

OSCAR WILDE ON SCREEN



Week Four

Pictures of Dorian, Part One

Welcome to *Oscar Wilde on Screen*

Week Four

You will note, above, that this week is entitled 'Pictures of Dorian, *Part One*'.

There are two compelling reasons for splitting our consideration of Oscar's only full-length novel (published in 1891, with a shorter version appeared in *Lippincot's Monthly Magazine* a year earlier) over two weeks.

One is simply that there have been so many versions and, indeed, subversions made of the famous tale of a man and his painting, that it would be impossible to cover even a representative sample in a single week.

The second and most important is this. *Dorian Gray*, more than any other work in the canon, has achieved a brand of immortality that is entirely in keeping with its protagonist.

It changes with the times.

And not simply in the sense that there are adaptations that relocate the story to the modern age (at time of filming) although that certainly plays a part.

No, the reason *Dorian Gray* survives is because the character, his (and sometimes her) actions and the *moral* of the story shifts as it is revisited through the lens of each successive generation.

It's a big question story.

What is sin? What is redemption? What are the unforgivable crimes? What is beauty? What is ugliness of soul? What makes us human or monster?

What is morality?

Dorian transcends his own narrative too. He leaps out of the pages of his initial tale and into other stories. He is used as a figure representing

his times, his class, his outlook. He is given redemptive arcs and driven to further acts of emotional vandalism in turn.

He is seen by some as an alter ego for Oscar himself – though the writer himself put it thusly:

‘[*The Picture of Dorian Gray*] contains much of me in it – Basil Hallward is what I think I am; Lord Henry, what the world thinks me; Dorian is what I would like to be – in other ages, perhaps.’

In short, there’s a lot to unpick.

This week, we’ll be looking at *Dorian Gray* from the days of silent cinema through to the 1980s, each version saying something about not only the book but the time in which the film was made.

FILMS WEEK FOUR

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1915)

Dir. Eugene Moore

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1945)

Dir. Albert Lewin

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1961)

Dir. Paul Bogart

Dorian Gray (1970)

Dir. Massimo Dallamano

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1976)

Dir. John Gorrie

The Sins of Dorian Gray (1983)

Dir. Tony Maylam

Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press (1984)

Dir. Ulrike Ottinger