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Elements of Literariness in Oscar Wilde's Novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Teaching the Novel in High School

Alenka Žbogar

Abstract

In terms of motifs and themes, Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is close to teenagers' reception needs: it touches on identity, double morals, the search for identification, and manners of socialization. This article explores certain other important elements of literariness in this novel that have been overlooked so far, indicating opportunities for opening the door to understanding and interpretation suitable for teenagers. It describes the elements of literariness tied primarily to the novel's linguistic and stylistic structure: the well-thought-out composition of the rhetorical figures, which, due to translation deficiencies, cannot be entirely deciphered in Slovenian. Proceeding from various metaphor theories, such as substitution theory (Aristotle 1982), as well as more modern ones (Black 1962, 1979; Bouverot 1969; Richards 1936), the article demonstrate that the novel uses a well-conceived structure and show the function of rhetorical figures, which are derived in several ways: 1) using a plant paradigm, which combines the recurring semantic rhetorical figures of the rose, flower, and blossom running across several chapters, forming a complex semantic unit; 2) using an animal paradigm, which combines the recurring semantic rhetorical figures of the bee and the spider; and 3) using the recurring semantic figures of the sky (with special emphasis on shades of blue) in an interesting dynamic: the recurring figure of the sky is followed by two chapters without this figure, which repeats five times, in which the sky in the first figure is turquoise (chapter 2) and in the last blue (chapter 18). Although the Slovenian translation of the novel (Wilde 1986) largely lacks these semantic nuances of the English original, the article recommends a comparative analysis of the original and the Slovenian translation. Interdisciplinary coverage in connection with English classes provides an insight into a holistic understanding of translation as a complex practice and familiarizes us with the fact that translation is "an active category that is constantly evolving" (Pregelj 2018: 12). High-school instruction proceeds from the didactic principle of systematic and organized learning of how to read literary works, while striving for "conscious and full experience, understanding, evaluation, comparison, and classification of literary works, taking into account general reading factors and the special features of reading literature" (Krakar Vogel 2004).

Keywords: structure, function of rhetorical figures, translation into Slovenian, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, high-school (Slovenian) literature instruction, interdisciplinary connections with English classes

Literariness is a fundamental issue that literary theory seeks to provide adequate answers to, and it is also one of the central nodes of literature instruction in schools. This article understands literariness in line with Marko Juvan's definition (2000: 44): as "a flexible historically, socially, and culturally differentiated convention derived from the immanent features of certain literary works—that is, classical, canonized, or paradigmatic works" (cf. Schmidt 1997: 144). The high-school curriculum for Slovenian (literature) (Poznanovič Jezeršek 2008) does not prescribe this novel as obligatory (although coverage of Wilde's *Salome* is obligatory), but high-school teachers often cover it nonetheless. In terms of motifs and themes, the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is close to teenagers' reception needs: it touches on identity, double morals, the search for identification, and socialization.[1] This article[2] explores certain other important elements of literariness that have been overlooked so far and that open the door to understanding and interpretation for teenagers. It describes the elements of literariness primarily tied to the novel's linguistic and stylistic structure: the well-thought-out composition of the rhetorical figures, which, due to translation deficiencies, cannot be entirely deciphered in Slovenian. At least two fundamental objectives of Slovenian high-school literature instruction are achieved by familiarizing high-school students with the elements of literariness described below: active contact with fiction and cultivation of readers with a good knowledge of literature (Poznanovič Jezeršek 2008). Because the Slovenian translation of the novel (Wilde 1986) largely lacks these semantic nuances of the English original, interdisciplinary coverage (in connection with English classes) is recommended.

Proceeding from various metaphor theories, such as substitution theory (Aristotle 1982), as well as more modern ones (Black 1962, 1979; Bouverot 1969; Richards 1936), the article shows that the novel uses a deliberate structure and rhetorical figures that are derived in several ways: 1) using a plant paradigm, which combines the recurring semantic rhetorical figures of the rose, flower, and blossom running across several chapters, forming a complex semantic unit; 2) using an animal paradigm, which combines the recurring semantic rhetorical figures of the bee and the spider; and 3) using recurring semantic figures of the sky (with special emphasis on shades of blue) in an interesting dynamic: the recurring figure of the sky is followed by two chapters without this figure, which repeats five times, in

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1 For more on reading literature and teenagers, see Žbogar (2014: 551–57).

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which the sky in the first figure is turquoise (chapter 2) and in the last it is blue (chapter 18).

Due to inconsistency in translating the recurring semantic figures of the flower, rose, and blossom, and the blue and turquoise colors in the recurring figures of the sky, which connects both paradigms, these carefully structured rhetorical figures and the specific functions they have in the novel cannot be perceived in the Slovenian translation (Wilde 1986). In the English original, the rhetorical figures follow the development of Gray's personality from a naive young man, whom the narrator places in Basil Hallward's studio at the beginning of the novel, to a man that makes a pact with the devil because he wants to stay young forever. The very first paragraph of the novel introduces the reader to the exceptional semantic charge of vegetation and its scent. The studio where the protagonist appears in the first paragraph reflects the atmosphere of a summer garden.

The setting itself is not metaphorical (Black 1962, 1979), but it does evoke a range of symbolic dimensions of the garden and the alluring scent connected with it: both symbols strongly characterize not only Catholic culture, but also other cultures (e.g., Muslim or Cabalist). Scent is an important initiation symbol: "Perfume plays an important part in purification, the more so because it is often an exhalation of such incorruptible substances as resin" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 748). Placing the protagonist at the beginning of the novel into an art studio pervaded by the stunning scent of flowers can be associated with the primordial innocence of paradise—the garden being "the immovable centre, the heart of the world and the point at which Heaven and Earth enter into communion" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 737), which seems deliberate. The poetic imagery accompanies the development of the protagonist's personality from his initial paradisiacal naivete, which is natural and therefore in contact with the divine and cyclical, to his gradual descent into demonic, static, and unnatural eternal youth and entrapment in the modern urban world alienated from the natural and nature (more on allusions to the urban environment of London, the theater, and so on is provided below).

Already at the beginning of the novel, the narrator introduces the reader to the symbolism of vegetation and the first principle, arch, or primordial connection with the divine. The contact between the metaphors of vegetation, which in the novel allude especially to the divine and the natural, and the metaphors of animals, which are predominantly connected with the demonic and unnatural (with both paradigms being nonetheless correlated) is established by the recurring semantic rhetorical figure of the sky. The sky (heaven) mirrors the current development of events as well as what has already happened and what is still going to happen—thus in a way, it projects the existing.

> Heaven is a direct manifestation of transcendence, power, sacrality and everlastingness which no Earth-dweller can attain. The mere fact of being high, of being high up, means being powerful (in the religious sense), and being as such filled with the sacred. (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 484–85).

In chapter 1, when Dorian Gray steps from the garden (paradise?) into the studio, where he meets Lord Henry, the man draws attention to his looks, saying that youth is the only thing worth having. This shocks Dorian so much that a spray of lilac falls from his hand, and a bee comes and scrambles over it for a moment. The bee is "a universal quickening power between Heaven and Earth, they come to symbolize the vital principal and to incarnate the soul" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 79), indicating the collective and individual, the secular and spiritual, the contact between the divine (the natural, cyclical cycle from birth to death) and the demonic (urban, static, and eternal youth). The bee appears in this telling role at least twice in the novel: in chapters 1 and 10 (of a total of twenty), which suggests it accompanies important shifts in the plot at the beginning of the novel and its climax.

> After a time the bee flew away. He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro. (Wilde 1974: 2/23)[3]

> Čez nekaj časa je čebelica odletela. Videl je, kako se je splazila v marogasto trobento vrtnega slaka. Zazdelo se mu je, da je cvet vzdrhtel, potem pa se je nežno zazibal sem in tja. (Wilde 1986: 2/66)

When the bee flies away, the flower quivers. In the Slovenian version of the novel, the word "flower" is translated as *cvet* 'blossom', through which a metonymy is introduced, blurring the dividing line between the recurring semantic rhetorical figures of the rose, blossom, and flower. Dorian Gray is initially connected with the metaphor of the rose (similar to his beloved Sibyl Vane), also the lilac to some extent, and then the flower (the metaphor of the rose evokes his initial innocence, whereas the metaphor of the flower evokes his youth and beauty), and only when a desire develops in him to stay young forever does the metonymy of the blossom appear, which is associated with the partiality and narcissism portrayed by Basil Hallward.

> The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed

[3] The first number indicates the chapter and the second number indicates the page in that chapter.

> to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ. (Wilde 1974: 1/1)

The bees fly around the garden dominated by stillness, murmuring (the verb "to murmur" is onomatopoetic and used to ascribe human properties to the bees). London roars in the background "like the bourdon note of a distant organ," which predicts the predominance of the urban over the natural and resembles the tense and unrelaxed Lord Henry, whose words (his own and those from the poisonous book) will captivate Dorian Gray (similar to London with its sound) so much that he will give in to the demonic.

> Every month as it wanes brings you nearer to something dreadful. Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly… Ah! Realize your youth while you have it. (Wilde 1974: 2/22).

> Z vsakim mesecem, ki se izteče, ste vse bliže in bliže nečemu strašnemu. Čas je ljubosumen na vas in se bojuje proti vašim lilijam in rožam. Postali boste bledi, lica vam bodo upadla, oči ugasnile. Strašno boste trpeli… Oh! Zavedite se svoje mladosti, dokler jo imate. (Wilde 1986: 2/65).

The personification of (jealous) time is complemented by two metaphors: the lily and the rose. The metaphor "roses" is translated into Slovenian as *roža* 'flower', which blurs the metaphorical role of the rose, whose rose color became the symbol of rebirth because of the semantic kinship between the Latin words *rosa* (rose) and *ros* 'dew' or 'rain'. (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 814). The lily is the symbol of whiteness, purity, and virginity, but also ambivalent properties, which are "a symbol of the potential of the individual to realize the antitheses of his or her being" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 607). Both metaphors thus overlap with the protagonist's characteristics from the beginning of the novel. At the same time, due to "relationship with blood, roses seem often to have been regarded as symbols of mystical rebirth" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 814), indicating the tragic transformation of Dorian's personality. When Dorian first looks at his portrait painted by Basil Hallward, he sees a perishable creature, and at that moment his world splits into appearance and truth, darkness and light, life and death, youth and old age: his experience of himself and the world becomes split, which is evoked by the following comparison: "His nature had developed like a flower, had borne blossoms of scarlet flame" (Wilde 1974: 4/54–55).

After he is banished from paradise (the studio), he forgets about his own inherent divinity and turns into a modern man obsessed with eternal youth. The expanded image using the metonymy of the blossom in chapter 4 heralds the beginning of Dorian's inability to perceive himself and the world

holistically and the influence of the demonic over him (expressed through the metaphor of the fire or flame). When Dorian no longer perceives himself holistically (naturally or cyclically), when he desires to remain young forever (which implies ambivalence, unnaturalness, and stasis), the metaphor of the rose or flower is replaced by the metonymy of the blossom marked with flame. When he meets Lord Henry, "[L]ife suddenly became fiery-coloured to him" (Wilde 1974: 2/19), in which the word "fiery" alludes to his gradual demonic transformation.

> His nature had developed like a flower, had borne blossoms of scarlet flame. (Wilde 1974: 4/54–55).
>
> Njegova osebnost se je razvila kot roža, rodila je škrlatno rdeče cvetove. (Wilde 1986: 4/96).

The Slovenian translation does not retain the metonymy of the English original: the translation of "had borne blossoms of scarlet flame" as "rodila je škrlatno rdeče cvetove" (had borne scarlet red blossoms) blurs the semantic nuances evoked by the noun "flame." Therefore, a more suitable translation would be *rodila je cvetove škrlatnega ognja*. The metonymy of "blossoms of flame" indicates Dorian's demonic transformation, which is emphasized by the word "flame," which is blurred in Slovenian.

This transformation is reflected not only by Hallward's portrait, which begins to grow old instead of the protagonist, but also by Dorian's narcissistic traits expressed in his attitude toward the young actress Sibyl Vane. Dorian is in love with Sibyl but, after she disappoints him in front of his friends with a poor theater performance, he "cuts her off," which breaks her completely and drives her to suicide. This tragic event is heralded by a sentence describing the atmosphere at the theater right before the show. The comparison reflects the tense atmosphere and heat in the hall and heralds Sibyl's horrific death, which she was driven to by her unhappy love for Dorian: "She had swallowed something by mistake, some dreadful thing they use at theaters… it had either prussic acid or white lead in it" (Wilde 1974: 8/98).

> The heat was terribly oppressive, and the huge sunlight flamed like a monstrous dahlia with petals of yellow fire. (Wilde 1974: 7/80)
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> Vročina je strašno pritiskala in orjaška svetilka je žarela kot dalija velikanka z žoltimi zublji cvetnih listov. (Wilde 1986: 7/121).

> Vročina je strašno pritiskala in orjaška svetilka je žarela kot pošastna dalija z rumenimi ognjenimi listi. (A. Ž.)[4]

This comparison is part of a figure that is also composed of the recurring semantic rhetorical figures in chapters 4, 8, and 18. The Slovenian translation "z žoltimi zublji cvetnih listov" ("with yellow flames of the petals") obscures the deliberate metaphorical structure of the original: the word *rumen* 'yellow' (in the decadent sense of yellow) would have been semantically more appropriate than the archaic Slovenian word for yellow *žolt*, and *ognjeni listi* 'fiery petals' would have been more appropriate than *zublji cvetnih listov* 'petal flames'. The expression "monstrous dahlia," which has been translated into Slovenian as *(dalija) velikanka* 'giant dahlia', should have been translated as *pošasten* 'monstrous', in line with Fran,[5] a Slovenian dictionary portal.

> When the blood crept from its face, and left behind a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes, he would keep the glamour of boyhood. Not the blossom of his loveliness would ever fade. Not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of Greeks, he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous. (Wilde 1974: 8/106)

As already mentioned above, the metonymy of the blossom expresses Dorian's partial perception of himself: "not the blossom of his loveliness would ever fade." The metaphor "pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes" is part of the recurring semantic rhetorical figure of lead that appears three times (in chapters 4, 8, and 18): it indicates Dorian's insensitivity, ruthlessness, and selfish individualism. Dorian's twisted nature grows more obvious after he hurts Sibyl, which is reflected in his portrait, which becomes increasingly evil after Sibyl's death. The following sentence appears in chapter 18, when Sibyl dies: "The dead leaves that were blown against the leaded panes seemed to him like his own wasted resolutions and wild regrets" (Wilde 1974: 18/199).

The metaphorical adjective "leaded" (panes) alludes to Dorian's inability to attain collective and general values. The eyes in the recurring semantic rhetorical figure in chapter 8 are connected with the panes in chapter 18 because windows in a house have a similar function as eyes in living beings. "The window symbolizes receptivity" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 1112). The covert comparison or moderate identification (Bouverot 1969) creates a parallel between the dead leaves and Dorian's wrong life decisions, and the regret he feels in this regard. The comparison in chapter 1, with which Lord Henry expresses Dorian's beauty, youth, and purity ("as if

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4 Translated by Alenka Žbogar.

5 monstruózen -zna -o prid. (ọ́) knjiž. *pošasten, spačen:* monstruozen videz človeka / monstruozen nebotičnik *nenavadno visok, velik* (www.fran.si).

he was made out of… rose leaves"; Wilde 1974: 1/3), is no longer possible. Dorian is compared to dead, fallen leaves that are being blown against the lead panes. The leaves are fragile and have already lost all their life juice, and the panes are made of lead, which implies that Dorian's decisions will remain unrealized: he will never marry Sibyl Vane and the regret he felt for hurting her was only a flash in his mind. However, just like dead leaves grow yellow and fall and trees grow green again in spring, Dorian, too, receives a new life opportunity in the next chapter: he meets young Hetty; it is May, he is in love again and firmly decided. "I am going to alter" (Wilde 1974 19/210). When he is describing Hetty to Lord Henry, he says: "She was quite beautiful and wonderfully like Sibyl Vane" (Wilde 1974 19/210).

The recurring figure of the flower appears in chapter 1: "He is some brainless beautiful creature who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence" (Wilde 1974: 1/8). In chapter 2, Dorian is listening to Lord Henry's views of life and the world, watching his "cool, white, flowerlike hands" (Wilde 1974 2/21). Dorian is first compared to a rose, then a flower, and after that a blossom—he is becoming increasingly destructive.

> His eye fell on the yellow book that lord Henry had sent him. What was it, he wondered. He went towards the little, pearl-coloured octagonal stand that had always looked to him like the work of some strange Egyptian bees that wrought silver, and taking up the volume, flung himself into an arm-chair and began to turn over the leaves. (Wilde 1974: 10/125)

The color yellow, already mentioned in connection with the translation of dahlia, has important semantic dimensions in this decadent novel: decadent writers perceived it as a symbol of rebellion; it created an impression of artificiality, vice, debauchery, and non-conformism. The yellow book in the passage above most likely alludes to *The Yellow Book*, a literary periodical published by the English decadents from 1894 to 1897. In chapter 10, Dorian reads the yellow book for the first time and is fascinated by it, even though he later describes it as "a poisonous book" (Wilde 1974 10/125). He buys no less than nine copies of the book and has them bound in different colors, so that each could suit his various moods. Just like Lord Henry's ideas, the book entraps him with ideas of eternal youth and beauty. Even he himself cannot fully accept his gradual descent into the demonic and so he looks for an escape in intoxicating himself (with music, painting, theater, literature, and plants). He also intoxicates himself with words, either those spoken by Lord Henry or those he reads in the book that the lord gives him; each time they have a destructive impact on him. Many things that the lord says probably come from *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Pater 1873). Ellmann (1987: 299) argues that "Lord Henry is forever quoting, or

misquoting, without acknowledgment" and that "plagiarism is the worst of his crimes." The "poisonous book"[6] mentioned in the novel is most likely the novel *A Rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysman, which features Des Esseintes, a young man from Paris that keeps becoming involved in various forbidden and including homosexual experiences.[7] When Dorian can no longer listen to Lord Henry's life views, he resorts to the intoxicating scent of the lilacs (through scent he returns to the studio [paradise] described at the beginning of the novel): "Lord Henry went out to the garden and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as it if had been wine. He came close to him and put his hand upon his shoulder" (Wilde 1974: 2/20).

In addition to the symbolic dimensions of the scent already discussed above, attention should also be brought to the fact that the genus name for the lilac, *Syringa*, derives from Greek *syrinx* 'pipe, tube' and that in the past the wood of this plant was used to make whistles. Dorian literally turns into some sort of an instrument that Lord Henry plays.

The metaphor "secret chord" expresses the influence that Lord Henry has over Dorian. Pearson (1964: 115), who wrote a biography of Oscar Wilde, believes that Wilde portrayed himself in Lord Henry and that in Dorian he portrayed the ideal he so fervently strove for himself. According to Pearson, the novel's tragic ending symbolically foreshadows Wilde's fate. Like Wilde, Lord Henry is in favor of individualism. The very words that "had touched [Dorian's] secret chord" can be understood as the birth of New Hellenism: both Lord Henry and Wilde were ardent smokers and, just like Lord Henry, Wilde detested an ugly environment and disliked awkward and ugly, non-sonorous words, which he nonetheless could not escape because there are only words in the world. As Dorian says: "Was there anything so real as words?… It is simply expression… that gives reality to things" (Wilde 1974: 2/19). His entire life Wilde "felt a strong need to transfer his aestheticist and 'art for art's sake' belief to concrete, everyday life" (Kos 1986: 11). Lord Henry cannot realize this tendency in his own life, but Dorian Gray manages to achieve this under his influence. When Lord Henry touches a "secret chord" in Dorian (Wilde 1974: 2/19), things become complicated: Dorian sets himself to music (Wilde 1974: 19), which, however, does not create "a new world, but rather another chaos" (Wilde 1974: 2/19). Under the lord's influence, Dorian descends from the garden into a world of hypocrisy, intrigues, murder, hucksters and drug dealers, dives, and the darkest and dirtiest corners of London. According to Wilde's biographer (Ellmann 1987: 240–44), Henry Wotton does not realize that he is poisoning Dorian with his

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6 One can read the following in the preface, paradoxically: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (Wilde 1974: xxxiii).

7 It is a well-known fact that Wilde was imprisoned for being a homosexual.

quips and lifestyle and that he himself is obsessed with the book. He claims that Wotton is not fit to judge whether a book can be addictive because he himself is addicted to one. "I must sow poppies in my garden," sighed Dorian. "There is no necessity," rejoined his companion. "Life has always poppies in her hands" (Wilde 1974: 8/101).

The poppy is a cultivated plant that can have several functions: a decorative plant, weed, or source for opium. After Sibyl's death, Dorian begins to consciously and deliberately drug himself, which reaches its climax in chapter 11, when he starts collecting jewels, musical instruments, perfumes, tapestries, and embroideries, plans to convert to Catholicism, collects ecclesiastical vestments, and studies mysticism. For him, all of these were "means of forgetfulness" (Wilde 1974: 11/140). In chapter 13 he kills Basil Hallward, which escalates his escape into intoxication in chapters 14 and 15, and in chapter 16 his journey into the underground (the dives). After he murders the painter, he looks down on the street: "A bitter blast swept across the square. The gas-lamps flickered and became blue, and the leafless trees shook their black iron branches to and fro. He shivered and went back, closing the window behind him" (Wilde 1974: 13/159).

Compared to the first few chapters of the novel, the metaphorical adjectives "iron" and "black" open completely new dimensions of plants as metaphors. The tree is the symbol of life; it grows and rises toward the sky and at the same time its fall and winter hibernation illustrates cyclicity, regeneration, renewal, and dynamics. The branches, which rise toward the sky and birds perch on, are associated with light, whereas the roots, which reach into the ground and between which reptiles crawl, are usually associated with darkness. Here, the symbols are diametrically opposite: the branches are black, leafless, and iron. Plants no longer symbolize life and Dorian's pact with the devil is becoming increasingly horrific: the sky/immortality descends from art into the human. Lord Henry's destructive influence over Dorian materializes for the first time when Dorian hurts Sibyl, which is suggested by the following comparison: "The sky above was like a faded rose" (Wilde 1974: 4/59). In a metaphorical sense, the rose also frequently occurs in connection with Sibyl: the fadedness indicates that something will suck the life force out of Sibyl: "The sunset had smitten into scarlet gold the upper windows of the houses opposite. The panes glowed like plates of heated metal" (Wilde 1974: 4/59). The hot sun makes the sky look like a faded rose (cf. the explanation of the metaphorical connection between fire and Dorian). The tension that Dorian feels over Sibyl's suicide in chapter 8 and the murder of Basil Hallward in chapter 13 is increasing. Alan Campbell, Dorian's friend, disposes of Basil's body using special chemicals (chapter 14), but that does not disburden Dorian. He increasingly seeks solace in intoxication, but even this no longer frees him in chapter 16. Therefore, he begins to take to the out-of-the-way parts of London filled with dives and pubs. His way there is described with the following figure: "The way seemed

interminable, and the streets like the black web of some sprawling spider" (Wilde 1974: 16/185).

This figure indicates Dorian's growing life indiscretions from which there is no escape: the giant spider's web is a metaphor for the illusion in which Dorian lives and without which his life would reveal itself to him in all its demonic dimensions. The spider web implies the "fragility of a reality which is no more than illusory and deceptive appearance" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 904). The recurring semantic figure of the sky weaves a deep structure in the novel and reveals the mastery of its metaphorical structure: it touches both paradigms (the plant and the animal paradigm), one time each, and heralds important shifts in the plot, while forming a strong and independent metaphorical unit itself. The first and last recurring rhetorical figures strengthen the expressive power of the contrasts evoked by both paradigms. The connection with the plant paradigm appears in chapter 4 in the following comparison: "The sky above was like a faded rose" (Wilde 1974: 4/59), which foretells a dramatic change in Dorian's personality and the anguished death of Sibyl. It is connected with the animal paradigm via the comparison "the sky was like a monstrous peacock's tail, starred with myriad of golden eyes" (Wilde 1974: 13/159).

An important role in the recurring semantic rhetorical figure of the sky is also played by its color (first turquoise and then blue). This is blurred in the Slovenian translation because the metaphorical adjective *blue* in chapter 18 is translated as *višnjev* 'azure' ("The sky was an inverted cup of blue metal" [Wilde 1974: 18/201]). The turquoise color of the sky across which little clouds are drifting as part of the first recurring figure ("the little clouds that, like ravelled skeins of glossy white silk, were drifting across the hollowed turquoise of the summer sky" [Wilde 1974: 1/8]) evokes associations of warmth ("summer"), purity ("glossy white"), gentleness ("little clouds like ravelled skeins"), and safety ("drifting"). In the second recurring figure, the sky is blue, but it expresses negative associations of danger ("inverted cup") and coldness ("metal"), and the threatening atmosphere is further enhanced by figures of cruelty ("frost lay like salt upon the grass"), threat (*a thin film of ice*), and dirtiness ("reed-grown lake"): "The crisp frost lay like salt upon the grass… A thin film of ice bordered the flat, reed-grown lake" (Wilde 1974: 18/201). The point of contact between the two recurring figures is the blue color of the sky; elsewhere in the novel the color of the sky is that of a faded rose, a pearl, opal, green copper, and a peacock's tail. The turquoise color in the first recurring figure and the blue in the last indicate Dorian's personality changes because blue is immaterial: "Blue is the coldest of colours and, is its absolute quality, the purest, apart from the total void of matt white." (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 102). The blue color indicates Dorian's surrender to pure and cold reality without illusions and delusions: the reality of the emptiness Turquoise alludes to Dorian's difficult path to disillusion because "turquoise is a sign of drought,

famine and death" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 104), and it also indicates renewal or regeneration after long and difficult trials of life, as at the end of the novel the protagonist realizes that eternal beauty and youth are only possible in art.

The high-school coverage of this novel proceeds from the systematic and organized learning of how to read literary works while striving for "conscious and full experience, understanding, evaluation, comparison, and classification of literary works, taking into account the general reading factors and the special features of reading literature" (Krakar Vogel 2004). Reading Wilde's novel should pass various stages of text analysis and comprehension: first starting with lexical comprehension (what the words mean, how they are structured into figures, how to identify metaphors, comparisons, and metonymy, how to translate individual words, how to examine the suitability of the Slovenian translation, and so on) and then moving on to comprehension by drawing conclusions and making connections (understanding the message of individual rhetorical figures, how they are connected with the novel's plot, the ideas and messages behind the rhetorical figures, and their interconnections and explanations). Critical reading (summarizing the idea and message, the function of individual poetic figures, the role of suitable translation, and evaluating the novel in terms of the deliberate structure of poetic imagery) should also play an important role. Furthermore, creative reading, such as staging the novel in the form of a play, filming it, recreating the story with a different ending, and so on, can contribute significantly to successful communication with the text.

The analysis and comprehension of the novel can be enhanced with suitable systemic information such as Oscar Wilde's life circumstances and their reflection in the novel, literary-theory concepts (definitions of metaphor, comparison, metonymy, and personification), literary-history concepts (decadence, decadent ideas, aestheticism, art for art's sake, and decadent intoxication; Poznanovič Jezeršek 2008: 26–27), and symbolic and semantic dimensions of individual words (e.g., shades of blue, yellow, fire, rose, lead, and so on). It makes sense to build the analysis and detailed interpretation alongside an interdisciplinary connection with English-as-second-language classes and to draw attention to the importance of accurate translation of literary works. In this way teenagers can familiarize themselves with the structure and function of poetic figures in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as the importance of translating them accurately. By examining in detail the motif-thematic, linguistic-stylistic, and ideational-communicative layers, they get to know the aesthetic, ethical, and cognitive functions of this work.

Conclusion

Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* uses a well-thought-out structure and function of rhetorical figures, which are derived in several ways by using

a plant and animal paradigm and using recurring semantic figures of the sky in an interesting dynamic. Although the Slovenian translation of the novel (Wilde 1986) largely lacks these semantic nuances of the English original, we recommend the comparative analysis of the original and the Slovenian translation. Interdisciplinary coverage in connection with English classes provide an insight into a holistic understanding of translation as complex practice and familiarizing with the fact that the translation is "an active category that is constantly evolving" (Pregelj 2018:12). The analysis and comprehension of the novel can be enhanced with suitable systemic information such as Oscar Wilde's life circumstances and their reflection in the novel, literary-theory concepts (definitions of metaphor, comparison, metonymy, and personification), literary-history concepts (decadence, decadent ideas, aestheticism, art for art's sake, and decadent intoxication; Poznanovič Jezeršek 2008: 26–27), and symbolic and semantic dimensions of individual words (e.g., shades of blue, yellow, fire, rose, lead, and so on). This not only opens the door to understanding and interpreting this novel, which in terms of motifs and themes is close to teenagers' reception needs; namely, it touches on identity, double morals, the search for identification, and manners of socialization, but also we emphasize that "a literary interest in the reader in the context of the aesthetics of reception, post-colonial theory, polysystemic theory and empirical literary science" (Pregelj 2018: 11) enabled readers for a more holistic understanding of translation as a practice, translator as an important factor and other circumstances affecting the emergence and life of translation as a product. "Translators use different words to 'say nearly the same thing,' as Eco puts it. All who encounter texts in different languages daily, see translation as a passion and a challenge, a task that is never boring, but different and unique every time." (Zlatnar Moe et al. 2019: 9).

University of Ljubljana

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POVZETEK

ELEMENTI LITERARNOSTI V WILDOVEM ROMANU *SLIKA DORIANA GRAYA* Z VIDIKA GIMNAZIJSKEGA POUKA KNJIŽEVNOSTI

Roman *Slika Doriana Graya* je z vidika motivov in tem blizu mladostniškim recepcijskim zahtevam: dotika se vprašanj identitete, dvojne morale, iskanja istovetnosti in načinov socializacije. V članku skušamo poiskati še nekaj drugih pomembnih, doslej spregledanih elementov tega romana in nakazati možnosti za obravnavo pri gimnazijskem pouku književnosti. Opisujemo elemente literarnosti, vezane zlasti na jezikovno-slogovno zgradbo romana: na premišljen ustroj retoričnih figur, ki pa jih v slovenskem prevodu (Šuklje 1986) ponekod ni mogoče razbrati. Izhajajoč iz različnih metaforoloških teorij, tj. substitucijske (Aristotel v Gantar 1982), pa tudi novejših (Black 1962, 1979, Bouverot 1969, Richards 1936), dokazujemo, da je na ravni retoričnih figur roman v izvirniku premišljeno strukturiran in da imajo te figure pomembne interpretacijske razsežnosti, izpeljane na naslednje načine: 1) kot rastlinska paradigma (s prepletom semantičnih grebenic vrtnice, rože, cveta); 2) kot živalska paradigma (osredotočamo se na evokacije čebele in pajka) ter 3) kot semantične grebenice neba (v povezavi z odtenki modre barve). (Pojavljajo se namreč v zanimivi dinamiki: grebenici neba sledita dve poglavji brez grebenice (kar se po petkrat ponovi), pri čemer je nebo v prvi grebenici turkizno (2. poglavje), v zadnji grebenici pa modro (18. poglavje).) V zadnjem slovenskem prevodu tega romana (Šuklje 1986) v izvirniku prisotnih pomensko nabitih retoričnih figur večinoma ni. Za šolsko rabo zato mdr. priporočamo primerjalno analizo izvirnika in slovenskega prevoda. Medpredmetna povezava s poukom angleščine bi omogočila vpogled v bolj celostno razumevanje prevajanja kot kompleksnega procesa, na katerega vplivajo številni dejavniki, saj je prevod »dejavna kategorija, ki se neprestano razvija« (Pregelj 2018: 12). Svetujemo sistematično in organizirano branje tega romana: pri pouku stremimo k »zavestnemu in polnemu doživljanju, razumevanju, vrednotenju, primerjanju in uvrščanju literarnih del ob upoštevanju splošnih dejavnikov branja in posebnosti literarnega branja« (Krakar Vogel 2004). Analizo in interpretacijo romana povezujemo s sistemskimi informacijami, kot so biografske okoliščine Oscarja Wilda (gimnazijci lahko preučujejo, ali se odsevajo tudi v romanu), usvajanjem literarnoteoretičnih (metafora, komparacija, metonimija, personifikacija) in literarnozgodovinskih pojmov (dekadenca, dekadenčne ideje, esteticizem, larpurlartizem, dekadenčna omama). Spodbujamo jih k razpravljanju o

simbolnih in pomenskih odtenkih posameznih besed (npr. ognja, vrtnice, svinca, modre in rumene barve). Ob medpredmetni povezavi z angleščino ter primerjalni analizi izvirnika in slovenskega prevoda gimnazijcem ponudimo možnost, da se seznanijo z dejstvom, da je »šele literarnovedno zanimanje za bralca v okviru estetike recepcije, postkolonialne teorije, polisistemske teorije in empirične literarne znanosti omogočilo pogled na prevajalke in prevajalce, pa tudi prevod kot na dejavne in dinamične kategorije« (Pregelj 2018:11) ter jih povabimo v bolj »celostno razumevanje prevajanja kot prakse, prevajalca kot akterja in dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na nastanek in življenje prevoda kot izdelka« (Zlatnar Moe idr. 2019: 9).