# Textual analysis: Basil’s studio

The text is an extract form the first chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde.

The first paragraph introduces the scene and describes the setting: a studio. The description concerns not how the room is look like but the atmosphere in it. Indeed the semantic field reminds to the sense of smell: the studio is filled with the perfume of flowers. The flowers and the “light summer wind” make suppose it is a sunny summery day. Thanks to the several details the reader may imagine himself to be into the scene and breath the sweet summer air.

The following paragraph introduces the character of Lord Henry Wotton.
The description is still focused on the theme of the beauty of nature. The significant use of details appeals to the semantic field of sight: the room is meticulously described in its furniture. It seems to be lord Henry Wotton’s point of view, but the intelligent reader can easily understand that it is the third person omniscient narrator’s. The lord, captured by a detail of the room, think about Tokyo: it reveals the lord’s high level of knowledge. Indeed according to 19th century standards, it provides an evidence of his high-ranking and his richness. Moreover some elements of furnishing like the “divan of Persian saddle-bags” and the “tussore-silk curtains” show the influence of the Aesthetism. Indeed aesthetics looked to eastern art researching the beauty. Another important aesthetic element is the disenchantment with the contemporary society. It is evident at line 15: the adjectives “dim” and “distant” underline the will of take distance from London and the Victorian society. In fact the Victorians researched the profit and based their behavior on facts only, on the other hand aesthetics (who worked an anti-Victorian reaction) believed that “All art is quite useless”.

The function of the third paragraph is to introduce the figure of Basil Hallward, the painter friend of Lord Henry Wotton. The description starts from general to particular: in fact the first imagine is the whole room, then the narrator draws the attention on the portrait Basil was painting. The narrator’s aim is to focus on the theme of beauty, previously brought up.

The characterization of the painter is made up in the forth sequence with references to his behavior: he is pleased by his work. Indeed he is catching the ecstatic moment the portrait is providing him. According to Oscar Wilde “the artist is the creator of beautiful things”. Since Basil is an aesthetic the reader can easy understand the painter’s “smile of pleasure” and his attempt to imprison into his mind the moment.
The description drags the character of Basil out of time: while he is admiring the painting, time stops and stands for a while. Indeed only art can do it.

Time comes back again when Lord Henry Wotton starts to speak: he incites his friend to expose his work of art at the art gallery of Grosvenor. He makes a comparison between art galleries and the Academy that is not suitable for his aim: “Grosvenor is really the only place” where the portrait could be admired.

Lord H. Watton, differently from Basil, appears to be partially Victorian because of his speech on the utility of exposing the painting: it reminds to the Victorian fear of falling at the bottom of the social ladder, while the painter is not interested in it. Basil says something meaningless for his friend “I have put too much of myself into it.”