


# The preface

The 'Preface', first published as an essay in a literary magazine, appeared in the 1891 final edition of the novel. It consists of a series of aphorisms, or epigrammatic sentences, considered the basic principles of Aestheticism in England.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things. *no this mean that artist aim is not to communicate a beautiful message but to offer an example of beauty*

To reveal art and conceal<sup>1</sup> the artist is art's aim. 

The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things. *→ The criticism reveals more about the person who is judging than about the object of judgment*

The highest as the lowest form of criticism is a mode<sup>2</sup> of autobiography.

Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.

Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated<sup>3</sup>. For these there is hope. *→ art should never express anything but itself; reader shouldn't find other messages in art*

They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. *→ art is not meant to instruct the reader. He rejected the didacticism typical of the Victorian novel.*

That is all.

The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban<sup>4</sup> seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth century dislike of romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium.

No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid<sup>5</sup>. The artist can express everything. *→ Morbid is emphasizing the same concept*

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art.

Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art. *→ he makes an instrument of what's right and what's wrong*

From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician.

From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft<sup>6</sup> is the type.

All art is at once surface and symbol.

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital.

When critics disagree, the artist is in accord with himself.

We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it.

The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless. *→ art exist for its own sake, and not for any moral purposes*

*The purpose of art is to have no purpose.*

- 1 conceal. Nascondere.
- 2 mode. Forma.
- 3 the cultivated. I raffinati, colti.
- 4 Caliban. Lo schiavo nero e selvaggio della Tempesta di Shakespeare (⇒ T29).
- 5 morbid. Morboso.
- 6 craft. Abilità.



Inversion to put attention on the complement

*→ these sentences are meant to contrast to make other things better, instead, the dream of the plain, which, according to some critics, is an anticipation of the death of the artist.*