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# Oscar Wilde's *Intentions* and Annotating *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* Or: How Explanatory Notes Can Profitably Include an Author's Theoretical Texts

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# 1. Introduction

When skimming readers' reviews of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on the internet, one often comes across people who express their astonishment at the eleventh[1] chapter of this novel. The long enumerations of fabrics, gems, perfumes, etc., are frequently described as boring by (non-academic) reviewers who do not know what to make of this chapter. For example, one reviewer on Amazon writes:

> The only flaw to this novel was, at one point, there is a stage where Dorian collects a lot of things - like embroidery, etc. It describes the things he collects and makes lots of references and allusions to seemingly random people. (Fiona n.pag.)

On a personal blog, we can find a similar assessment: "I literally had to force myself to read that particular chapter. […] [I]t had little to no impact on the rest of the story" (Holly n.pag.). If these reviewers resorted to the annotations in the Oxford[2], Norton, and Belknap editions of *DG,* their confusion would not be dispelled.  Readers of these annotations only learn that similar passages occur in Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *À Rebours* and that the chapter is a compilation of unmarked quotes and paraphrases from various books (see Appendix 2). "So," readers might think, "the chapter is not only boring but also plagiaristic." None of the annotators of these three editions tries to explain why Wilde thought it appropriate to compose a chapter that does not conform to most readers' expectation for a novel, namely that it should contain actions that advance the plot and interaction between different characters (cf. Brunel 13; Dickhaut 302). This and similar questions can, as I hope to show in this paper, be addressed by an annotation that includes the views on art that are put forward in Wilde's critical writings.

Wilde's essays in his *Intentions* offer an illustrative example for a discussion about how an author's critical texts can be made fruitful for annotating his or her literary works. These essays often reject conventional views concerning art, which – if put into practice – can pose significant obstacles for understanding. For example, the traditional notion that art should imitate life is rejected in the aestheticist[3] text "The

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[1] Ninth chapter in the 1890 version.
[2] All quotes from *DG* will be taken from this edition.
[3] Aestheticism is notoriously hard to define and to differentiate from other terms such as "Decadence" or "Symbolism" (cf. Lange 19). Following Manfred Pfister, I treat the three as interconnected and overlapping phenomena and subsume them under the label "fin de siècle" (cf. Pfister 138–41). Each of the terms can be seen as designating a different focus of fin-de-siècle literature: Aestheticism is mainly concerned with an anti-didactic and anti-mimetic approach towards art, and the prioritization of beauty over everything else (cf. 139). Decadence is generally characterized by its fascination with cultural decline and immorality (cf. Haupt 141). Lastly, Symbolism is concerned with transcendence and correspondences between different sensual experiences (cf. Powell 157). For other attempts to define Aestheticism see e.g. Rasch 58; Wuthenow 121; and Temple *passim.*

Decay of Lying". A literary passage that can be interpreted as adhering to such an unorthodox principle might defy readers' expectations of what a literary text should do and in what manner. As I will try to show, an annotation for this passage has to anticipate readers' possible confusion and use the critical texts as one way of illuminating the primary text. In *DG*, there is a multitude of passages that can be (among other possibilities) linked to, and interpreted against the backdrop of, their author's essayistic work in *Intentions*. However, none of the annotators of this novel has taken this fact sufficiently into account yet.

For my discussion, I have chosen the most recent and most extensively annotated editions of *DG*. Joseph Bristow's is part of the *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* series, which aims at providing "scholarly and textually accurate" editions (Oxford University Press n.pag.) He provides the longest annotations, in which he cites all of his sources. The edition annotated by Nicholas Frankel also offers extensive explanatory notes, but is often less scholarly than Bristow's, as Frankel does not always cite his sources, includes many pictures that are not directly linked with the primary text, and omits a complete apparatus of variants. The Norton edition by Michael Gillespie has the most concise annotations of all three and is primarily meant to be a textbook for students of literature (W.W. Norton & Company n.pag.). My discussion of these three editions will show that the omission of Wilde's *Intentions* in annotations for *DG* is not a single phenomenon but runs through all of them – independently from the intended audience or the annotator's possibilities in terms of space.

An examination of the literature available on annotating shows that the problem lies not in the practice alone but also in a lack of theory: Guidelines for annotating have largely ignored the opportunities offered by implementing an author's critical texts in explanatory notes[4]. Jochen Schmidt is the only critic to briefly touch on this topic. He argues that a note should include the comments an author made on his or her work (cf. Schmidt 81). However, he does not explain *how* these comments should be used: Are they to be treated as authoritative or as one interpretation among many? The former would mean that only one reading of a passage – the author's – is presented as valid, which prevents readers from interpreting the passage themselves, i.e. the exact opposite of what an annotation should do (cf. Battestin 13). The risk of curtailing interpretation can, however, be avoided by treating an author's critical text as only *one* possibility of illuminating the primary text. Hence, the inclusion of *Intentions* in annotations for *DG*

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[4] See the articles by Frühwald, Friedman, Fuhrmann, Ricklefs; Battestin, Jack, Jansohn, Koopmann, Lamont, Martens, Small, Wall, and Woesler.

is meant to *broaden* the range of possible interpretations and not delimit them to a single one.

How an annotation can include Wilde's essays without prioritising them over other readings will be shown on the basis of two concrete examples. To this aim, I will outline two of the views expressed in *Intentions* and select passages from *DG* that raise questions that can be partly explained by having recourse to these views. I will discuss the shortcomings of Bristow's, Frankel's, and Gillespie's annotations with respect to answering readers' possible questions, and compare their explanatory notes with my own suggestion for an annotation. This, I hope, will illustrate how annotations can benefit from the inclusion of an author's critical writings and how such notes can help readers arrive at their own interpretation of the text.

## 2. Wilde's *Intentions* and Annotating *Dorian Gray*
### 2.1. "[F]acts Are Either Kept in Their Proper Subordinate Position, or Else Entirely Excluded"[5]

Apart from the insistence that art must never be judged from a moral standpoint[6], the assertion that art does not have to – or even *must* not – be concerned with the facts of the 'real world' is the most prominent argument in Wilde's *Intentions*: Art "is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. She is a veil, rather than a mirror" (Wilde, "Decay" 89)[7]. The main reason for prioritising fancy over fact in art is that a direct imitation of life is perceived as "dull" (75). Yet, "Decay" does not entirely oppose the notion that art refers to a world outside itself. Rather, it differentiates between two recommendable artistic practices: Firstly, "[a]rt begins with abstract decoration, with purely imaginative [...] work dealing with what is unreal" (84)[8]. In this case, facts are fully excluded and there is discernible no link to the world outside the work of art. The second possibility is that "[a]rt takes life as part of her rough material [...] and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact" (84)[9]. In the latter case, art *does* refer to a world outside itself but entirely recreates it, keeping "between

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[5] Wilde, "Decay" 87

[6] This part of Wilde's theory will not be discussed here, because, generally speaking, scholarly annotations that pass moral judgments on the annotated text are very rare.

[7] This view was one of the pillars of the aestheticist movement (cf. Lindner 70–71; Hansen 244–246; Pfister 139).

[8] In *DG*, Lord Henry wants to write exactly such a novel: It should be "as lovely as a Persian carpet and as unreal" (206).

[9] Something similar is asserted in the preface to *DG*: "Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art" (167). Likewise in "Critic": "[It] is the function of Literature to create, from the rough material of actual existence, a new world that will be more marvellous" (152). The artist "accepts the facts of life, and yet transforms them into shapes of beauty" (190).

herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment" (84).

For the most part, *DG* can be seen as belonging to the second category. The novel does not aim at imitating the world as a realist or naturalist text would, i.e. it does not strive to describe the "empirical world" in its "ordinary details" (Winkler 1148)[10]. However, there are many references to the world outside the text whose implications for the world within the novel have to be understood by readers. For example, only those who know that "Fonthill" refers to the luxurious home of the sybaritic writer William Beckford are able to assess what this allusion tells them about Dorian's own taste and lifestyle (cf. Wilde, *DG* 97)[11]. In an early review of the novel, Walter Pater argues that in *DG* Wilde is mostly true "to the aesthetic philosophy of his *Intentions*; yet not infallibly, [...] there is a certain amount of the intrusion of real life" (87). Hence, *DG* presents readers with a world that is at once 'real' and artistically transformed[12]. This raises the question whether annotators should make readers aware of incongruities between the world as depicted in the text and the 'real world'.

This issue is contested among annotators. Claire Lamont admits that she cannot find an answer but confirms that the "question of the text's reference to a world outside itself" is a pressing one and has to be addressed by a theory of annotation (cf. 53). Many texts concerned with annotation argue against drawing attention to instances in which the 'real world' is misrepresented. It is feared that, when literary texts are explained in terms of how they differ from 'reality', they cease to be appreciated for their literariness (cf. Koopmann 49; Small 196; Leavis 173; 180; Ricklefs 59). Furthermore, Gunter Martens asserts that such an annotation would be simply useless. Readers gain nothing from knowing, for example, that a building looks differently from how it is described in a literary text (cf. 41). Stephen Wall is the only one to explicitly ask annotators to inform readers whether a passage is true to reality or not (cf. 2). Hence, critics argue

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[10] This does of course not mean that realist literature is a perfect mirror of the world, which does not add, choose, or exclude anything for artistic purposes. Yet, unlike aestheticism, it aims at creating the illusion of a perfect imitation of 'reality'.

[11] All three annotators of *DG* offer a note for "Fonthill". Bristow explains that it was the "most extravagant of Romantic country houses" (391) and Frankel that the author was "notoriously dissolute" and that "no expense was spared" when building Fonthill (179). Gillespie's annotation is less helpful for assessing the possible significance of the reference for *DG*. He mentions that Fonthill was a Gothic mansion, but most of the information he provides is irrelevant for *DG,* e.g. that Byron admired Beckford's *Vathek* (100).

[12] E.g. by inventing historical personages like the "second Lord Gerard, the companion of the Prince Regent in his wildest days" (122). The mysterious novel that is frequently referred to by Dorian is likewise an invention, even though many possible sources for it have been identified, e.g. Huysmans's *A Rebours* and Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (see Fehr *passim* and Maier 175–203).

either in favour of disregarding the 'real world' as mere rough material, or in favour of using the world outside the text as a standard by which the work of art has to be judged.

Annotating the very first sentences of *DG*, Joseph Bristow shows himself to lean towards Wall's suggestion of using the real world as norm (see Appendix 1 for the original passage and Bristow's note). As the narrator describes how the odour of different flowers fills Basil's studio, Bristow comments that it is very improbable that the "'rich odor [sic] [...] of these plants would have mingled together on the summer wind" and goes on to provide proof that even if all of them bloomed at the same time, they would not be as fragrant as Wilde describes them (366). This may be true, but it does not become apparent how this information could enhance any reader's understanding of the novel. Readers now know that the description of the flowers is not true to nature, but they are not told whether this fact has any significance and – if it does –, what this significance might consist in. Bristow's annotation leaves readers with potentially more questions than answers. Explanatory notes should indeed point out inconsistencies in a text and raise questions that readers might not have thought of on their own. Without the necessary background information, however, readers will not able to arrive at an answer to these questions.

One piece of background information that can help understanding the first two sentences of *DG* is the rejection of mimesis in "Decay". In order to show how an annotation that includes this essay and counterbalances it by other interpretations might look like, I have written a draft for my own annotation. For this, I follow the guidelines of the Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System ([TEASys](#)) that structures annotations in levels and categories so that readers may choose how much and what kind of information they wish to receive. The part of the annotation that is concerned with Wilde's critical text is highlighted in grey. For further clarification, I have added boxes that describe what each passage of the annotation is concerned with.

<p align="center">•    •    •    •</p>

[Level 1]

[Context]

John Sutherland and Joseph Bristow, the editor of the Oxford edition of *DG*, note that it is unlikely that the scents of these flowers would have mingled in June (cf. Sutherland 197-8; Bristow 366).

> Observation for the text that explains the necessity for an annotation

[Level 2]

[Interpretation]

There are several explanations for this (seeming) mistake. For one, the passage could really merely be a flawed depiction of nature, owing to Wilde's notorious ignorance of botany (cf. Ojala 66-67; Kohl 29). However, Sutherland argues that the description of these flowers blooming at the same time is not a mistake. Rather, it should be read as a sign for the "desire to abolish the generational sequences of youth, maturity, and age" that is "allegorized" in *DG* (Sutherland 198). In his opinion, the coexistence of the three flowers symbolises the coexisting of Dorian's life-stages as youth, adult, and old man (cf. 198).

> Interpretation 1: Mistake

> Interpretation 2: Life-stages

Another possibility is that Wilde is employing Victorian flower symbolism in this passage. Purple lilac stands for the "[f]irst emotions of love", hinting at Basil's love for Dorian, while white lilac signifies youthful innocence, the trait ignorant onlookers associate with Dorian in the novel (Greenaway n.pag). None of the Victorian reference works I consulted mention "pink-flowering thorn", but the thorn apple symbolizes deceitful charms, which might allude to the danger behind Dorian's charming surface (cf. Greenaway n.pag.). Given the Victorian fashion for 'talking bouquets' and Wilde's own use of the green carnation as a secret symbol for homosexuality, it is not inconceivable that he deliberately used flowers whose meaning can in some way related to the plot (cf. Laufer *passim*). Frankel annotates two different passages of *DG* with reference to Victorian flower symbolism (cf. 78; 98).

> Interpretation 3: Flower symbolism

Bristow's annotation for this passage implies that Wilde's description is faulty. From a factual and mimetic point of view this is true. However, such an attitude towards art is rejected in Wilde's essays: In "The Decay of Lying", he asserts that art "is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance" to the 'real' world (89). If one agrees with this contention, it does not matter whether the description of the flowers is true to nature as long as it can be considered aesthetically pleasing[13]. From an aestheticist standpoint, the factual world is only a rough material, which the artist has to transform in order to create a more beautiful and interesting world in art (cf. 84).

> Interpretation 4: Rejection of mimesis

Thus, there are four possibilities to account for the description of the flowers in this passage. The first presupposes that Wilde committed the mistake unwittingly because he lacked botanical knowledge. The other three possibilities presume that the author acted intentionally: Either, he wanted the passage to set the tone for a novel

> Conclusion

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[13] Nowhere in his essays does Wilde address the question who decides what is aesthetically pleasing. Is it the author, the critic, the reader, or is beauty an inherent and unchanging quality of certain works of art?

concerned with the coincidence of different stages of life, or he drew on Victorian flower symbolism, or he bent the rules of nature in order to create an aesthetically pleasing passage. A combination of possibilities is also thinkable: He could have transformed reality in order to create a passage that he deemed beautiful *and* that had a deeper meaning, which could be related to the rest of the novel in some way.

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Bristow's annotation for the first two sentences of *DG* implicitly raises a question without answering it, namely why the description of the flowers is not true to nature. This sample annotation offers different answers, one of them based on Wilde's "Decay". Most non-academic readers may not be familiar with the statements on art expressed in Wilde's essays nor with the aestheticist movement in general. Leaving information concerning the notion that (in art) beauty is more important than facts[14] unmentioned would mean to deprive them of one way of evaluating the beginning of *DG*. What Bristow depicts exclusively as a mistake does not necessarily have to be one; it may also be interpreted as an example of the anti-mimetic theory of "Decay" put to practice. Instead of presenting Wilde's essay as the only key to *DG*, my sample annotation incorporates it as one of several possibilities, thereby providing readers with a broader range of starting points for interpretation. The inclusion of "Decay" enables them to reflect on whether they want to adopt the aestheticist rather than the mimetic standard for assessing depictions of the world when reading *DG*. This decision might have consequences for their whole reading experience and evaluation of the novel, as it contains numerous instances of a wilful distortion of facts, all of which will have to be addressed by the annotator.

The sample annotation shows that it can indeed be quite illuminating to compare the world of the literary text with the real world. The concern – expressed in many articles about annotating – that this comparison would use the factual world as standard and ignore the literariness of the text is shown to be mostly unfounded. Rather, it puts the focus on how and for what reasons reality is transformed in literature, stressing the permissibility of this transformation.

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[14] Wilde's disregard for facts can also be exemplified by the description of Dorian's collections, for which the author had recourse to several reference works: For example, the characteristics of one instrument are transferred to another and Wilde increases the radius within which its music can be heard from two leagues to three leagues (cf. Maier 164-5). For further examples of the changes Wilde made to his source material see Appendix 3.

## 2.2. A "Starting-Point for a New Creation"[15]

While "Decay" focuses on how art transforms the facts of life into a thing of beauty, "Critic" and "Pen" are concerned with an even better rough material for art, namely art itself. Using a piece of art as their starting point for creation, authors are able to draw from an already "purified" source, thereby creating a more perfect work (cf. Wilde, "Critic" 154; "Pen" 113). This practice, somewhat misleadingly called "criticism" by Wilde, is a "creation within a creation" ("Critic" 154). Good critics, according to these essays, are less occupied with the original work than with the "complex impressions" it produces in them and the question how they can realise these impressions in their own piece of art ("Pen" 109)[16]. In "Critic", Gilbert (the speaker) even argues that "creation is doomed" and that 'criticism' is the only possible creative act left (200). This (fairly modernist) attitude towards creation was not uncommon during the fin de siècle: Around 1860, "unoriginality – understood as the inventive reuse of the words of others – came increasingly to be discerned as an authentic form of creativity" (Macfarlane 8).

This notion of using already existing works and transforming them into a new piece of art can be helpful for understanding the eleventh chapter of *DG*, by which so many readers are irritated. The chapter has almost no plot and mainly consists of quotes and paraphrases from various books that are used in order to describe Dorian's different collections. None of the quotes are indicated; quotation marks only occur when they are already used in the source text. Neither is any of the original works identified in *DG*. Thus, the first fact an annotation has to acquaint readers with is *that* Wilde used a variety of reference works and did not simply know everything about gems, perfumes, etc. Then, readers need information concerning the *what, how,* and *why* of the chapter: Annotators have to specify what passages are taken from what sources, before discussing how Wilde selected and recombined the original texts. Ideally, this is accompanied by sufficiently long extracts from the source texts, so readers can also compare the texts themselves. *Why* is the most important question, because (as numerous reviews show) this is exactly what readers wonder when they are confronted with the eleventh chapter: Why does Wilde compose a text that almost exclusively consists of others' words, and why does he think it appropriate to present his readers with a chapter without a plot? The statements concerning originality in *Intentions* do not

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[15] Wilde, "Critic" 157.

[16] Cf. also the preface to *DG*: "The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things" (167).

suffice to answer the latter question. However, Wilde's essay "Critic" also offers a possible explanation for this problem, namely the prioritisation of contemplation over action (cf. "Critic" 179).

When annotating, for example, the beginning of the passage that is concerned with Dorian's collection of gems, Bristow, Frankel, and Gillespie only partly address the questions regarding the *how* and *why* of Wilde's use of his sources (see Appendix 2 for the passage in *DG* and their annotations). Bristow identifies the source text and provides readers with an extract from it. This extract, however, does not contain the information Wilde used, which appears a few lines below in the original (see also Appendix 2). Thus, Bristow's annotation does not enable readers to examine how the author used the original works. At the end of his annotation, Bristow argues that a connection can be made between this passage and a passage in Huysmans's *À Rebours*, in which the protagonist collects gems as well. Frankel likewise identifies the original texts and explains that Wilde "renders this source material in a prose of subtle power, transforming it drastically in the process" (Frankel 197). He also explains that Wilde emphasises the esoteric qualities of the stones that are described in William Jones' *History and Mystery of Precious Stones* (cf. 197). This is at least an attempt to analyse how Wilde used his source texts. However, as Frankel provides no extracts from the original texts, readers cannot verify his interpretation. The possibility that *À Rebours* might have served as a model for the passage is not mentioned. In an explanatory note for the whole chapter, Frankel argues that "Wilde's object is to capture the texture of Dorian's experiences" and his various moods (187; see Appendix 2). Gillespie begins his note with a detailed comparison between the jewel collections in *DG* and Huysmans's novel. Furthermore, he argues that Wilde included the legends and superstitions about various gems in order to "add an occult, decadent flavour to the story" (112). At the end of his annotation, he identifies the source texts but does not provide any extracts from them.

All three annotators inform readers of Wilde's sources, but only Bristow provides extracts from them and only Frankel briefly analyses how they are transformed in *DG*. None of the annotators offers a discussion about why the author might have chosen to compose the chapter in such a 'plagiaristic' manner. A possible reason for including a chapter without a plot at all is only briefly touched on by Frankel. Hence, the *how* and *why* of the chapter remain largely unanswered. As the following draft for

an explanatory note will show, Wilde's critical writings can offer possible answers to these questions.

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[*This would be an annotation for the whole paragraph about Dorian's collection of gems. Each stone would also be annotated separately. For each of them, I would make available the corresponding original passages in Church and Jones, so readers can compare them to the description in* DG *themselves and reflect on whether they agree with my comparison between the texts.*]

[Level 1]

[Intertextuality]

The physical descriptions of the gems in the following paragraphs are taken from A.H. Church's *Precious Stones* (1882), while the superstitions and anecdotes associated with these stones are drawn from William Jones's *History and Mystery of Precious Stones* (1880).

What?
Sources

[Level 2]

[Interpretation]

When adapting Church's and Jones's texts, Wilde often sticks to their content, but changes the form considerably. Frankel comments that "Wilde renders this source material in a prose of subtle power, transforming it drastically in the process" (197). Wolfgang Maier's assessment of the passage is slightly more elaborate but in the same vein: "Wilde kreiert ein eigentümliches, vom Original losgelöstes Gebilde mit einer Atmosphäre, die typisch für das ganze 11. Kapitel ist: Die Welt wird dargestellt als sinnliche Erlebnissphäre, als reizendes Objekt, das Dasein wird ästhetisiert" (161). [+ *English translation of this quote*]

How? Others'
analyses

The accuracy of these interpretations can be examined by comparing the passage of *DG* with Jones' and Church's books in more detail. When adapting his source texts, Wilde paraphrases and shortens passages, and leaves out all of Church's professional jargon. From Church's long descriptions, he often selects only a few words (see Appendix 2). The passages taken from Jones are usually closer to the original but still paraphrased. A possible reason for treating the two sources differently could be that Church's book is mainly concerned with scientific facts, while Jones's contains legends from far-away places and long-gone times, thus being much better suited to a literary

How? Comparison
between *DG* and
its sources

text. Nevertheless, Wilde still makes considerable changes to Jones's text. For example, Jones records that the king of Malabar had a rosary of 104 pearls, which Wilde alters to 304 pearls in the 1891 version of *DG*, rendering the description even more lavish (see Appendix 3). Likewise, he turned the "shark" of one of Jones' anecdotes into a "sea-monster" and invents that the monster "mourned for seven moons" over losing a precious pearl (see Appendix 3). These changes make the anecdote appear yet more mythical than Jones original (cf. Frankel 197). Even such a brief comparison between both texts shows that – contrary to Isobel Murray's assertion – Wilde did not take the passages verbatim out of Jones work (cf. Murray 192). (For a more detailed comparison between *DG* and its sources see the annotations for each gem.)

The way in which Wilde adapts the two source texts might be seen against the backdrop of his essays "Pen" and "Critic" (cf. Maier 170-71): In these, it is argued that authors should contemplate other texts (also non-artistic ones) and works of art, and use the impressions they gain from these in order to create a (new) piece of art (cf. "Pen" 109; "Critic" 200). Accordingly, Wilde can be seen as using Jones' and Church's texts as stimuli for creation rather than sources that have to be closely imitated. The impressions he gains from them lead to a new text that differs from the originals in style as well as (to a lesser extent) in content. The aim of the practice proposed in "Critic" and "Pen" is not only to use a source but also to transform and improve on it in accordance with the author's sensations and artistic ideals (cf. "Pen" 109; Ross xxiii). As shown above, Wilde does not hesitate to alter his sources considerably in order to create a text he might have deemed more aesthetically pleasing and better suited to *DG* than the originals. Furthermore, the practice of being inspired by books rather than nature chimes in well with the anti-mimetic principles advanced in Wilde's essay "Decay". He could easily have gone to a museum and note down his observations on the gems exhibited there. (Church's work was a handbook to a collection in the South Kensington Museum (cf. Frankel 197)). Instead, he chose to rely on books.

| How? Embedded in *Intentions* |
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[Context]

[*This part of the annotation would embed the preoccupation with precious stones in the context of fin-de-siècle literature (Huysmans, Gautier, and others) and compare Wilde's treatment of gems to theirs. It is left out of this sample, because Wilde's* Intentions *are irrelevant for this part of the explanatory note.*]

| Literary background |
|---|

[Level 3] [*In the finished web-version, this part of the annotation would be a separate annotation to which all explanatory notes regarding Wilde's use of his sources in the eleventh chapter would refer to.*]

[Interpretation]

The practice of creating a whole chapter out of paraphrases from various books might seem uncreative and – given the fact that Wilde discloses none of his sources in the text – plagiaristic. This impression is not wholly unfunded; the artist James McNeill Whistler, for example, frequently accused Wilde of plagiarism (cf. MacFarlane 157). [*In the finished annotation, I would elaborate on this point by giving more examples etc*.]

However, the chapter might also be understood in the context of Wilde's (and other fin-de-siècle writers') views regarding creativity. According to Robert MacFarlane, the fin de siècle was "a period during which certain prominent writers [...] made borrowing and appropriation a primary and explicit feature of their artistic productions" (156). This attitude can be observed in Wilde's "Critic" and "Pen". In these essays, it is argued that "creation is doomed" ("Critic" 200) and that "the arts borrow, not from life, but from each other" ("Pen" 113). If we can judge by his critical writings, Wilde may have seen his use of sources in the eleventh chapter as a sign of creativity rather than unimaginativeness, as artists should offer their readers "originality of treatment, not of subject" (Wilde "Olivia"). The content of the chapter mainly belongs to others, but the style is Wilde's.

Another explanation for the borrowings in this chapter might be that Wilde tried to appear more erudite on these topics than he actually was – a practice he is often accused of (cf. Jackson 208). As there are no quotation marks in the text apart from those that appear in the original texts and as Wilde does not disclose his sources in the chapter, the impression is created that he simply *knew* everything about gems, perfumes, fabrics, etc. Several contemporary reviewers had the impression that he was trying to appear more learned than he was and argued that the novel was the outcome of "cheap research" (Jeyes 68; cf. Anonymous 71). One of them makes a guess at Wilde's sources and asserts that the eleventh chapter is "too suggestive of the South Kensington Museum and aesthetic Encyclopaedias" (Book-Worms 76).

All three possibilities – plagiarism, fin-de-siècle creativity, and feigned erudition – are valid readings of this chapter and may influence how readers assess the borrowings that make up this part of *DG*.

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|---|---|
| Why use sources in this manner? | |
| Answer 1: Plagiarism | |
| Answer 2: Conventions and *Intentions* | |
| Answer 3: Feigned erudition | |
| Conclusion | |

Readers may not only wonder why Wilde uses so many different sources but also why he writes a chapter without a plot at all. The possible answers to this question are interconnected. Firstly, one reason might lie in the conventions of fin-de-siècle literature. Generally speaking, the "use of a decadent hero in fiction involves an abrogation of action and plot" (Weir 94). The most prominent example for this is Huysmans's novel *À Rebours*, which is primarily concerned with the inner life of its protagonist and his views on art. The novel that exerts such a strong influence on Dorian in *DG* is also described as having "no plot, and [...] only one character" (*DG* 102). Secondly, Frankel explains that the eleventh chapter is meant to "capture the texture of Dorian's experiences" as well as his moods and fancies (187). This interpretation can be seen against the backdrop of fin-de-siècle literature, as well. As noted above, the texts of this time often aim at describing the fleeting moods and sensual impressions of languid characters rather than any actions (cf. Symons 165). Thirdly, Wilde's *Intentions,* which are in line with this strand of fin-de-siècle literary conventions, also prioritise contemplation over action. In "Critic". the author Robert Browning is praised because, according to the speaker,

> [i]ncident and event were to him unreal or unmeaning. He made the soul the protagonist of life's tragedy, and looked on action as the one undramatic element of a play. (179)

According to this view, not the plot should be foregrounded but a character's thoughts and moods. Anne Varty even argues that Wilde saw plots as "a necessary evil for fiction" (Varty 127). Thus, rather than seeing the eleventh chapter of *DG* as a boring aberration in the overall narrative, one could perceive it as an epitome of decadent writing. [*In the final version of this annotation, I would slightly elaborate on all three suggestions.*]

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Even though the annotations by Bristow, Frankel, and Gillespie are by no means entirely unhelpful, they leave several questions unanswered. An explanatory note for an intertextual reference should help readers see how the incorporation of other texts "works" and analyse their significance for the primary text (cf. Battestin 10; Kocher 181). Bristow's, Frankel's, and Gillespie's explanatory notes do not entirely satisfy this expectation for an annotation. Their notes explain *that* Wilde uses sources, but they still leave readers with questions: Why does Wilde choose to use sources in this certain way and why does he include this chapter, which does not advance the plot, at all? Is he a plagiarist, who made changes to the source text so that his borrowings are not detected?

| Why write a chapter without a plot? |
| Answer 1: Conventions |
| Answer 2: Texture of experiences |
| Answer 3: *Intentions* |

Did he believe his readers would be interested in reading page-long descriptions of gems? The eleventh chapter of *DG* sticks out among the rest of the novel and raises several obstacles for understanding (and enjoying) the book in its entirety.

As I hoped to show in this sample annotation, Wilde's critical writings can be used to answer these questions. Users of the annotation are offered different possibilities for assessing his use of sources; two negative ones (plagiarism and feigning erudition) and a positive one that is based on the attitudes towards originality propounded in "Critic" and "Pen". Depending on which explanation they agree with, their reading experience and appraisal of the novel can differ. When addressing the question why Wilde included the chapter at all, his critical writings are used as an extension to two other explanations rather than as a contrasting interpretation. First, his literary practice is embedded in the culture of his time, then, it is proven that this embedding is justified by showing the similarities between Wilde's critical writings and fin-de-siècle poetics in general. Furthermore, critics' and annotators' analyses regarding the way in which Wilde transformed his sources have also been shown to be expandable by linking his practice to his critical writings.

## 3. Conclusion

> Annotations should answer two kinds of questions: first, questions which readers ask themselves while reading a text; second, questions which readers do not ask themselves while reading a text but which, after reading the annotation, they feel they should have asked. (Niederhoff n.pag)

As I have tried to show in this paper, the annotations by Bristow, Frankel, and Gillespie often fail to achieve exactly this. They do not fully anticipate and answer readers' questions, and their annotations might often pose more questions than they resolve. Furthermore, *if* they provide answers, they only do so to a limited extent, as they usually provide or imply only one interpretation of a passage. By offering my own annotations for two passages of *DG,* I essayed to demonstrate how Wilde's critical texts can help annotators identify and address questions that arise from the text, as well as increase the number of possible interpretations.

On the basis of my two sample annotations, it can be seen that linking the literary text to its author's critical works can only ever be *one* way of explaining the text if annotators do not want to curtail interpretation. The inclusion of Wilde's essays was shown to serve two main purposes. Most importantly, it can add a completely new

reading of a passage, e.g. when the rejection of mimesis was given as one explanation for the 'faulty' description of nature at the beginning of *DG*, or when the seemingly plagiaristic use of sources was explained in terms of Wilde's professed attitude towards originality. The author's critical texts can also be employed to substantiate interpretations that are based on other fields of knowledge. The explanation why the eleventh chapter of *DG* does not have a plot was first embedded in the literary conventions of the time and school in which it was written. An extract from "Critic" was then used in order to show that – in this question – Wilde was in line with these conventions. Furthermore, annotators can benefit from taking into account the author's critical works even before they write explanatory notes. Knowing which ideas are advanced in Wilde's essays, they can look out for passages that might have been written with these ideas in mind, and reflect on whether the putting to practice of these (often unorthodox) ideas poses problems for understanding the text.

Despite the advantages of including an author's critical works in an annotation, it is apparent that such an approach runs the risk of treating the author's essays as a means to recover authorial intention. Thus, annotators should always make clear (to themselves as well as to readers) that the literary text is more than a theory put to practice; it is a complex work, which was influenced by a multitude of factors and which can even greatly contrast with its author's critical texts[17]. Establishing a connection between an author's critical and literary works is always an act of interpretation and should be marked as such (e.g. by explicitly labeling the passage "Interpretation" as practiced in accordance with TEASys). Everything else might induce readers (especially non-academic ones) to see this explanation as the most plausible one and treat all differing readings as mere addenda. The inclusion of an author's critical texts is meant to broaden the range of interpretations, not delimit it to one: An annotator's task is to help readers understand, interpret, and enjoy a text, not to promote an artist's views.

As can be seen in my sample annotations, the information that had to be added in order to improve Bristow's, Frankel's, and Gillespie's notes went beyond including Wilde's critical texts. For example, the three often only provide one interpretation of a passage, insufficiently compare *DG* with its sources, and frequently fail to see the novel against the backdrop of fin-de-siècle literature in general. Thus, implementing *Intentions* in the explanatory annotations was only one step that had to be taken in order

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[17] In this case, an annotation would be required that discusses what might have induced this gap between theory and practice.

to fully answer readers' possible questions. The background information on different fields of knowledge had to be expanded and more interpretations had to be included in the sample annotation. Bristow, Frankel, and Gillespie most likely lacked the space for such notes, which shows that being able to publish their explanatory notes online might help annotators write annotations that offer a sufficient amount of background knowledge and do not delimit interpretation.

It remains to be seen whether the practice of using critical texts for the elucidation of literary works by the same author is universally applicable. However, two problems are already discernible. Some writers, for example Lord Byron, produced only little theoretical output. In such a case, the author's views regarding art would have to be reconstructed using private letters, reviews, and the like. This would most likely leave editors with only a rudimentary understanding of an author's views on the production and aim of art. Nevertheless, they should try to take into account the little information they were able to recover. A second problem is that authors can put forward highly contradictory theories during their career, or radically change the style or content of their literary output. Hence, annotators have to be on their guard and critically reflect on which critical texts can be used to shed light on a certain literary text, without, however, dismissing contradicting critical works as irrelevant in the annotation.

Taking into account an author's critical works broadens the range of possible interpretations and can help annotators anticipate and answer readers' possible questions. Furthermore, readers can benefit from this practice on a hermeneutical as well as on a didactic level. As the reviews quoted at the beginning of this paper show, parts of the text that might have been strongly influenced by the author's ideas about art raise obstacles to understanding and can mar the reading experience of the whole text. By including information on these ideas and using them as one way of elucidating the text, these obstacles are removed and a deeper understanding and greater enjoyment of the whole literary text is made possible. Through embedding certain literary passages in their author's critical works, annotators not only enable readers to understand the whole text better but possibly also a whole literary movement – provided the author's critical texts are related to a certain school. The literary text is seen against the backdrop of the poetological discussions of its time and readers are introduced to the views on art a certain author or movement professed to hold, thereby expanding their knowledge about literary history and theory.

## 4. Appendix
**Appendix 1**

<u>Annotated passage</u>: "The studio was filled with the rich odor [sic] of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn" (3).

<u>Bristow's annotation</u>: "[I]t is improbable that the 'rich odor', 'heavy scent, and 'delicate perfume' of these plants would have mingled together on the summer wind. As John Sutherland observes, in 'southern Britain, lilac blossoms and is odoriferous in rainy April, thorn in May . . .  and roses bloom in blazing mid-June'. Sutherland adds that while it 'is not inconceivable that the flowers, blooms, and blossoms which Wilde describes . . .  might just coincide on the branch in mid-June', they would not exude the 'full odoriferousness about which the first chapter is so eloquent' (*Is Heathcliff a Murderer? Great Puzzles in Nineteenth-Century Literature* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 197-8)." (366)

<u>Frankel</u>: no annotation
<u>Gillespie:</u> no annotation

**Appendix 2**

<u>Annotated passage</u>: "On one occasion he took up the study of jewels [...] He would often spend a whole day settling and resettling in their cases the various stones that he had collected, such as the olive-green chrysoberyl that turns red by lamplight, the cymophane with its wirelike line of silver the pistachio-coloured peridot, rose-pink and wine-yellow topazes, carbuncles of fiery scarlet with tremulous, four-rayed stars [...] He discovered wonderful stories, also, about jewels. In Alphonso's Clericalis Disciplina a serpent was mentioned with eyes of real jacinth" (113-14). The passage goes on like this for another two pages.

The smaragdus of Theophrastus included with the beryl a number of quite different stones, such as the chrysocolla and dioptase. Pliny's smaragdus included, besides the above, the green chrysoberyl and the chrysoprase, as well as the green plasma, the prase, and green jasper. In native East Indian jewellery the emerald is usually cut *en cabochon*; this form conceals the flaws to a great degree. In Europe the step-cut is considered the most suitable style. Emeralds are occasionally engraved or carved. In the Hope collection there was a beautiful vinaigrette made out of two emeralds, ⅞ inch in height, and ⅝ inch across; it brought 145 guineas when sold by auction in 1886.

### CHRYSOBERYL.

The cymophane or true cat's-eye, the hard specimens called oriental chrysolite by jewellers, and the alexandrite are varieties of chrysoberyl. Their differences of hue and of physical appearance are not associated with any essential differences of composition. The colours of chrysoberyl range from columbine red through brownish yellow to leaf green; a golden yellow and a greenish yellow are not unusual. The coloured chrysoberyls are strongly dichroic;* some brownish specimens from this cause may present to the unassisted eye the aspect of tourmalines. The green leaf, or deep olive green variety, known as alexandrite, of which fine flawless specimens of large size have been sent from Ceylon, is remarkable for appearing of a raspberry red hue by candle or lamplight. This mineral crystallises in the orthorhombic system; twins are frequent. The hardness of chrysoberyl approaches that of the sapphire: it is 8·5. Its lustre and brilliancy are considerable. Its specific gravity averages 3.7; it is but slightly lowered by strong ignition.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Golden yellow | . . 3·84 | Brownish yellow | . . | 3·734 |
| Greenish yellow | . . 3·76 | Alexandrite | . . | 3·644 |

* Fig. 9. Frontispiece.

The cymophane, or true cat's-eye, owes its chatoyancy, whether of pale steely whiteness as a flash, or as a line like a silver wire, to the orderly arrangement of an immense number of minute cavities along certain lines causing minute internal striations. The dark yellowish green hue is most prized; it is usually cut *en cabochon*. The chrysoberyl occurs in many localities, notably in Brazil and Ceylon, Connecticut, and the Urals. A fine specimen from the Hope collection is in the British Museum.

The chrysoberyl owes its colour chiefly to iron in the form of ferrous oxide; but traces of chromium and of manganese oxide also occur in it. Its percentage composition is roughly :

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alumina | . . . . 78 | Glucina . . . . | 18 |
| Ferrous oxide | . . . 4 | | |

### PHENAKITE.

Phenakite is but rarely used as a gem-stone. The colourless transparent variety may, however, be mistaken for a diamond, especially by candlelight, when the prismatic colours, or " fire," of a brilliant-cut specimen are conspicuous. The hardness of this stone lies between 7½ and 8, while its specific gravity is close upon 3. Crystals of phenakite usually take the form of a low obtuse rhombohedron. This mineral is sometimes perfectly colourless and transparent, but more frequently is rather clouded and milky, or of a straw, sherry, or cinnamon tint. When viewed with a dichroiscope the ordinary image is colourless, the extraordinary image being of a warm yellow or brown, should the specimen examined possess any colour at all.

The best specimens of phenakite known come from the emerald and chrysoberyl mines at Takovaya, eighty-five versts east of Ekaterinburg, Perm, Asiatic Russia : the matrix is a mica-schist ; less important examples are found in Colorado, U.S.A.

In the Mineralogical Gallery of the British Natural History Museum, there are fine specimens of phenakite both in crystals

Bristow's annotation: "Fehr (253-5) notes that this [chrysoberyl] is the first of a series of references that were largely taken from A.H. Church, *Precious Stones*, which appeared in 1882. W may have consulted other poplar handbooks as well. Cf. Church, 72: 'The cymophane or true cat's eye, the hard specimens called oriental chrysolite by jewellers, and the alexandrine are varieties of chrysoberyl.'

The choice of stones in this paragraph echoes a passage in Huysmans's *A Rebours*. In ch. 4, Des Esseintes fashions a bouquet of flowers from precious stones: 'les feuilles furent serties de pierreries d'un vert accentué et précis: de chrysobéryls vert asperge; de péridots vert poireau' (Huysmans 58). ('[T]he leaves were set with stones of intense, unequivocal green: with asparagus-green chrysoberyl, with leek-green peridots', Mauldon 37)." (401)

Frankel's annotations: (1) "All the descriptions of rare and exotic stones in this paragraph are adapted from A. H. Church, *Precious Stones* (London, 1883), a handbook to the Townsend collection of precious stones in the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). Wilde renders this source material in a prose of subtle power, transforming it drastically in the process." (197)

(2) "The "wonderful stories about jewels" contained in this paragraph and the two following it were inserted into the typescript by Wilde on three handwritten sheets. They represent the largest single alteration Wilde made to the typescript prior to sending it off for publication. These anecdotes are closely adapted – often word for word – from William Jones, *History and Mystery of Precious Stones* (London: Richard Bentley, 1880). With one exception, all the phrases quoted by Wilde had been previously quoted by Jones; similarly, with the same exception, all names and sources cited by Wilde had previously been cited by Jones, though their esoteric qualities are decidedly more pronounced. The exception is Wilde's reference to the jewelled gifts that Edward II gave to Piers Gaveston, his male lover – a homoerotic reference, which, as Joseph Bristow notes, has no precedent in Jones's work." (197)

Frankel's annotation for the whole chapter: "This is the most difficult, intractable, and densely referential chapter in the novel. Not surprisingly, it has given directors fits in their numerous efforts to bring the novel to life on the stage, film, and on television. Here Wilde largely abandons witty dialogue and dramatic interpersonal exchanges in favor of descriptions of Dorian's interests in religion, mysticism, music, perfumes, jewels, ancient tapestries, and the study of his own ancestors, as he enacts Lord Henry's philosophy of a "new Hedonism". Wilde's object is to capture the texture of Dorian's experiences and the almost scientific spirit in which they are pursued – and thus to capture also the "various moods and changing fancies" of Dorian's own shifting, experimental nature. Wilde's language here is highly ornate, frequently poetic, and it possesses all the characteristics ascribed by Arthur Symons to writings of the Decadent Movement. Like *Le Secret de Raoul* [title of Dorian's mysterious novel in Wilde's manuscript] the chapter possesses a "curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases" (Chap. 8, p. 184)." (187)

Gillespie's annotation: "Des Esseintes's study of jewels was more elaborate in *A Rebours*. Many of the more exotic stones mentioned here were used in Huysmans's novel as a covering on the shell of a giant tortoise, contributing to the creature's premature demise. Huysmans is interested in his hero's use of jewels in order to create new sensations and new aesthetic effects in his life. Wilde emphasises equally the anecdotes connected to the jewels to add an occult, decadent flavour to the story. He culled his information on stones from A. H. Church's *Precious Stones* (1882), another of the South Kensington Museum Art Handbooks. Many of the stories come, sometimes verbatim out of William Jones's *History and Mystery of Precious Stones* (1880), as cited in *Dorian Gray*, Murray 246." (112)

**Appendix 3**

The "King of Malabar" passage in *DG*: "The King of Malabar had shown to a certain Venetian a rosary of three hundred and four pearls, one for every god that he worshipped." (283).

The "King of Malabar" passage in Jones (123):

> The famous Venetian traveller, Polo, also mentions a famous "rosary" of pearls and rubies belonging to the King of Malabar, "who wears round his neck a necklace entirely of precious stones, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and the like, insomuch that this collar is of great value. He wears also, hanging in front of his chest, from the neck downwards, a fine silk thread, strung with one hundred and four large pearls and rubies of great price. The reason why he wears this cord with the one hundred and four great pearls and rubies is (according to what they tell), that every day, morning and evening, he has to say one hundred and four prayers to his idols. Such is their religion

The "shark" passage in *DG*: "A sea-monster had been enamoured of the pearl that the diver brought to King Perozes, and had slain the thief, and mourned for seven moons over its loss" (283).

The "shark" passage in Jones (124-25):

> his image of the sovereign. This reminds us of the romantic tale, related by Procopius, of that pearl of unrivalled magnitude, obtained at the urgent entreaty of King Perozes, by the daring diver, from the guardianship of the enamoured shark, but with the sacrifice of his own life. How vividly does he bring before

## 5. Abbreviations

"Critic": Wilde, Oscar. "The Critic as Artist"

"Decay": Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying"

"Pen": Wilde, Oscar. "Pen, Pencil and Poison"

*DG*: Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Ed. Joseph Bristow.

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