

From Megametaphor to Macrostructure: Moral Metaphor and Blending in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Abstract

This study investigates the contribution of moral megametaphors to the macrostructure of Oscar Wilde's seminal novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) were employed for systematic and well-grounded analysis. The study adopted a qualitative approach, using case study design and thematic analysis, to explore the role of moral megametaphors in developing the narrative structure, character progression, and literary themes. Results reveal that the moral megametaphors frequently used in the novel include the conceptual metaphors, i.e., MORALITY IS BEAUTY, MORALITY IS PURITY, and THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY, and metaphorical blends, i.e., THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT and MORALITY IS THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE PORTRAIT. These megametaphors (1) enhance the textual coherence by connecting several micrometaphors; (2) develop the narrative structure with the portrait as a visual, dynamic manifestation of corruption; and (3) reinforce the writer's message on aesthetic beauty and moral decay. The study offers valuable insights for both research and practice by extending the application of CMT and CBT in literary analysis and providing practical guidance for teaching literature and translating metaphors. While acknowledging certain limitations, the study encourages future research to explore broader themes and adopt more objective approaches to further deepen the understanding of metaphor's role in literary macrostructure.

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Keywords: Blending; Conceptual Metaphor; Macrostructure; Megametaphor; Morality; *Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Introduction

Morality is principally concerned with the promotion of well-being and the prevention of harm to humans (Lakoff, 2002). All moral principles, such as compassion, fairness, loyalty, and tolerance, serve to facilitate social cooperation for mutual benefit to ensure human survival and thriving development (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Due to its importance, this issue has received special attention from scholars of different fields, such as religion (Feder, 2021; Robinson, 2016), psychology (Huangfu et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2023), and linguistics, especially cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 2002; Yu, 2022). Challenging the traditional view on metaphor, cognitive linguists posit that metaphor is not simply a matter of words, but of concepts, and that metaphor structures the ways we think and the actions we perform (Kovecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Prior studies concerning moral metaphors, such as Lakoff (2002) and Yu (2022), have provided a detailed analysis of moral concepts and the logic behind them in different languages. In the field of literature, for instance, Herrero-Ruiz (2008) and Dimitrova (2016) explored how conceptual metaphors of morality contribute to the plot development of fairy tales in different regions. However, to date, little attention has

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been paid to how both metaphorical blends and conceptual metaphors of morality have been utilised to develop the macrostructure of a literary work.

To fill in the gaps in the literature, this study aimed to investigate the contribution of both moral metaphor and blending to the macrostructural development of a literary text. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*), written by Oscar Wilde and first published in 1890, was selected for the analysis due to its rich metaphorical language, recurrent metaphorical patterns of morality, and narrative complexity. Although this novel has attracted considerable attention from numerous scholars who analysed it through the lenses of philosophy and literary criticism (Bowser, 2022; Fry, 2022; Lawtoo, 2020; Liebman, 1999), there has been relatively minimal focus on the analysis of this work using the framework of linguistics, specifically cognitive linguistics. This research gap highlights the potential value of approaching this novel from the perspective of cognitive linguistics.

Given the aim mentioned above, this study sought to answer this research question: How do moral metaphors contribute to the macrostructure of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*? This question can be specified into two sub-questions: (a) How do the recurrent conceptual metaphors of morality contribute to the macrostructure of the novel? and (b) How do the recurrent metaphorical blends of morality contribute to the macrostructure of the novel?

Literature Review

Theories in Cognitive Linguistics

Two influential theories concerning metaphor in cognitive linguistics are (a) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), which centers on conceptual metaphor and (b) Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), introduced by Fauconnier & Turner (1994) with its focus on blending. A search of the literature reveals that researchers tend to focus on either CMT (Greenham, 2018; Phan & Ho-Trinh, 2023) or CBT (Booth, 2017; Copland, 2012) to analyze a literary work. Sullivan (2013) and Prazmo & Augustyn (2020) are among the few studies that did combine CMT and CBT for a more comprehensive analysis of the cognitive mechanisms underlying the selected literary text.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their seminal 1980 work *Metaphors we live by* and has later been developed by these authors and other influential scholars, including Mark Turner, Raymond Gibbs, and Zoltán Kövecses. CMT suggests that metaphor is not solely a decorative element of language, but a fundamental part of the conceptual system of the human mind, influencing not only language but also thought and action (Kovecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). To differentiate this type of metaphor from the linguistic metaphor, the term “conceptual metaphor” was used, highlighting that metaphor refers to “metaphorical concept”, which is part of the conceptual patterns that humans rely on in their daily lives to think and speak about different aspects of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

A conceptual metaphor is commonly defined as the understanding of one domain of experience, which is usually abstract, through another that is typically more concrete (Kovecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Such a unidirectional process is logical in the human attempt to understand the world, for it is natural and practical to “conceptualize the cognitively less easily accessible domains”, i.e., the target domain, “in terms of the more easily accessible ones,” i.e., the source domain (Kövecses, 2020, p. 5). A conceptual metaphor is formulated as TARGET-DOMAIN IS SOURCE-DOMAIN or TARGET-DOMAIN AS SOURCE-DOMAIN. More technically, a conceptual metaphor is defined as “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (Lakoff, 1993), in which a mapping is “a systematic set of correspondences” between constituent elements of the source and those of the target domain (Kovecses, 2010). These mappings are partial, systematic, tightly structured and asymmetric, unidirectional, and grounded in human perceptual, biological, and cultural experiences (Kovecses, 2010; Kövecses, 2020; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT)

Conceptual Blending Theory (also known as Conceptual Integration Theory, Many Space Model), or Blending Theory for short, was introduced by Fauconnier & Turner (1994, 2002). Developed from Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Mental Spaces Theory, CBT can account for complex mental phenomena that these theories have yet to address adequately. Unlike CMT, which focuses mainly on identifying well-established and conventional patterns of metaphorical thought, CBT is primarily concerned with novel and unique instances which involve creative, but possibly transient, cognitive processes. To explain such complexities of human thought, CBT typically employs a network model with at least four mental spaces, rather than a two-domain mapping as in CMT. This model includes two input spaces (which are related to the source and target domains in CMT), a generic space that represents the frames, roles, and schemas common to both inputs, and the blend space, where elements from the input spaces combine and interact (Fauconnier & Turner, 1994,

2002). In the four-space model, elements of the two input spaces are projected into the blend space, which differs from the simple, unidirectional mapping from the source domain to the target domain as suggested by CMT. Figure 1 depicts the key components of the cross-space network.

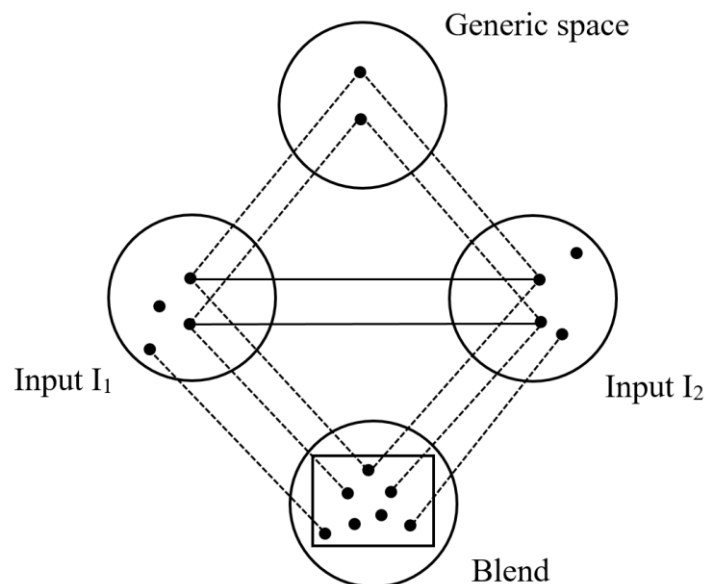


Figure 1: Basic Diagram of Four-Space Network (Source: Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Expanding upon Mental Spaces Theory, CBT details the mechanism of conceptual integration, or ‘blending’, highlighting creative aspects of meaning construction. Specifically, the blend not only partially inherits the structure of each input but, thanks to the juxtaposition of elements from the input spaces, can also generate its own properties, which are not present in any of the inputs. There are three operations, i.e., composition, completion, and elaboration, which are essential in the construction of emergent structure in the blend space. *Composition* refers to the process where elements from the inputs are brought together to form new relations, *completion* makes the composed structure complete with background knowledge, and *elaboration* involves treating the blend as a mental simulation and running it imaginatively according to the principles and logic established for the blend (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Differences between CMT and CBT may render them seemingly incommensurable or even conflicting. In this paper, however, the two theories are viewed as mutually complementary because of two reasons: (1) CMT and CBT address different aspects of metaphorical conceptualization: CMT focuses on conventional, systematic patterns in metaphorical thought, while CBT, on discussing metaphorical blending, seems to target unique, individual instances of conceptual integration which results in new meaning, insights, and ideas; (2) conceptual metaphors, with their one-way mappings between two conceptual domains, provide inputs for exploitation by metaphorical blending. This viewpoint is in concordance with Crisp (2003), who argued that CBT should not be viewed as a replacement but rather as an extension of CMT.

While morality is often analyzed in terms of discourse, this study takes a cognitive linguistic approach to examine how this abstract concept is structured in thought. By focusing on how they are metaphorically conceptualized, the study reveals the cognitive processes that shape the understanding of morality. This approach is particularly relevant to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as it explores how Wilde’s metaphors function on both a conceptual and narrative level. It is important to note that this study is not engaged in a critique of the moral systems presented in the novel, but rather, it analyzes the cognitive structures underlying the network of metaphors used in the work. Specifically, CMT was used to analyze the conventional metaphor of morality recurring repeatedly throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, while CBT was adopted to explore how metaphorical blending goes beyond the realms of pre-existing conceptual framework to generate novel ideas related to morality. By examining these cognitive structures, the study provides insights into how metaphorical thinking contributes to the novel’s narrative and thematic coherence.

Megametaphor and Semantic Macrostructure

Megametaphor

In the realm of literature, metaphor tends to be discursive rather than sentential. Specifically, there is an overarching, “undercurrent” metaphor, termed as “megametaphor”, which runs through a significant portion of a text or even a whole text (Kovecses, 2010; Werth, 1994). By connecting several single, “surface” metaphorical expressions, megametaphors can help develop the macrostructure, i.e. plot, gist, and theme, of a literary text, thereby improving its thematic coherence and depth (Sullivan, 2013). Due to their cognitive

nature, the megametaphors in the current study were analyzed through recurrent conceptual metaphors and metaphorical blends in a selected text.

To ascertain that metaphor is essential to human cognition, cognitive linguists have often collected several metaphorical expressions across a wide range of discourses to prove that there is a single conceptual metaphor underlying each set of linguistic metaphors. This approach, though insightful, has predominantly been restricted to instances at the sentence level rather than those developed throughout a discourse (Werth, 1994). In fact, a specific metaphorical concept can be “sustained, as a kind of ‘undercurrent’, over an extended text,” i.e., throughout an entire poem, play, or novel, or within a significant part of one work (Werth, 1994). This ‘overarching’ conceptual metaphor is referred to as an ‘extended’, or ‘sustained’, metaphor or a ‘megametaphor’ (Kovecses, 2010; Stockwell, 2002; Werth, 1994).

In contrast to a limited number of underlying megametaphors within a text, there is typically a larger quantity of ‘micrometaphors,’ or ‘single’ metaphors, which can be found at the surface level (Kovecses, 2010; Stockwell, 2002; Werth, 1994). These surface micrometaphors are specific metaphorical expressions and are, in fact, manifestations of a megametaphor. In other words, a megametaphor functions as a foundational element that integrates and gives coherence to lower-level micrometaphors, enhancing the overall coherence of the text.

In line with Werth’s (1994) application of Text-World Theory, this study explores how megametaphors function as conceptual anchors within the broader narrative discourse of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. While Werth’s theory emphasizes how readers construct text-worlds based on extended metaphors, also known as megametaphors, the current study focuses on how these metaphors operate as organizing principles within the text itself, shaping the semantic macrostructure and reinforcing the theme of morality. In this study, CMT provides the foundation for identifying megametaphors as overarching conceptual structures that organize recurring moral metaphors within the text. These megametaphors serve as organizing principles that integrate smaller metaphorical expressions (micrometaphors), contributing to the text’s overall coherence. Meanwhile, CBT allows for an exploration of how these megametaphors generate new, creative meanings by blending different mental spaces. Together, CMT and CBT explain how megametaphors contribute to the narrative macrostructure by providing both conceptual continuity and creativity within the text. This ensures that the novel’s central themes are cohesively represented across its discourse.

Macrostructure and Its Relation to Megametaphor

This study draws on the works of Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) and van Dijk (1980) to discuss the role of macrostructure in shaping the overall coherence of a narrative. According to their Theory of Macrostructure, the semantic structure of discourse must be understood at both the microstructure and macrostructure levels. While the microstructure refers to “the local level of the discourse”, that is, “the structure of the individual propositions and their relations,” the macrostructure has “a more global nature, characterizing the discourse as a whole,” thereby capturing the most relevant, crucial, and prominent aspects (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). Kintsch & van Dijk (1978) argue that a discourse cannot be fully explained by microstructures alone. Macrostructures are essential for clarifying global meaning, such as the topic, theme, gist, or upshot of a narrative, thereby defining the overall coherence of a text (van Dijk, 1980; Van Dijk, 1985). Without this focus on macrostructures, it becomes difficult to understand the global meanings of a discourse or even the local coherence between individual sentences (van Dijk, 1980). Therefore, macrostructures play a critical role in both text comprehension and memory retention.

The recurrent use of a particular metaphor, or the use of a megametaphor, is one of the common techniques used by literary writers (Crisp, Heywood, & Steen, 2002; Werth, 1994). Beyond enhancing textual coherence, a megametaphor serves to reinforce and highlight the central ideas and themes of a literary work (Kovecses, 2010; Werth, 1994). In agreement with this perspective, Stockwell (2002) adds that megametaphors can also enhance the reader’s understanding of the overall meaning or ‘gist’ of a text and its significance. As ‘macrostructure’ is the overarching semantic structure, capturing the main ideas and themes of a work, it can be concluded that this term has a close connection with ‘megametaphor’.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, megametaphors serve as key conceptual elements that not only unify recurring moral themes but also shape the novel’s macrostructure by influencing readers’ perceptions of its fundamental ideas. The pervasive nature of these megametaphors provides a framework within which character development, plot, and themes interact, creating a coherent narrative. This alignment with macrostructural theory explains how *The Picture of Dorian Gray* maintains a cohesive discourse across its complex narrative, making its themes more memorable and impactful.

In summary, this section has outlined Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Conceptual Blending Theory, and the Theory of Macrostructure as the theoretical frameworks guiding this study in addressing the research question regarding the contribution of moral metaphors – manifested as conceptual metaphors and metaphorical blends – to the narrative macrostructure of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design and thematic analysis to explore how megametaphors, contribute to the macrostructure of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The qualitative approach requires the researcher to familiarize with the data and identification of themes that might determine the distribution of variables into measurable constructs.

Data Collection

The data collection procedure started with a thorough reading of the selected novel. Every instance where metaphorical expressions related to morality appeared was recorded, together with its context. To minimize the subjectivity involved in linguistic metaphor identification, the researcher adopted the Metaphor Identification Procedure of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (MIPVU), proposed by Steen et al. (2010), to locate specific words used metaphorically in the discourse. This method allowed for the use of dictionaries to check the basic meanings of lexical units, which were then compared with their contextual meanings to determine whether each unit was used metaphorically.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved several steps including initial coding and searching for themes and recurrent patterns, developing a macrostructural framework, reviewing themes to define them with names, and finally producing the report. In the first stage, all the instances of metaphorical language related to morality were noted down, and initial codes were generated from these metaphorical expressions based on their source domains or their counterpart input spaces (with morality as the target domain or one of the input spaces). During this stage, recurrent “themes,” images, or concepts that frequently intersect with morality were detected and interpreted, and then grouped into identified metaphorical expressions showing potential recurrent patterns. The “themes” identified in this stage were, in fact, moral megametaphors. To construct the conceptual metaphor from linguistic metaphors, a five-step procedure proposed by Steen (2011) was followed viz., (1) metaphor-related words, (2) metaphor-related propositions, (3) open metaphorical comparison, (4) analogical structure, and (5) cross-domain mapping. Additionally, if the cross-domain mapping of the CMT failed to explain novel instances, then the four-space network supported by the CBT would be constructed to explain the new semantic structure emerged from the blending. It should be noted that the term “theme” in thematic analysis, highlighted with quotation marks in this paper, is used to signify recurrent patterns identified in the data (cf. literary theme, which refers to the underlying messages or major ideas conveyed by a text).

In the second stage, after the novel had been carefully read, a macrostructural framework was designed to review “themes,” which focused on plot, character and thematic developments. With the insights gained from the macrostructure of the novel, the “themes”, or megametaphors in this study, were reviewed in context and possibly refined or combined to ensure they accurately represent the metaphorical expressions found in the text and align with the macrostructure. In the third stage, the “themes” were defined with names. In other words, megametaphors of morality were defined through the analysis of conceptual mappings or blends. Specifically, the metaphorical mappings were examined to discern how the abstract concepts of morality are expressed through more concrete images within the novel. Instances of conceptual blending were also analyzed to explain how elements from different domains were combined to create new meanings. Naming “themes” in this stage involved determining a succinct and easily understandable name for each megametaphor, using the format TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN, or INPUT SPACE 1 IS INPUT SPACE 2. Finally, a report was produced which discussed the impact of the moral metaphors, i.e., the recurrent conceptual metaphors and blends, on the development of macrostructure of the novel, including its narrative structure, character progression, gist and literary themes.

Results and Discussion

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the two concepts of “soul” and “morality” are closely connected and even overlap, reflecting a well-founded philosophical tradition. Since the fifth century BCE, the soul has been considered as “the bearer of moral qualities” and as essential to human virtue, indicating its deep ties to ancient Greek philosophy, one of the foundations of Western civilization ((Lorenz, 2009), part 1, para. 4). Definitions of “soul” in different dictionaries also reflect this close relationship; for instance, the soul is defined as “the moral and emotional nature of human beings” in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and “the moral or emotional part of a person's nature” in *Oxford English Dictionary*. Within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the metaphors of soul and morality overlap and somewhat clarify each other, enhancing the understanding of both concepts.

The soul-and-body dualism and the aesthetics-and-ethics dichotomy are two important themes of the novel (Liebman, 1999; Manganiello, 1983), which are thoroughly developed through a network of

megametaphors of morality. The findings of this study reveal that three conceptual metaphors, i.e., THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY, MORALITY IS PURITY, and MORALITY IS BEAUTY, and three conceptual blends, i.e., THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT, THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY, and MORALITY IS THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE PORTRAIT, which frequently occur and intertwine throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to portray Dorian's moral transformation from innocence to a life of sin.

It should be noted that all the quotes including metaphorical expressions related to morality, presented below, were extracted from the 2006 Oxford University Press republication of the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The word or phrase in the quote which is used metaphorically or in response to the metaphorical blend was highlighted in italics.

Conceptual Metaphors: MORALITY IS PURITY, MORALITY IS BEAUTY, And THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY

Initially, before encountering great temptations, Dorian Gray possessed virtuous qualities:

1. "He was very earnest, and had a *beautiful* nature." (Wilde, 2006) and apparently attempted to maintain his virtues:
2. "He had kept himself *unspotted* from the world." (Wilde, 2006) After that, Dorian becomes infatuated with Sibyl Vane, a young actress, because of her artistic persona rather than her true self. When she no longer maintains the artistic ideal he admired, he dismisses her both as a performer and a prospective life partner. Disturbed by her tragic reaction and his role in her misery, he reflects on his selfishness and cruelty, saying:
3. "I can't bear the idea of my soul being *hideous*." (Wilde, 2006) and he does consider making amends to Sibyl, imagining:
4. "They would be happy together. His life with her would be *beautiful* and *pure*." (Wilde, 2006) However, Dorian later finds out about her suicide before any reconciliation can occur. Indirectly responsible for her death, he feels sinful and reflects wistfully on his innocent youth:
5. "He recalled the *stainless purity* of his boyish life," (Wilde, 2006) Sybil's death profoundly affects Dorian, serving as a catalyst for his moral descent throughout the rest of the novel. As he commits more crimes, Dorian increasingly laments the loss of his former innocence:
6. "He felt a wild longing for the *unstained purity* of his boyhood" (Wilde, 2006) and hopes for a way to restore his innocence and goodness:
7. "Some love might come across his life, and *purify* him, and shield him from those sins [...]" (Wilde, 2006)

Dorian's earlier state of moral innocence is largely described with the source domains BEAUTY and PURITY. Metaphorical expressions like *beautiful* (1) and *hideous* (3) are instantiations of the conceptual metaphor MORALITY IS BEAUTY. In this metaphor, physical beauty maps onto moral goodness and physical ugliness onto moral wickedness. For instance, "a *beautiful* nature" refers to Dorian's initial righteousness (1). In the metaphor MORALITY IS PURITY, moral integrity is equated with being pure, clean, and free from harmful substances, which can metaphorically represent moral faults or corruption. The opposite of purity is impurity, defined as "the state of being dirty or not pure" in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, or more specifically "being soiled, tainted, blemished, and stained" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), so cleanliness and purity are closely connected and overlapped. In this light, linguistic metaphors like *unspotted* (2), *stainless* (5), *unstained* (6), *pure* (4), *purity* (v, vi), and *purify* (7) describe Dorian Gray's desire for moral innocence and his wish to be free from the impact of his depravity.

Dorian's gravest crime is the murder of Basil Hallward, his loyal friend and the painter of his portrait, who trusts him and wishes him well:

8. "I want you to have a *clean* name and a *fair* record." (Wilde, 2006) *Clean* refers to being honest and not engaging in illegal activities, instantiated by MORALITY IS PURITY, in which moral integrity is understood as being spotless or uncontaminated. *Fair*, on the other hand, is exemplified by the conceptual metaphor MORALITY IS BEAUTY, so "fair record" means having a history that reflects honesty, trustworthiness, accountability, etc. Despite Basil's kindness and heartfelt plea to Dorian to maintain his integrity, Dorian kills Basil to conceal the secret of his hedonistic and unorthodox lifestyle, which sharply contrasts with the accepted ethical standards of his time:
9. "Callous, concentrated on evil, with *stained* mind and soul hungry for rebellion, Dorian Gray hastened on, quickening his step as he went, [...]" (Wilde, 2006) Stains are typically marks that are difficult to remove. Generated by the conceptual metaphor MORALITY IS PURITY, the description of Dorian's mind and soul as *stained* indicates the lasting impact of his unethical behaviours on his own soul.

The severity of his decadence is also described with the repeated use of death-related imagery:

10. "His soul, certainly, was *sick to death*." (Wilde, 2006)
11. "It was the *living death* of his own soul that troubled him." (Wilde, 2006) These intense descriptions are instantiations of MORALITY IS A LIVING ENTITY, in which morality is conceptualized as a living being, capable of experiencing hunger, sickness, and death. In (10), the sickness of his soul

metaphorically represents a moral degradation. The extremity of the sickness, “to death,” emphasizes the profound depth of his moral decline. The metaphor suggests that just as a living being can fall ill and potentially die, Dorian’s morality can also deteriorate to the point of being irrecoverable. In sentence (11), the expression “living death” creates a paradox, in which his soul is essentially dead to the virtues that make life meaningful and human, such as empathy, love, and moral responsibility, yet he continues to exist physically.

Though constantly seeking superficial pleasures to selfishly enjoy life and escape the feeling of guilt, Dorian remains plagued by his transgression and yearns for redemption:

12. “Was it true that the senses could *cure* it [the soul]? Innocent blood had been spilt. What could atone for that?” (Wilde, 2006)
13. “Nothing that he could do would *cleanse* him till he had told his own sin.” (Wilde, 2006) The soul in (12) is personified as a living entity, generally capable of healing. However, in Dorian’s case, his soul seems incurable due to (i) his continued indulgence in hedonistic pleasures derived from excessive spending, promiscuity and substance abuse, and (ii) his avoidance of true moral accountability. Just as physical cleansing removes dirt or impurities, moral cleansing, a manifestation of MORALITY IS PURITY, involves actions or thoughts that remove unethical behaviours or guilt (13). Without honest confession, Dorian would be unable to be absolved of his sins.

These examples illustrate how physical and familiar source domains like BEAUTY, PURITY, and A LIVING ENTITY are used to conceptualize more abstract target domains such as MORALITY and THE SOUL throughout the novel. The megametaphor MORALITY IS BEAUTY helps establish the initial alignment between beauty and goodness which Dorian later perverts, which leads to the central conflict of his external beauty and internal corruption. The megametaphor MORALITY IS PURITY provides a way to measure his divergence from Victorian moral standards, while the megametaphor THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY helps deepen the reader’s understanding of the consequences of his choices on his moral fiber. In short, the repeated use of these conceptual metaphors throughout the novel builds a linguistic and cognitive framework that enriches the thematic texture of the narrative.

Metaphorical Blends: THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT, THE SOUL IS A LIVING THING, MORALITY IS THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE PORTRAIT

The central element of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the portrait painted by Basil Hallward, which is connected with the megametaphor THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT. Unlike the conceptual metaphors in the previous section, in which morality is simply understood in terms of a more concrete and familiar domain, the metaphorical blends discussed in this section help readers visualize Dorian’s internal corruption in a vivid, almost tangible manner, for his moral decay can actually be observed through the transformation of his portrait. The picture is painted when Dorian is still young, inexperienced, and relatively moral, having yet to face strong temptations or negative influences. At this stage, his initial innocence is perfectly reflected in the portrait. Overwhelmed by the timeless beauty of the artwork, Dorian expresses a wish for eternal youth and beauty, even at the cost of his soul, so that it would be the portrait, not him, that ages:

14. “If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to *grow old*! For that—for that—I would give everything!” (Wilde, 2006) This desire is mysteriously satisfied, and consequently:
15. “It [the painting] has a *life* of its own.” (Wilde, 2006) and it ages and degenerates in his stead rather than simply a reflection of his appearance:
16. “[Dorian] looking now at the evil and *aging* face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. (Wilde, 2006)

Not only does the portrait reflect the signs of age, it also reveals the depths of his soul, constantly transforming to reflect his increasing moral corruption. The portrait’s first change occurs when Dorian mistreats Sybil Vane and is indirectly responsible for her death:

17. “For every sin that he committed, a *stain* would *fleck* and *wreck* its fairness”. (Wilde, 2006) Just as a stain discolors and spoils whatever it touches, Dorian’s evil deeds disfigure the once beautiful painting, making the ugliness of his actions outwardly visible, albeit only to him and later to Basil, who was murdered for that reason. This deliberate killing makes the red stain, which is already there when he indirectly causes the death of Sybil Vane, spread wider:
18. “And why was the red *stain* *larger* than it had been? [...] There was blood on the painted feet, as though the thing had dripped [...]” (Wilde, 2006) The painting becomes even more grotesque when the red stain, symbolically referring to Dorian’s immoral behaviours, is compared with a disease:
19. “It [the red stain] seemed to have *crept like a horrible disease* over the wrinkled fingers.” (Wilde, 2006) specifically leprosy:
20. “The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed, [...]. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange *quickenings of inner life* the *leprosy* of sin were *slowly eating* the thing *away*.” (Wilde, 2006)

Leprosy can cause serious damage to the skin and leave permanent disabilities on the body, specifically targeting the nerves, limbs, and eyes. The disfigurement of the body due to leprosy in this context corresponds to the destroyed beauty in the painting due to Dorian's moral corruption. In the Victorian era (1837–1901), leprosy was incurable, so through this metaphorical image, readers can understand that once the beauty of a portrait is destroyed, it cannot be restored. Indeed, although Dorian later decides to do good deeds (by not seducing Hetty Merton and letting her live a pure life), whether with noble motives or not, the mistakes and consequences of his previous actions cannot be changed anymore, and therefore restoring his original good nature is almost impossible. As Dorian cannot “expel every sign of evil passion from the face” in the picture, the painting itself remains ugly, even “more loathsome, if possible, than before” (Wilde, 2006).

Not only does he indulge in his own desires, but Dorian also lures several innocent individuals into a life of decadence, which leads to their loss of honor and separation from families and friends. His unspoiled beauty, specifically his “pure, bright, innocent face” (p. 127), acts as an ideal shield and therefore helps him evade societal judgment. Without fear of retribution, he is drawn deeper into sin. Along with Dorian's moral degeneration, the portrait continues to deteriorate:

21. “What *the worm was to the corpse*, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas.” (Wilde, 2006)
22. “They [his sins] would *mar* its *beauty* and *eat away* its *grace*.” (Wilde, 2006)
23. “They [his sins] would *defile* it [the painted image] and make it shameful.” (Wilde, 2006)
24. “Beneath its purple pall, the face painted on the canvas could grow *bestial*, *sodden*, and *unclean*.” (Wilde, 2006)

Dorian's immoral behaviours are understood as worms consuming decaying flesh, while his soul, which is mirrored in the picture, is perceived as a corpse being devoured by worms (21). While Dorian looks alive and vibrant on the outside, internally he experiences a death-like state (10, 11) and becomes morally decayed like a corpse (22, 23), highlighting the dichotomy between appearance and reality – a central theme in the novel. The combination of THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT, MORALITY IS BEAUTY, and MORALITY IS PURITY in instances 19-24 shows that, as Dorian's morality degenerates, the portrait becomes increasingly disfigured, uglier, and tainted. These blends are used in conjunction with the conceptual metaphors EVIL IS AN INSECT and EVIL IS A DISEASE, which enriches these depictions, making the portrayal of his corruption uniquely profound.

The grotesque distortion of the image in the painting is vividly described in several details throughout the novel:

25. “He would place his white hands beside the coarse *bloated* hands of the picture, and smile.” (Wilde, 2006)
26. “He mocked the *misshapen* body and the *failing* limbs.” (Wilde, 2006)
27. “The *rotting* of a *corpse* in a *watery* grave was not so fearful.” (Wilde, 2006)

The megametaphor MORAL DEGENERATION IS PHYSICAL DETERIORATION effectively underlies the transformation seen in the portrait, tying together different kinds of physical deterioration, i.e., deformity and decomposition, with moral corruption. Specifically, the depiction of “misshapen body” and “failing limbs”, which may be connected with the complications of leprosy, corresponds to how Dorian's misdeeds permanently weaken and impair his moral integrity. Other instances such as a “sodden” face, “bloated hands”, and the “rotting of a corpse in a watery grave” when being juxtaposed evoke the idea of death and decomposition. While “sodden” means being soaked or saturated, often in a heavy and unhealthy way, “bloated” refers to unpleasant swelling, like a corpse left in water, soaked and swollen as it absorbs an excess of liquid.

Together, these metaphorical expressions describe the portrait's transformation from a graceful figure to a grotesque corpse as it absorbs Dorian's excessive corruption. What happens to the corpse is described more specifically in instance (27). Just as a body generally decomposes more slowly when submerged in water, Dorian's transgressions are gradually disclosed thanks to the magic from the portrait. As a grave tends to conceal a decaying corpse from view, the portrait acts as a shield against public scrutiny and legal punishment, hiding Dorian's true nature from society through his handsome and youthful appearance. Instance (27) also reveals that witnessing the slow decay of a corpse is even less horrifying than knowing about Dorian's sinful life. All these instances generally reflect Dorian's unrestrained evil and its devastating effects on his soul, represented physically by the portrait. In fact, the megametaphor MORAL DEGENERATION IS PHYSICAL DETERIORATION is part of a more encompassing megametaphor: MORALITY / THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY, which facilitates the understanding of moral and spiritual conditions in terms of biological processes.

The recurrent megametaphors THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT and THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY in the novel extend beyond simple metaphorical mappings. Each of these megametaphors involves a four-space network where a new structure emerges from blending the input spaces of SOUL and PORTRAIT as well as PORTRAIT and LIVING ENTITY. Unlike typical two-domain mappings, these blend spaces allow the soul to be understood not just conceptually but through the actual transformation of the painting. This portrait has become more than

just a painting; it acts as a living, dynamic manifestation of Dorian's degenerating soul, capturing the essence of his dual existence. The two megametaphors often intersect to depict Dorian's ethical decay, and form what Fauconnier & Turner (2002) termed as "multiple-scope networks", which is illustrated in Figure 2.

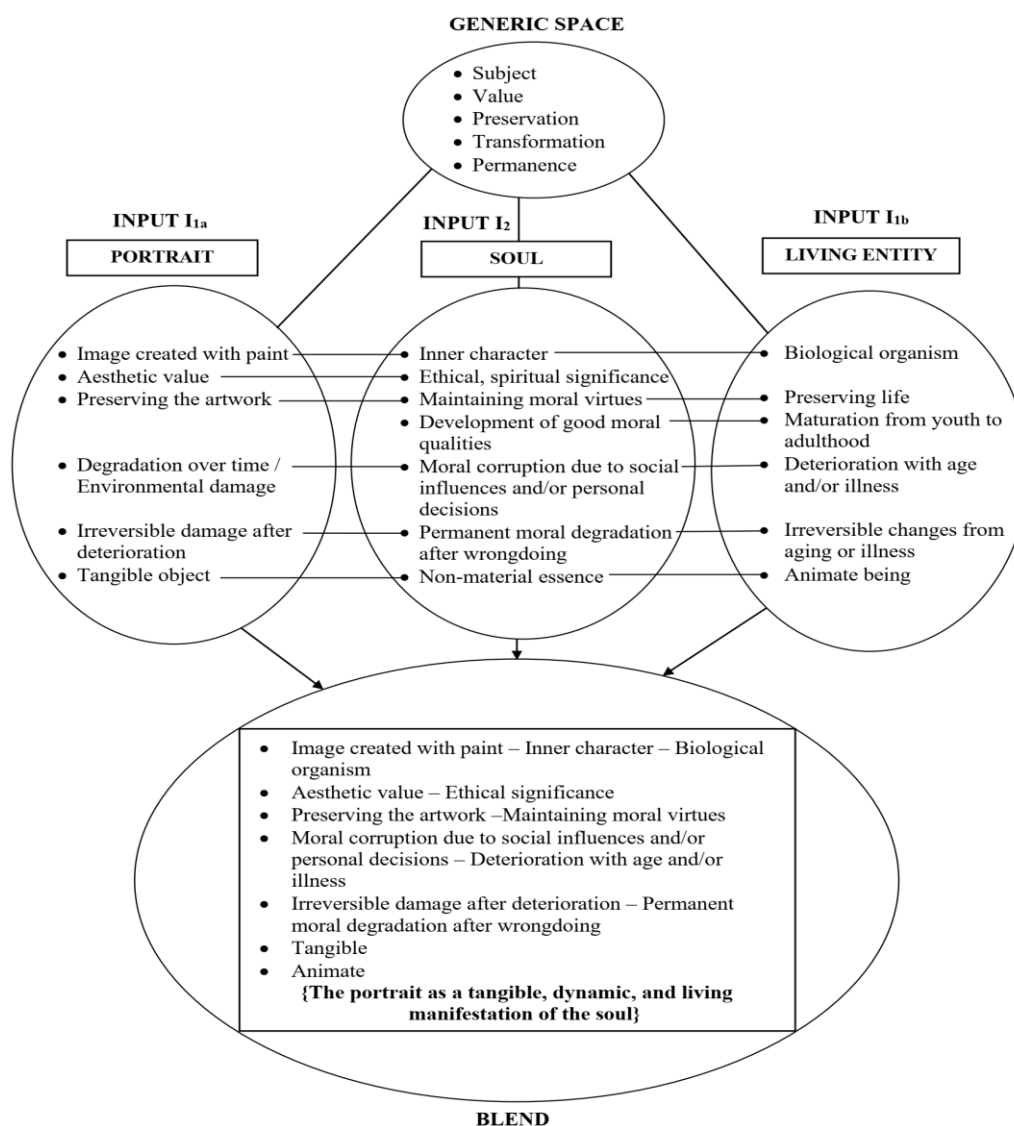


Figure 2: The multiple-scope network of *THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT* and *THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY*.

The combination and interaction of the elements from the input spaces, i.e., SOUL, PORTRAIT, and LIVING ENTITY, in the blend space create a new emergent structure: *the portrait as a tangible, dynamic, and living manifestation of the soul*. This is not merely a way of thinking about the SOUL domain through the LIVING ENTITY domain as in instances 10-12. In fact, this new semantic structure does not belong to any individual input space in the framework, but to the blend space in which the elements of all the input spaces interact and integrate.

Specifically, the portrait of Dorian as a tangible and dynamic representation of the soul does not belong to the SOUL input space, for it is a concrete object, not an abstract concept as the soul. Similarly, the living portrait does not belong to the LIVING ENTITY or PORTRAIT input spaces because it does not have the metabolic process or biological growth of a normal living organism or the static nature of a typical portrait. Instead, this new structure in the blend space, encompasses the tangible portrait as part of the PORTRAIT input space, life as part of the LIVING ENTITY space, and the moral development as part of the SOUL space. Thanks to this blending phenomenon, the abstract moral and spiritual qualities become tangible and observable, and the portrait becomes living and dynamic, resulting in more vivid and convincing descriptions of Dorian's moral degradation.

In the megametaphors of MORALITY IS PURITY and MORALITY IS BEAUTY, the cross-domain mapping is employed in instances 1-7, where the idea of morality is understood in terms of the properties or degrees of purity and the external beauty of an unspecified and undefined object. These conceptual metaphors

are grounded in everyday experience and are used, often unconsciously, to help people think and talk about a more abstract concept thanks to their knowledge of a more familiar and concrete domain. Unlike these instances, the metaphors in instances 17-19 and 22-24 are explicitly manifested because the object embodying these qualities is specified as the portrait of Dorian. This process is not unconscious but is indeed the author's deliberate and creative use of metaphor to create unique metaphorical blends in the novel.

What makes the three blends of MORALITY IS PURITY, MORALITY IS BEAUTY, and THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT even more special is their flexibility to be integrated with each other to create a more overarching blend, which is MORALITY IS THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE PORTRAIT. The foundation for this integration is that purity and beauty, the two aspects of the portrait's external appearance, are usually combined in the novel to represent the transformation of Dorian's moral states from innocence to corruption. This integration, as presented in Figure 3, allows for a richer interpretation of morality which is reflected through the visible condition of the portrait, or more specifically, through its aesthetic quality (beauty) and condition (cleanliness, purity).

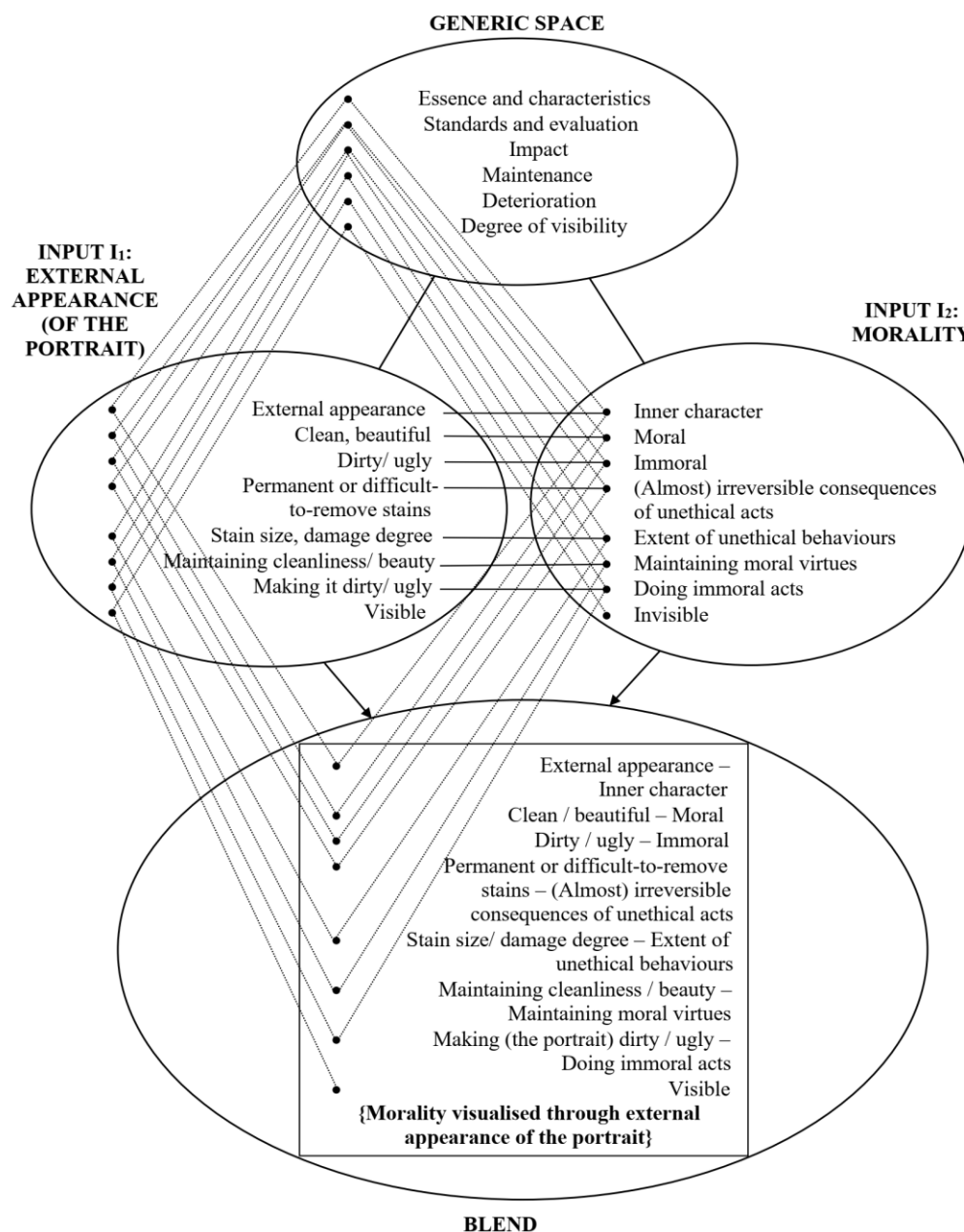


Figure 3: The four-space network of MORALITY IS THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE PORTRAIT.

The novel ends with the death of Dorian Gray, who reveals his true form as a man marked by a sinful life: “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage,” (Wilde, 2006), while the painting returns to its original state of perfect beauty. Dorian’s demise appears an inevitable consequence of his inability to reconcile the contradiction between his outer beauty and his corrupted inner character. This shows that a person’s true

character will ultimately assert itself, despite superficial appearances. As *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a typical work of the aesthetic and decadent phases of late Victorian literature, it reflects the changing norms and challenges of its time when individuals were judged by their outward appearance rather than their ethical conduct (Goldfarb, 1962; Livesay, 2016). Thanks to the creative use of the portrait and the frequent use of conceptual metaphors and metaphorical blends related to morality, Wilde has successfully exposed the duplicity, hypocrisy and superficial values of the society he lived in, warning the reader against the dangers of pursuing beauty without regard to morality.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a typical example of Gothic fiction, which gained popularity in Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries. Key elements of this genre include doubleness, hidden aspects of the human psyche, supernatural and mysterious elements, and horror (Hughes, 2018). In this novel, the moral metaphors not only reinforce the theme of doubleness (i.e., the double life of the upper classes in Victorian times and the duality of body and soul), but also showcase the author's creativity through the innovative use of the portrait imagery. Unlike the conventional thinking where a portrait is merely a static representation, depicting an entity and framing that entity at a specific moment on a flat surface, the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is alive and constantly changing to reveal the hidden depths of the protagonist's soul; however, this life is created to speak about moral degradation and decay. Thanks to the moral metaphors related to the portrait, Dorian's soul has been vividly, unusually, and horrifically materialized, bearing the distinctive mark of Gothic literature.

Conclusion

This study explored the role of moral metaphors in the macrostructural development of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by examining conceptual metaphors and metaphorical blends repeatedly used throughout the work. The results revealed that the conceptual metaphors of morality, i.e., MORALITY IS PURITY, MORALITY IS BEAUTY, and THE SOUL IS A LIVING ENTITY, help establish the initial association between Dorian's beauty and goodness, evaluate his later moral degeneration, and highlight the impact of his choices on his moral integrity. While the conceptual metaphors of morality and their instantiations in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are often conventional, the metaphorical blends of these metaphors, when combined with THE SOUL IS A PORTRAIT, provide a unique and vivid demonstration of Dorian's internal corruption. The emergent structures of these blends allow readers to directly visualise the impact of his moral choices through the external appearance of a living portrait. Overall, the conceptual metaphors and blends analysed in this study were proved to contribute to the narrative structure and thematic development, especially concerning the dualities of soul and body and of aesthetics and ethics.

The findings of this study hold useful implications for both research and practice. From a research perspective, the study broadens the use of CMT and CBT in literary analysis, illustrating how megametaphors contribute to the thematic and narrative macrostructure of a text. This offers new opportunities for exploring the role of moral metaphors in shaping literary coherence, with potential applications across various genres and historical periods. Moreover, the interdisciplinary approach, which combines cognitive linguistics with literary studies, provides fresh insights into how conceptual metaphors function within literature, laying the groundwork for future research that integrates these disciplines. On a practical level, the study provides a framework for educators to examine how metaphors influence narrative structure, offering valuable perspectives for teaching literature, particularly in helping students understand how metaphors systematically develop complex themes within a narrative. Additionally, it offers guidance for metaphor translation, emphasizing the importance of preserving or adapting megametaphors to maintain a text's conceptual integrity during translation.

Despite its important findings, this study has certain limitations in terms of (1) its scope which is restricted to moral metaphors within *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and (2) potential subjectivity due to the interpretative nature of literary analysis. To overcome these limitations, future research could expand the scope of metaphoric analysis by examining metaphors and blends related to other topics and themes within *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's macrostructure. Additionally, the use of moral metaphors in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can also be compared with their use in other works by Oscar Wilde or his contemporaries to learn about how megametaphors function across different texts and therefore gain insights into the literary trends of the period. Moreover, to address the inherent subjectivity of literary analysis, further studies could incorporate the Reader-response Theory to learn about different readers' perceptions and interpretations for more objective insights into the impact of megametaphors on the macrostructure of a literary work.

It is hoped that this study can help enhance understanding of how moral metaphors and blends contribute to narrative and thematic coherence and provide a basis for future research on the role of metaphors in shaping literary macrostructure across different works and contexts.

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