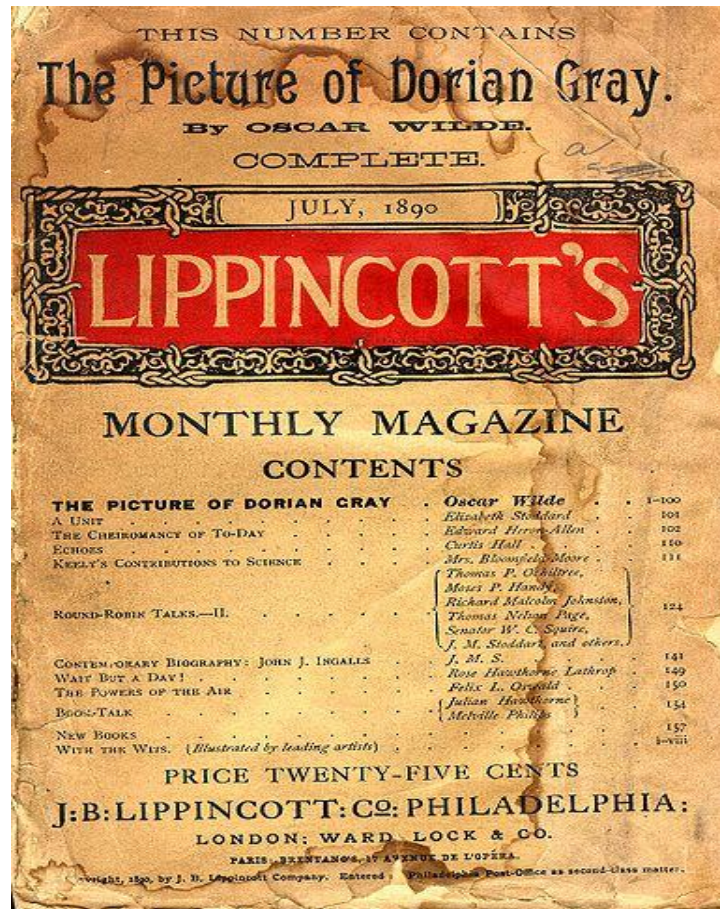


**Colour symbolism in the
novel “The Picture of
Dorian Gray” by Oscar
Wilde.**

**by Krasheninnikova
Elizaveta**

Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a true masterpiece. It contains a lot of symbols, motives, allusions, which are now and then even provocative.



- Oscar Wilde was a genuine artist of poetic word.



Natural sciences present colour as *a light flux.*

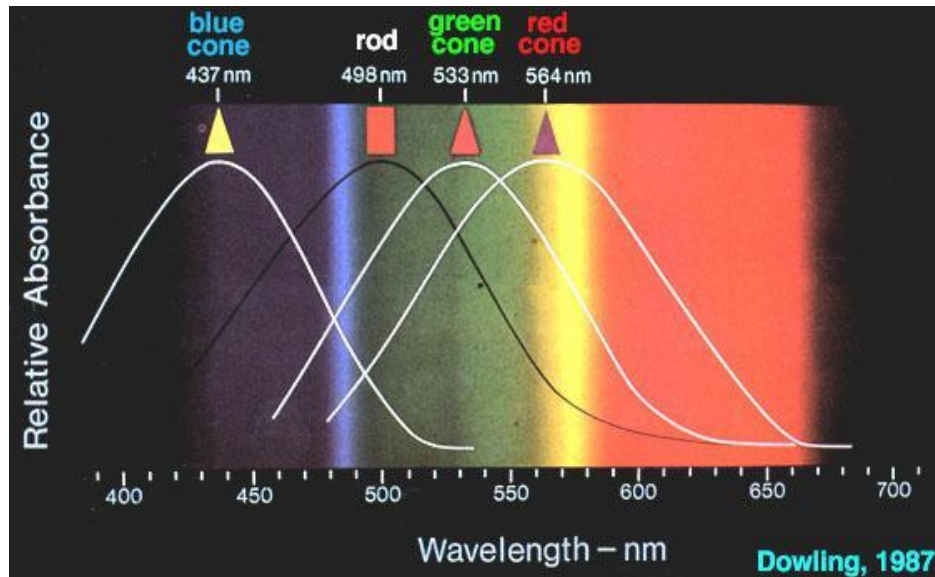


Fig. 14. The peak spectral sensitivities of the the 3 cone types and the the rods in the primate retina (Brown and Wald, 1963). From Dowling's book (1987).

For literature's purposes:

- spiritual basis of colour;
- “*perceptual and moral effect of colour*” (J.W. Goethe).



The art conception of the Pre-Raphaelites.

- A supply of criticism aimed at the modern society from a position of Beauty.
- Life should be more aesthetically acceptable.
- The principle of stylization .
- The main features of the Pre-Raphaelites are:
 1. exaggerated decorativism;
 2. bright colouring;
 3. detailed elaboration.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti

“Proserpine”.

(1874)

Oil on canvas.

Tate Gallery,

London, UK



John Everett Millais *"Ophelia"*.
(1851–1852)
Oil on canvas
Tate Britain, London



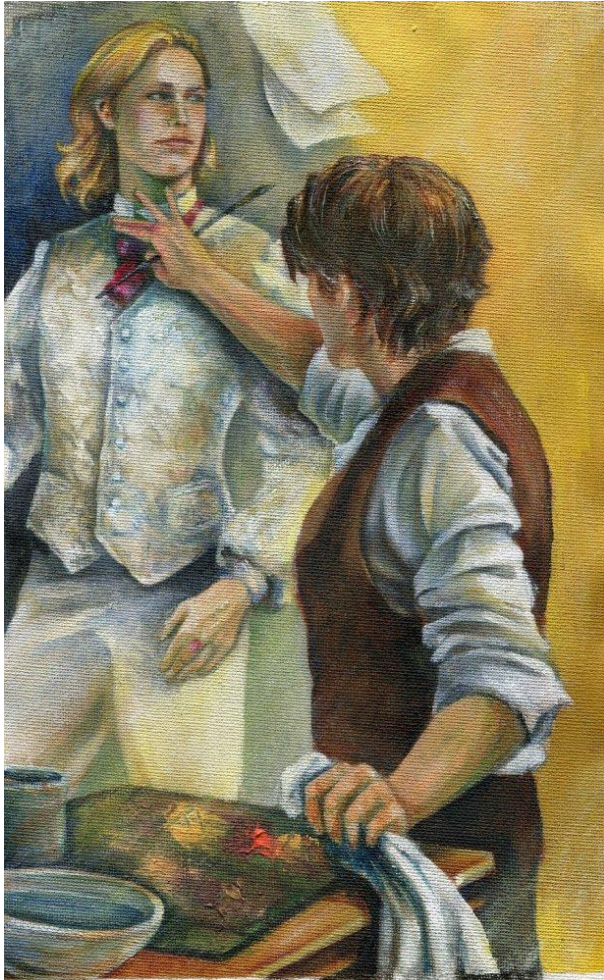
John William Waterhouse *"The Lady of Shalott"*
(1888)
Oil on canvas
Tate, London

The main character – young and handsome dandy Dorian Gray.

- a lad of delightful beauty “with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair”.
- “Immobilized” colours are the implementation of eternal youth, which Dorian longed for.



The portrait painted by Basil Hallward is a true work of Art.



the same “gold hair, blue eyes, and rose-red lips”.

*“foul parody ... infamous,
ignoble satire...”*

- Despite having transformed beyond recognition, the portrait preserves the protagonist’s features.
- Nevertheless “gold in the thinning hair”, “scarlet on the sensual mouth” could be noticed in the canvas, “the eyes had something of ... their blue”.



A generalized colour characteristic of the protagonist:

- ***Lord Henry:***

“Young Adonis, who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves”.

(I chapter)

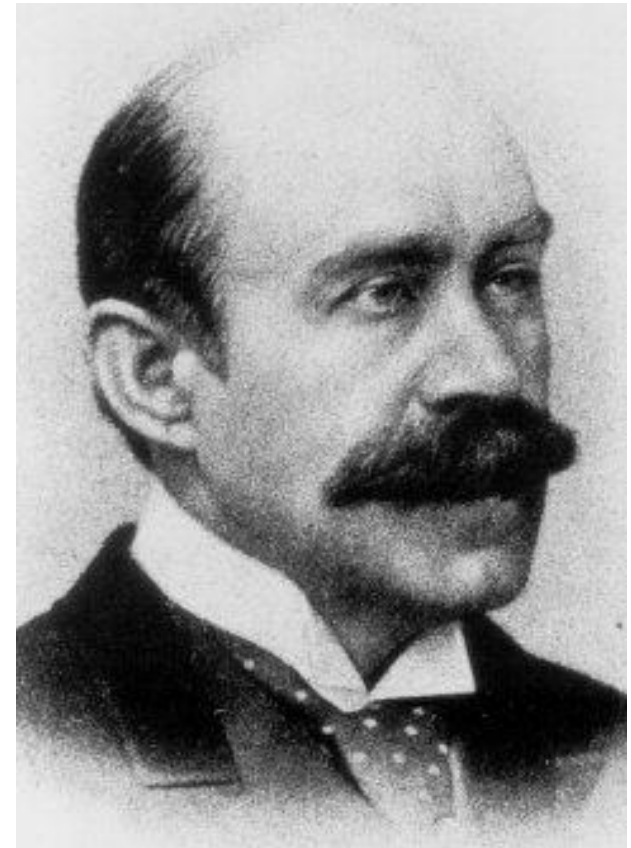
- ***An unknown sender to Dorian:***

“The world is changed because you are made of ivory and gold”.

(XX chapter)

Aestheticism (by Walter Pater)

- no attention to moral;
- absolutized pure Beauty;
- refined and exquisite form;
- worship of inanimate nature.



The evidence of this theory in the novel:

- Colour is frequently expressed by the epithets, metaphors and comparisons with gems, metals.
- The beauty of things seems to be immortal.
- The names of material are used with the meaning of tints.
- In the novel the colours of nature are reconsidered by the objects of the material world.

The examples of comparison of colours with gems:

- “crocodiles with small beryl eyes”;
- “the opal-and-iris-throated birds”;
- “His eyes deepened into amethyst”.



The colours in the descriptions of the sky:

- “the hollowed turquoise of the summer sky” (turquoise - a greenish-blue colour of this mineral);
- “The sky was pure opal”;
- “a thin wreath of smoke was rising. It curled ... through the nacre-coloured air” (nacre - a hard substance, that forms the inner layer of the shells of certain molluscs);
- “a copper-green sky”.



The examples of comparison of colours with metals:

- “the leafless trees shook their black iron branches to and fro”;
- “the water’s silent silver”;
- “the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine”.





Fatal “yellow” book



Dorian’s likings and
passions



a mosaic of different
paints and tints

- olive-green chrysoberyl”;
- “flame-red
cinnamon-stones”;
- “books bound in tawny
satins”;
- “altar frontals of crimson
velvet”.

Lord Henry: “Sin is the only real colour-element left in modern life”.

- Vivid colours flash out in the moments when Dorian’s vices and crimes are shown.

(The illustrations by Viktoria Svichkar)



The incident with Sibyl Vane and the first torture of conscience:



- “... tiny scarlet speck that makes men mad”.
- “He was trying to gather up the scarlet threads of life, and to weave them into a pattern; to find his way through the sanguine labyrinth of passion through which he was wandering”.

The scene of Basil Hallward's murder and the description of the dead man:

- “loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening”;
- “the light shot up for a moment in a flame of murky orange”;
- the dead man's “glistening yellow face”.



The scene in the den:



- “The moon ... like a yellow skull”;
- “orange, fanlike tongues of fire”;
- “a tattered green curtain”;
- “Two red sparks flashed for a moment in the woman's sodden eyes”

Enumerated examples pay attention to the key colour signs. They are obvious evidence of the Oscar Wilde's art genius.

