). The Pre-Raphaelites emphasized the beautiful hair of beautiful women in their paintings. However, Lady Audley's golden curls mean more than just beautiful hair both in the painting and the novel. The painter of Lady Audley's portrait succeeded in creating a portrait that reflects both the lady's angelic beauty and her wicked soul. That made the portrait both mirror-like and mysterious.

The resemblance between Dorian Gray and the portrait of him is extraordinary. It is described as "a wonderful likeness" (Wilde, 2006, p.24) in the novel. The resemblance is so powerful that Lord Henry says "Mr. Gray, come over and look at yourself" (Wilde, 2006, p.24) as if he was showing a mirror to him. The painting was like a copy of Dorian Gray and from the first moment the portrait was finished, everyone in the room noticed that the portrait has its own life. After Dorian sees the portrait and feels desperate about the inevitable destiny of getting old, Basil decides to rip up the canvas. Dorian wants to stop Basil and says "It would be murder!" (Wilde, 2006, p.26). His using the word 'murder' emphasizes how alive and vivid the portrait is. Before Dorian discovers the extraordinary magic in the portrait, he says, "It is part of myself. I feel that" (Wilde, 2006, p.27). Even before the portrait shows its magic, it made Dorian feel the power that captured his soul. Basil Hallward's calling the portrait "real Dorian" (Wilde, 2006, p.28) and Lord Henry's asking "Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?" (Wilde, 2006, p.28) strengthen the sense of the portrait's similarity to Dorian. It was not just Dorian who felt the life and soul in the portrait, the enchantment was strongly impressing all spectators, even the painter himself.

Like Lady Audley's portrait, the picture of Dorian was also kept covered in the novel. The first time he realizes the change in the expression of him in the portrait, he also realizes that the portrait is like a mirror that he looks at after he does cruel things. The painting makes him question himself about his behaviour towards Sibyl Vane. Just as one looks into a mirror and feels one's own gaze on oneself, Dorian's portrait was also "watching him" (Wilde, 2006, p.79). After he clearly sees the changed expression and is sure about the change, he is conscious of the fact that the portrait is the reflection of his soul. "This portrait would be to him the most

magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul” (Wilde, 2006, p.91). It was a map, a guide that he was fond of looking at from time to time, and sometimes it became a loathful experience to see his corrupted soul. To hide his increasingly ugly portrait, he puts a screen onto it. However, it would not be enough when servants are around, and Dorian cannot help thinking about a possible robbery. Besides, his friends Lord Henry and Basil Hallward want to see the portrait. Dorian Gray could not take the risk of the secret of his life being seen by anyone. That is why he uses a coverlet to cover the painting and locks it in his old schoolroom, which is a place that he has not entered for many years. This is the only way for him to feel safe from discovery – after all, the portrait is dangerously “conscious of the events of life as they occurred” (Wilde, 2006, p.90) and a clear and stark reflection of these. Thus, unlike Lady Audley’s portrait, Dorian’s portrait has a haunted side. “In Wilde’s story the picture is metaphysically a mirror of Dorian’s inner being” (Pease, 2017, p.192), and the portrait is repeatedly referred to as a mirror in the novel. Even though Basil Hallward thinks that he put the secret of his soul into the painting at the beginning, the reader finds out that Basil was wrong. There was nothing of him. It was the exact mirror of Dorian and his soul. Dorian Gray’s portrait has a mysterious side that makes it change consistently according to his crimes and sins. It becomes worse day by day as Dorian keeps committing crimes and sins. Towards the end of the novel, Basil Hallward sees the changed version of the painting. The expression of Dorian in the painting makes Basil feel “disgust and loathing” (Wilde, 2006, p.131). So the portrait was like a sinister mirror that is to be hidden under a fabric in a locked room. Even though Dorian’s portrait changes consistently, unlike Lady Audley’s portrait, there is a common point between the two paintings in both novels. One could see and understand the character of Dorian Gray and Lady Audley by looking at their portraits.

“What is implicit in all this is art’s ability to provide a window not only on the divine, but also on the demonic” (Pease, 2017, p.197). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the portrait of him was a window on the demonic. It was a curse that occurred as a blessing at first to Dorian Gray. His staying young and beautiful by means of the portrait’s getting old, saves his life and makes him live a life as a popular young man. However, these were not enough for him to live a peaceful and fulfilled life. The portrait was a curse to him. It was the window that opens to his wicked soul. At the end of the novel, he feels hate toward his beauty, Basil and the portrait. “When Dorian Gray tries to destroy the portrait, in a mad attempt to erase the evidence of his own moral decay” (Pease, 2017, p.189), he ends his own life. This end intensifies the mysteriousness

of the portrait because it makes the reader think that from the time that Dorian wished for eternal youth and beauty, he was a person divided into two. His appearance, i.e. his body, was existing while his soul was trapped in the portrait. Dorian's mad wish tied fast his life to art and revealed all the ugliness of Dorian's soul. This entanglement is a curse to Dorian Gray's life. Dorian Gray hates his beauty, and the love that he feels for his own beauty fades away. The painting's turning back to its original beauty after Dorian's death which ends the connection of his life with the portrait, emphasizes Oscar Wilde's aesthetic perspective toward the connection of life and art. The writer who supports art for art's sake gives the reader a very precious lesson with the lines: "Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel" (Wilde, 2006, p.185). Beautiful things should fade away; only then does their beauty become meaningful.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, it is hard to say that the painting became a window on the demonic. However, it is possible to say that it showed her wicked soul like a mirror, and it also brought her misfortune. If there was not a portrait of her, George would not know that she is alive. Starting everything from this painting, her lies are uncovered one by one. At the end, the power of the paintings cause the ruin of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray. It is questionable whether the power that destroyed the lives of the main characters was of evil spirits or bad luck. Yet, it is clear that the portraits had a detrimental effect on the lives of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the significance and enchanting power of beauty in Western culture in general and in *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde in particular. This thesis has examined the effects of beauty on Lady Audley and Dorian Gray and on their environments. Special attention has been accorded to the Pre-Raphaelite portraits of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray. The relationship between the representation of outward appearance and inward being (body and soul) has been scrutinized and discussed. It has been argued that the Pre-Raphaelite portraits of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray display both the beauty of the characters and the truth about their soul and the portraits can be compared to magic mirrors.

Results indicate that beauty has a strong significance that is rooted in the distant past; it is a cosmic value that cannot be underestimated. The power of beauty is much stronger than is commonly assumed, it is almost magical. The strongest of the source of power of beauty is the idea of kalokagathia that dates back to antiquity. The idea of kalokagathia united beauty with

goodness in the minds of people so that people tend to believe that beautiful people have a good soul. Humanity reinforced the very old idea of combining the good and the beautiful in their literature including fairy tales. As the time passes the good and beautiful became almost inseparable. Hereby, beauty became a power that can serve as a mask that hides the evil soul, or as a spell that turns everything to an advantage of the beautiful person.

In both novels, the characters Lady Audley and Dorian Gray affect the people around them with their angelic beauty. Their beauty makes people want to be friends or partners with them. Moreover, the angelic beauty that both of the characters possess make people trust them. Yet, it is seen that the beauty of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray is nothing but a mask that hides their evil soul and ugly crimes. The idea of the equalization of beauty and goodness in the minds of people makes them blind to the crimes of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray. Thus, whatever Lady Audley and Dorian Gray do, their beauty convinces people that they are innocent and pure.

The importance of beauty in the lives of people never disappeared fully. Yet, in the Victorian Era, the accelerated industrialization caused ugliness in both the environment and people. At that time, the appreciation of beauty became a less significant concern for humanity. Aestheticism emerged as a reaction to materialism, commerce and ugliness that industrialization brought to the era. Afterwards, the Aesthetic movement occurred, beauty became the aim of any artwork, rather than being a random outcome. Moreover, Aestheticism reminded humanity of the significance of beauty. Before the occurrence of the Aesthetic movement, Pre-Raphaelite portraits of women gave rise to beauty to gain prominence again and paved the way to Aestheticism. The Pre-Raphaelites played an important role for this thesis. It was argued that in both novels the portraits of the protagonists are Pre-Raphaelite. While Lady Audley's portrait is articulated as Pre-Raphaelite portrait clearly, there is no such information for Dorian Gray's portrait. Yet, making inferences by adducing the details of the portrait and style of the artist, it can be argued that Dorian Gray's portrait is also a Pre-Raphaelite painting. The impressive details, vivid colors, mirrorlike texture, and incredible similarity of the portraits of the sitters convince the reader that they are both Pre-Raphaelite portraits. The reader feels impelled to ponder the relationship between the physical appearance and personality of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray, respectively, i.e. the duality of body and soul.

The portraits of Lady Audley and Dorian Gray have so much in common. Yet, they are also different from each other. Both portraits resemble a mirror as the faces in the portraits resemble the sitters very much. Both portraits show the souls of the sitters while displaying

their beautiful appearance. Lady Audley's portrait indicates a duality as it reflects both her beautiful physical appearance and her ugly, wicked soul. That makes her portrait mirror-like. Dorian Gray's portrait indicates a more complex duality compared to Lady Audley's. At the beginning the face of Dorian on the portrait possesses a pure beauty. Yet, as the time passes, every evil action of him that corrupts his soul is reflected on the portrait. It is a more sinister version of a portrait holding a duality. The duality the Lady Audley's portrait holds is closer and more applicable to real life.

The magnificent beauty that both Lady Audley and Dorian Gray possess gives them a magic-like power. The beauty becomes a means of their dreams come true. Lady Audley starts living a rich and comfortable life, making people believe in her lies, she manipulate her husband as she likes, uses her beauty as a mask that hides her evil nature and secrets, and finally after her real identity comes out, her beauty enables her to elude punishment. Dorian Gray lives an aesthetic lifestyle and goes after what is beautiful to him without being worried about getting old. He enchants and inspires people around him. Moreover, his beauty makes people trust him. The ones who see Dorian's beauty do not believe the evil things that they hear about him, and because of his beauty he is able to go on with his everyday life in society. His pure beauty and youth save his life from James Vane. Both of the characters live all the advantages of their beauty. Yet, their life ends tragically. They start hating their own beauty. In the end, both Lady Audley's and Dorian Gray's lives collapse because of their utter lack of balance and harmony.

This we altogether fail to see or understand: that when a soul that is strong and great in every way has to rule an inferior body, or vice versa, the whole creature is not beautiful – for it lacks the greatest harmony, but the creature that is in the contrary state is, for him who has eyes to see, most beautiful and lovely (Grube, 1927, p.275).

To summarise, my thesis aimed to show that beauty which is seen as superficial and insignificant by many people is an important quality that possess great power and should be taken more seriously. The duality of inward and outward beauty in art and life deserves more notice and attention.

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