

DORIAN GRAY DANCES IN THE DARK

Since I received the assignment two weeks ago, I've been thinking of some songs that could represent the character Dorian Gray but I couldn't find anything because I was looking for something that perfectly embodies Mr. Gray. Then I rediscovered *Dancing in the dark* by Bruce Springsteen. The song of the Boss reinvents Dorian Gray in a contemporary key even if it remains loyal to the soul of the damned character born by Oscar Wilde's mind.

Here are the lyrics

*I get up in the evening, and I ain't got nothing to say
I come home in the morning, I go to bed feeling the same way
I ain't nothing but tired, man I'm just tired and bored with myself
Hey there baby, I could use just a little help*

(Chorus)

*You can't start a fire, you can't start a fire without a spark
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark*

*Message just keep getting clearer, radio's on and I'm moving round the place
I check my look in the mirror wanna change my clothes my hair my face
Man I ain't getting nowhere I'm just livin in a dump like this
There's something happening somewhere baby I just know that there is*

(Chorus)

*You sit around getting older there's a joke here somewhere and it's on me
I'll shake this world off my shoulders come on baby the laughs on me
Stay on the streets of this town and they'll be carving you up alright
They say you got to stay hungry hey baby I'm just about starving tonight
I'm dying for some action I'm sick of sitting 'round here trying to write
This book
I need a love reaction come on baby give me just one look*

(Chorus)

*You can't start a fire, sittin' 'round cryin' over a broken heart
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark*

*You can't start a fire, worryin' about your little world falling apart
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark*

*Even if we're just dancing in the dark
Even if we're just dancing in the dark
Even if we're just dancing in the dark*

Hey baby!

The text talks about a man who is "tired and bored with himself". He leads his life through the emptiness of nights without achievement of any goals and pattern of action, hoping that material things could reduce his suffering. He has lost the compass or he has probably never got it. He becomes conscious of his condition and so he feels disgusted of himself. As time passes this terrible feeling becomes clearer and heavier the same does the lack of any direction. He can be aware that things which are worth the struggles of life happen around him but he can't be absorbed in them.

All the story reminds me of the figure of Dorian Gray. This one sells his soul in the name of the eternal beauty. He obtains that paying a high price, losing everything: his purity, moral integrity, originality, his closest friends and the beloved girl, his reputation. Then he falls in the deepest desperation, wandering for entire nights among vices trying to take distances from himself.

The philosopher Soren Kierkegaard would define Mr. Gray's condition homesickness, hysteria of the spirit. People want to be happy in an absolute way but they stubbornly concentrate on physical, immanent and finished things. If they don't obtain anything they remain unhappy but if they obtained such things the pleasure will be short and so will be the reason of more unhappiness. For the Danish philosopher, the only way to leave suffering behind is choosing ourselves in our own entirety. Dorian Gray chooses only the aesthetic part and that is the reason way the main character of Oscar Wilde is so sad and commits suicide.

Coming back to the song we could find several explicit references to *The picture of Dorian Gray*. First of all "dancing in the dark" which is the title and appears every time in the chorus. We can link that with nocturnal vices at first glance but it could also mean poorly wandering in the dark of the night without hopes. The "mirror" is the picture realized by Basil Hallward. In the beginning it is an instrument of self-satisfaction, afterwards it involves in an instrument of torture because it hurts Dorian Gray every time he looks at it. "Getting older" is not just a question of time or age (we know well that Mr. Gray doesn't grow old): it could be thought as if soul's corruption gets bigger and bigger. Jokes and laughs can represent bad gossips on his figure spread in the city and moreover the irony of his existence: being miserable for being handsome.

In the second and third stanzas appears the theme of love which apparently discords with the features of the character. Actually it could be seen as the strong wonder of reaching an interior peace to start again ("I'm just about starving tonight"). In the end, the expression "this gun's for hire" highlights the fact that life is only one and we have only one chance to fulfill ourselves and being satisfied and happy.