

# A critical comparative analysis regarding Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Omar Khayyam's quatrains

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**Abstract**— This paper provides a critical comparative analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyát*, exploring the thematic intersection of individualism, morality, mortality, and metaphysical self-awareness. By examining Wilde's portrayal of the soul as a locus of ethical consequence within the context of Victorian gothic literature, the analysis demonstrates how Wilde critiques conventional moral frameworks, proposing a radical internalization of moral judgment and spiritual retribution. In parallel, the paper analyzes Khayyam's quatrains—rendered through Edward FitzGerald's influential translations—which similarly redefine traditional metaphysical concepts by placing notions of heaven, hell, reward, and punishment within the individual's existential domain. While highlighting ideological contrasts such as Wilde's depiction of immortality as a destructive pursuit versus Khayyam's celebration of life's transient pleasures, the study underscores fundamental philosophical parallels. Both authors, though culturally and temporally distinct, propose that spiritual consequence and metaphysical truths reside within the self, independent of external religious paradigms. This investigation ultimately positions Wilde and Khayyam as significant contributors to the modern, secular reconceptualization of ethics and metaphysics, asserting their roles as iconoclasts who challenge and redefine the boundaries between aesthetic experience and ethical self-realization.

**Keywords**— Oscar Wilde, Omar Khayyam, Individuality, Victorian Gothic, Metaphysical Self, Morality, Comparative Literature

Be happy for this moment.  
This moment is your life. Here  
with a Loaf of Bread beneath  
the Bough, A Flask of Wine, a  
Book of Verse - and Thou  
Beside me singing in the  
Wilderness - And Wilderness  
is Paradise enow.<sup>1</sup>

(Omar Khayyam – 12<sup>th</sup>  
century)

'Because to influence a person  
is to give him one's own soul.

He does not think his natural  
thoughts, or burn with his  
natural passions. His virtues  
are not real to him. His sins, if  
there are such things as sins,  
are borrowed. He becomes an  
echo of someone else's music,  
an actor of a part that has not  
been written for him. The aim  
of life is self-development. To  
realize one's nature  
perfectly—that is what each of  
us is here for. People are afraid

<sup>1</sup> Omar, Khayyam, and Edward Fitzgerald. 1979. *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*, trans. by E. Fitzgerald (London, England: Mammoth)

of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self. Of course, they are charitable. They feed the hungry and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion—these are the two things that govern us. And yet, I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal—to something finer, richer than the Hellenic ideal, it may be. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself'.<sup>2</sup>

(Oscar Wilde – 1890)

As a disruptive literary phenomenon, the Victorian gothic genre portrays the social scene as dark and spiritually decadent, manifesting itself as a chilling critique of the scarcity of moral values in London, and the depravity of its Godless population. Traditionally, the fictions of the late Victorian gothic genre depicted London as the source of depravity, presenting it as a corrupt urban landscape in which unsanctified creatures walked freely. London's ethically-bankrupt status had been cemented in gothic literature so firmly that in his *The Sorrows of Satan*,<sup>3</sup> Marie Corelli narrates the Devil's inability to find any Londoner

who would be immune to his temptations. According to Corelli, as the Devil ultimately fails to find any trace of morality in London, he proceeds to choose the city as his homeland.<sup>4</sup>

As stated, the perception of corrupt individuals infecting the society was pervasive at the time, and it had some unfortunate consequences. During the initial publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's only novel, critical discussions mainly revolved around the author's personal life, failing to reflect upon the depth of his literary work, and ultimately perceiving it to be a mere reflection of his indecent lifestyle. Far from aiming to delineate Wilde's strategy in engaging the Victorian audience, the novel's critical analysis had been limited to homosexual anxieties so prevalent at the time. Such an irrational prejudice led to critics mostly failing to realize that the novel, using *Dorian Gray* as the protagonist, meant to depict the universal and everlasting search for an ideal individuality. Individuality, as a concept, is essential in illuminating the parallelisms between Wilde's novel and the famed quatrains of Khayyam.

As a preface to his novel, Wilde asserts that 'no artist has ethical sympathies' and that in an artist, any form of ethical sympathy would be 'an unpardonable mannerism of style'.<sup>5</sup> I have come to maintain that such a liberated and unrestrained strategy in the pursuit of art, should indeed be identified as the primary reason for Wilde's breathtaking success in investigating the corruptions of the soul. In his unorthodox novel, Wilde manages to present these corruptions as mere symptoms, originating from aesthetic narcissism, and the gradual death of conscious.

During its initial publication, almost all of the popular press came to vehemently rebuke the novel, citing its outrageous lack of morality. As the novel was being described as a 'poisonous book with odors of moral and spiritual putrefaction',<sup>6</sup> and as a disgrace since 'it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity',<sup>7</sup> Wilde astutely pointed out the irony in the public outrage. He proceeded to argue that his novel was legitimately and categorically moral, since during the course of its process 'All excess, as well as all renunciation brings its own punishment'.<sup>8</sup> This assertion is the crucial

<sup>2</sup> Wilde, Oscar. 2013. *Picture of Dorian Gray (Collector's Edition): Including the Uncensored 13 Chapter Version & The Revised 20 Chapter Version* (London, England: Arcturus Publishing)

<sup>3</sup> Corelli, Marie. 2015. *The Sorrows of Satan: Or, the Strange Experience of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire - Scholar's Choice Edition* (London, ON, Canada: Scholar's Choice)

<sup>4</sup> Corelli, Marie. 2015. *The Sorrows of Satan: Or, the Strange Experience of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire - Scholar's Choice Edition* (London, ON, Canada: Scholar's Choice)

<sup>5</sup> Wilde, Oscar. 2013. *Picture of Dorian Gray (Collector's Edition): Including the Uncensored 13 Chapter Version & The Revised 20 Chapter Version* (London, England: Arcturus Publishing)

<sup>6</sup> *The Daily Chronicle*. June 30<sup>th</sup>. 1890. (DeKalb, Illinois)

<sup>7</sup> *The Scots Observer*. July 5<sup>th</sup>. 1890. (The United Kingdom)

<sup>8</sup> Ellmann, Richard. 1997. *Oscar Wilde* (Harlow, England: Penguin Books)

point in understanding Wilde's iconoclastic point of view, as it seeks to depict the soul, an internal and intrinsic entity, as the agent of divine retribution. Such a break from established principles of morality had monumental implications, as Wilde's disruptive ideology ultimately meant to introduce misunderstood notions like heaven and hell, as being originated from within, and not extrinsically manifested in the afterlife.

It would be fair to point out that while partially failing to comprehend Wilde's reconceptualization regarding the fabric of the self, and his reevaluation of established religious structures, philosophers like Colin McGinn did manage to evaluate the novel based on a humanist and individualistic agenda.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Michael Patrick Gillespie manages to offer an impressive, and liberal humanist critique of Wilde's novel, although, as with McGinn, he fails to consider the role of the Victorian gothic, as the stage upon which Wilde presents the inward nature of divine retribution.<sup>10</sup> According to Gillespie,

"Through the actions of its characters, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s discourse establishes within us a sense of the wide-ranging aesthetic force that ethics exerts upon a work of art. Furthermore, Wilde's novel gives us the opportunity to enhance the mix of our aesthetic and ethical views by extending our sense of the possibilities for interpretation beyond those delineated by our immediate hermeneutic system'.<sup>11</sup>

Such agendas, impressive as they were, ultimately failed as well, since they couldn't fathom Wilde's tacit assertions, as he implied that the process of reward and punishment, previously thought to be exclusive to the afterlife, is inherently interpersonal, and takes place within the soul of each individual. Hence, according to Wilde himself, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel predicated upon, and not in contrast with, the notions of morality.<sup>12</sup> This provides a clue as to which strategy would prove to be the most illuminating while interpreting the novel. One could reasonably argue that an ethical reading of Wilde's

novel is the best choice, since it can reveal the contradictory emotions and problematic moral scenarios that often afflict the characters.<sup>13</sup> Note that in utilizing the fantastic elements provided by the Victorian gothic genre, Wilde manages to portray intricate and sensitive moral dilemmas that every character, even in the depths of depravity, would be forced to deal with, and subsequently, live with its consequences.

### Omar Khayyam, an enigma

During a glorious period of enlightenment, Nineteenth-century British literature went through an ideological metamorphosis, as fiction and poetry came to undertake the preoccupations that had been specific to theological discourse. This entailed writers and poets opting to employ classic religious accounts, in order to argue for secular conclusions. One of the prominent manifestations of this overlap between religious and secular modes of thought is Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, which had justifiably become 'by far the best known and most popular poem in the English language' by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Using his formidable literary taste in this remarkable instance of Orientalism,<sup>15</sup> FitzGerald manages to employ the Persian interpretation of the metaphysical aspect of the self, commonly known as the soul, and then proceeds to apply it to the spiritual trends of the Victorian era.

As stated, the poems were originally written by Omar Khayyam, a Persian poet of majestic nature. In his poems, originally called *Rubáiyát* as its Persian equivalent, Khayyam manages to depict a secular way of thought, striving to rebel against the reign of religious fundamentalism. This is mostly due to his belief that transcendental notions of fundamentalism have failed in making sense of human existence, and can no longer withstand rational philosophical challenges. The speaker of the *Rubáiyát*, seeking solace in 'A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou / Beside me singing in the Wilderness,' opts to let go of the conflicts that afflict him within, and to relish and embrace pleasure.<sup>16</sup> Khayyam, in effect, manages to introduce the metaphysical and the unknown part of one's existence, that is, the part known as the Soul, and depict it as an entity operating within the physical presence of every individual. He then proceeds to reconceptualize notions such as divine retribution, heaven, and even hell, leading to

<sup>9</sup> McGinn, Department of Philosophy Colin. 1997. *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press)

<sup>10</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

<sup>11</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

<sup>12</sup> Ellmann, Richard. 1997. *Oscar Wilde* (Harlow, England: Penguin Books)

<sup>13</sup> Ellmann, Richard. 1997. *Oscar Wilde* (Harlow, England: Penguin Books)

<sup>14</sup> Gray, Erik. 2008. "FitzGerald and the 'Rubáiyát', in and out of Time," *Victorian Poetry*, 46.1: 1–14

<sup>15</sup> In art history, literature and cultural studies, **Orientalism** is the imitation or depiction of aspects in the Eastern world. These depictions are usually done by writers, designers, and artists from the West.

<sup>16</sup> FitzGerald, Edward. 2008. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Christopher Decker (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press)

a materialist version of the notions that were once thought to be exclusively religious and metaphysical. It is this materialist version of thought, that allows FitzGerald to present his own secular interpretations of the *Rubáiyát*.

As FitzGerald's elegant rendition of Khayyam's Persian voice came under the spotlight, Victorian reviewers appreciated the secular orientation that the poem so masterfully reincarnated. The *National Review*, for example, came to praise FitzGerald's competence in capturing the 'zeitgeist', saying:

'there is now some recent change in the mood of the Anglo-Saxon race that has caused this wide response to Omar-in-FitzGerald. It is, one must imagine, that there has been of late a wide and rapid decline in religious belief, so that a vast number of English people are able to understand and largely sympathize with the old rebel against the orthodox Islamite Puritanism of the East.'<sup>17</sup>

Seeing how they were originally written centuries prior to translation, the accuracy with which the *Rubáiyát* were able to address the spiritual awakening of the time, coupled with their characteristic skepticism, only furthered the poems' popularity, leading Charles Eliot Norton to write that 'The prevailing traits of Omar Khayyám are so coincident with certain characteristics of the spiritual temper of our own generation'.<sup>18</sup> Another example would be Jessie E. Cadell's critical review, diligently announcing:

'That we have heard a good deal of late about Omar Khayyám is not due to any increase in the number of Persian scholars, but to the fact that the existing translation

harmonises with a special phase of modern thought'.<sup>19</sup>

Bear in mind that literary critics in the twentieth century, long after the publication of FitzGerald's volumes, have also noted that, astonishingly, the *Rubáiyát* does extremely well in upholding the secular values so cherished in the west. Hence, not before long, it came to be known that Khayyam, and therefore Fitzgerald, were the perfect embodiments of modernity,<sup>20</sup> and how it was applicable to the state of the Victorian era.<sup>21</sup> David G. Riede, as an example, writes that:

'The great cultural importance of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* is not merely in its exemplification of the Victorian age's melancholy agnosticism but in its exemplary severing of poetic beauty from any kind of Christian duty'.<sup>22</sup>

### Khayyam's ideology

Abu'l Fath Omar ibn Ibrahim Khayyam, widely known as Omar Khayyam, was born around 1083 AD, and died after a lifetime of literary and scientific achievements between 1124 AD and 1129 AD.<sup>23</sup> Predominantly known as a mysterious poet, Khayyam was also an astronomer, astrologer, physician, philosopher, and mathematician, making outstanding contributions to science.<sup>24</sup> Aminrazavi notes that 'Up to date, there are fourteen treatises that are known to have been written by Omar Khayyam [...]. As one can see, Khayyam wrote little but his works are dense, original and written in very concise language'.<sup>25</sup>

For all his fame and glory, the man himself remains something of an enigma. Over time, Different biographers, both Persian and Western, have come to describe him in various fashions, with some accounts documenting him as a 'pleasure-seeking, wine-drinking agnostic',<sup>26</sup> while others reportedly called him a 'closeted

<sup>17</sup> Holland, Bernard. 1899. "The Present Popularity of Omar Khayyám," *National Review*: 643–52

<sup>18</sup> Norton, Charles Eliot. 1869. "Omar Khayyám," *North American Review*, p. 565

<sup>19</sup> Cadell, Jessie E. 1879. "The True Omar Khayam," *Fraser's Magazine*, pp. 650–59

<sup>20</sup> In using the term 'Modernity', this paper follows Michael Saler in using this term to denote a 'mixture of political, social, intellectual, economic, technological, and psychological factors, which include the emergence of the rational and autonomous subject; the differentiation of cultural spheres; the rise of liberal and democratic states; the turn to psychologism and self-reflexivity; and the dominance of secularism, nationalism, capitalism, industrialism, urbanism'.

<sup>21</sup> Saler, M. 2006. "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *The American Historical Review*, 111.3: 692–716

<sup>22</sup> Pearsall, Cornelia. 2007. "Allegories of One's Own Mind: Melancholy in Victorian Poetry, by David G. Riede," *Victorian Studies*, 49.4: 756–58

<sup>23</sup> Garrard, Garry. 2007. *A Book of Verse: The Biography of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Abergavenny, Wales: Sutton Publishing)

<sup>24</sup> In the year 1072 AD, Omar Khayyam documented the most accurate year length ever calculated, a figure still accurate enough for most purposes in the modern world.

<sup>25</sup> Aminrazavi, Mehdi. 2013. *The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam* (London, England: Oneworld Publications)

<sup>26</sup> Garrard, Garry. 2007. *A Book of Verse: The Biography of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Abergavenny, Wales: Sutton Publishing)



Zoroastrian', a 'Sufi Muslim', an 'orthodox Sunni Muslim, and even a 'disciple of the Ancient Gods of Greece'.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of his faith, he is universally known to be an iconic intellectual, with astonishing scientific discoveries.

Yet Khayyam is perhaps best known for his work as a poet. The *Rubáiyát*, his collection of hundreds of quatrains (or rubais), was first translated from Persian to English in 1859 by Edward Fitzgerald. These short poems are Khayyam's attempt at celebrating the pleasures that life has to offer, while simultaneously shedding light on the political and religious atmosphere of the time of their composition. Note that what makes his poems propitiously peculiar, is the semi-secular experience that it provides for the audience. Contrary to what one might expect, the poems don't reaffirm any convictions about the supremacy of reason over sensation, or vice versa, as they are primarily concerned with the relationship between the self, as a physical being, and the other side of the self, which is defined as a metaphysical entity. Mentioned below is one of his most iconic quatrains, subject to this paper's analysis:

I sent my soul through the  
invisible,

Some letters of that after-life spell,

And by my soul returned to me,

And answered I myself am  
Heaven, And Hell.<sup>28</sup>

"برتر ز سپهرخاظم روز نخست"

لوح و قلم و بهشت و دوزخ میجست

پس گفت مرا معلم از فکر درست

لوح و قلم و بهشت و دوزخ با تست<sup>29</sup>

### Analysis of the quatrain

Khayyam was a prolific poet, managing to provide the future generations with a plethora of poems, concerning the essence of existence, and the ultimate fate of mankind. Based on a general overview of his works of literature, it would be a reasonable observation as to place his poems in three separate categories, with each category representing a different perspective on the matters of life and death. Note that these categories are somewhat incompatible, since they portray conflicting views regarding the nature of existence. Nevertheless, the poems constituting each section manage to present well-founded

and convincing arguments, cementing their effect in the reader's mind. These categories include:

- i. Believing the afterlife and the essence of existence to be an unsolvable mystery, Khayyam inexorably insists upon on the incomprehensibility of the afterlife, announcing it to be unknown and unfathomable. Therefore, one must cease all efforts to conceptualize it.
- ii. In a plethora of other works, consisting of many of his most iconic poems, Khayyam is adamant about the necessity of appreciating the pleasures of life. He opts to pivot his focus from the afterlife, and encourages the audience to relish in the joys of their brief mortal life. He defines every moment of our temporary existence as a precious gift, meant to be fully appreciated before the arrival of death.
- iii. In the third direction of his poems, Khayyam manifests an avid interest in the afterlife, rejoicing in the solid faith that there will be a divine system of rewards and retributions, that will conclude the fates of the virtuous and the sinners of the world. Note that Khayyam's assertions in these poems are fundamentally different from the traditional notions of heaven and hell, since his alternative point of view is predicated upon a humanist and individualistic view of the afterlife.

The quatrain in question should be placed within the third category, as it asserts Khayyam's belief in an alternative view of the afterlife. When scrutinized properly, it would be evident that the said quatrain is trying to convey the notion that human beings, that is, the spiritual and metaphysical part of their existence, are indeed the center of life and death themselves, around which divine concepts such as heaven and hell revolve.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, by the effective use of rhetoric, Khayyam encourages the audience to wake up to the realization that heaven and hell, life and death, or any other concept of divine retribution and intervention, are intrinsic entities placed within each individual's existence, and they cannot be called upon or triggered as a result of any external factor. Humans are all there is, he so persuasively argues, and whatever one might be searching for, whether it is Heaven or Hell, life or death, pain or pleasure, faith or blasphemy, damnation or salvation, whatever it may be, it is imperative for one to seek it within one's self, and not in any other extrinsic entity. He is, in effect, trying to liberate the human mind from the

<sup>27</sup> Garrard, Garry. 2007. *A Book of Verse: The Biography of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Abergavenny, Wales: Sutton Publishing)

<sup>28</sup> FitzGerald, Edward. 2008. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Christopher Decker (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press)

<sup>29</sup> FitzGerald, Edward. 2008. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Christopher Decker (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press)

<sup>30</sup> FitzGerald, Edward. 2008. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Christopher Decker (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press)

invisible shackles of superstitions, by insisting that in order to discover the ultimate destination, one need not look anywhere but within, for the concept of Heaven and Hell, reside nowhere but inside. Therefore, looking within, should you choose to ignite it, the everlasting flames of Hell shall engulf you whole, and should you nourish and nurture it, the flowers of Heaven shall rain upon you forever.

### **Ideological contrasts between Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Khayyam's quatrains**

Note that the most dominant theme in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is mortality and the fleeting nature of beauty and youth, and in fact, it is the obsession with mortality that causes Dorian's dramatic downfall.<sup>31</sup> This sounds very familiar, as it reminds us of how Khayyam encourages the reader to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of life. During the course of the novel, and as the urge to become immortal starts to unravel Dorian, he comes to view Basil's portrait of himself in an infuriating manner. He notices how the portrait will forever remain unscathed, and how its presence is practically a mockery of his hopeless mortality. With Henry's words ringing in his ears, and now suddenly aware of the inexhaustible passage of time, Dorian comes to see his beauty as a curse, inflected upon him only to be slowly taken away, while tormenting him in the process.<sup>32</sup> This is in direct contrast with Khayyam's interpretation of mortality, because while Dorian comes to associate beauty with death and doom, Khayyam depicts the fleeting nature of life as the reason for cherishing and appreciating it.

During the course of the novel, Dorian falls in love with Sybil, which later on turns out to be a manifestation of his obsession with beauty and death. It gets clear that Dorian loved Sybil not because of Sybil herself, but simply because he got to watch her die onstage repeatedly, followed by her miraculous resurrection backstage. She epitomized immortality in the eyes of Dorian, as her vivacity and beauty seemed to be eternally immune to her constant brush with death.<sup>33</sup> In the eyes of Dorian, even her unfortunate suicide turns out to be a final magnificent resurrection, since even in death, she preserves her beauty and remains eternally young in her lifeless state. Therefore, it is the process of resurrection that is glorious in the eyes of Dorian, whereas in the case of Khayyam, the glory resides in acknowledging the inevitability of death, and challenging its authority by living every moment to the fullest.

Later on in the course of the novel, Dorian too is gifted, or rather, cursed by the notion of immortality. This

comes as the result of the portrait, which curses Dorian's flesh to remain forever stuck in the same point of time. But contrary to what one might have hoped, he interprets his newfound freedom as a license to experience every form of excess, and to maintain a callous disregard for the dire consequences of his actions.<sup>34</sup> Such a tragic turn of events is Wilde's attempt to suggest that while the legions of death will ultimately come for all mortals, the consequences of achieving any sort of everlasting life are much more catastrophic. Just as the portrait came to be the main antagonist in the novel, driving Dorian to engage in unspeakable acts of sordid nature, and reminding him of the innocent he has forever lost, Wilde suggests that however horrible, death is a necessary evil bound to be faced sooner or later. Khayyam on the other hand, is never bothered with the idea of immortality, since in his point of view, all life, no matter how long or how short, is bound to reach death at some point, rendering the search for everlasting existence null and void.

### **Ideological parallelisms between Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Khayyam's quatrain**

Note that while Dorian succeeds in becoming immortal on the physical front, in the spiritual realm of existence, he is unable to make a difference. Accordingly, while he manages to experience every form of excessive pleasure with ostensible immunity, his soul will bear the marks of his platitude forever. There has been a propensity among the scholars, to consider the painting as a separate entity from Dorian himself. This misguided perception asserts that the painting has managed to trap Dorian's soul within itself, allowing his flesh to remain unscathed from the whips of time.

But after proper scrutiny, one will ultimately notice that the painting can never exist separately from Dorian himself, and while they are at times miles apart, the metaphysical connection between them is never lost. I believe that the nature of such a connection is the illuminating factor here, since it confirms that contrary to the traditional analysis of the novel, the painting doesn't own Dorian's soul, neither can it contain the soul within itself. So how does the portrait function?

I have come to realize that the soul was never left in the painting to rot, and it was always within Dorian. What the painting actually does, I believe, is that it manages to depict the status of Dorian's soul at any given moment, while blocking its manifestation in the physical realm. Hence, the soul, ever present within Dorian, is perpetually

<sup>31</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

<sup>32</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

<sup>33</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

<sup>34</sup> Gillespie, Professor of English Michael Patrick (ed.). 2010. *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Andover, England: Twayne)

afflicted by the scars of his turpitude, while not being allowed to materialize those scars in the physical realm.

If one were to look closely, one would discover that Dorian's wretched soul, represented in the painting naked from its physical façade, amounts to his personal version of eternal damnation. This means that Dorian is carrying around his own personal hell, and his own version of retribution resulted from his degeneracy. Therefore, hell didn't engulf him in flames subsequent to his death, he wasn't transported to any apocalyptic world of demons and suffering, and all along, without even realizing it, he was the carrier of his own hell. His retribution came from within, and as he nurtured it and ignited it over time, the flames ultimately caught up to him in this world, and not any other.

That is the exact same point that Khayyam tries to make in his aforementioned quatrain. As evident, he proceeded to assert that heaven and hell, as agents of retribution, can never be anything external to the self, meaning that they are not worlds to enter, or portals to be sucked through. These notions are to be subject to reconceptualization, since they are ultimately part of mankind, within him, and grown from him. Khayyam then proceeded to imply that it is one's individual choice, to decide his essence of being, meaning that it is one's personal responsibility, to determine whether it shall be heaven, or hell, that he chooses to nurture, or starve. Juxtaposed next to Wilde's novel, it is clear that these notions are the foundation in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well.

## CONCLUSION

As delineated in this paper, both Khayyam and Wilde were concerned with the idea of death and mortality, and how one comes to face the consequences of one's actions. Bear in mind that while Khayyam has a much more direct approach toward the matter, both him and Wilde come to reach the same conclusion at the end. This means that while centuries apart, it would be a cogent observation to perceive Oscar Wilde and Khayyam as ideologically compatible. Equality iconoclastic in each their societies, they both managed to present a modern and materialist version of existence, introducing the metaphysical aspect of humanity's existence as independent from the forces of death. They argued that this metaphysical aspect, previously thought to be exclusive to religious context, operates freely and independently from the afterlife, perpetually implementing justice upon one's actions. They both unveiled the Soul as the ultimate, omnipresent, and omnipotent agent of retribution, manifesting itself as Heaven or hell based on one's performance in life. Ultimately, they managed to convey the message that the hell within devours sins and hatred, while its polar opposite

feeds on love and pleasure. Every man is the center of his own salvation or doom, everyman is the center of his own divine retribution. Oscar Wilde, and Omar Khayyam are the pioneers of the modern ethical structure.

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