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**The Influence of Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*
on Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray***

Bachelor Paper

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on Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray***

**Vliv díla Charlese Roberta Maturina *Melmoth Poutník* na román
Oscara Wilda *Obraz Doriana Graye***

Bakalářská práce

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Abstract:

Until now the almost unconsidered influence of Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) on Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/1891) is discussed. The analysis of the links between the two works is used to provide a framework for examining how Wilde uses this earlier text by a distant ancestor as a possible model for the plot and characterization of his own Decadent novel.

Abstrakt:

Tato práce zkoumá vliv románu Charlese Maturina *Melmoth Poutník* (1820) na dílo Oscara Wilda (1890/1891) *Obraz Doriana Graye*, vliv, který je široce uznáván, nicméně nebyl doposud hlouběji analyzován. Analýza spojitostí mezi oběma díly je zde použita jako nástroj, umožňující určit, do jaké míry a jakým způsobem, Wilde použil prvky z díla svého vzdáleného příbuzného při tvorbě svého vlastního dekadentního románu *Obraz Doriana Graye*.

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1. OSCAR WILDE'S CONNECTION WITH CHARLES ROBERT MATURIN'S WORK *MELMOTH THE WANDERER*

There seems to be an obvious influence of Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* on Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, as many critics have claimed. However, the links between the two pieces of work have been little considered and have not been deeply analyzed yet. The aim of this paper is to present the elements that Wilde has probably taken from *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and to analyze, how Wilde has handled them in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The possibility that there was an influence of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* on Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* has not only been validated by many critics, but it is also supported by the fact that Maturin was not only Wilde's literary ancestor, but also his family ancestor. Wilde was the great-nephew of Maturin. He not only demonstrably knew Maturin's *Melmoth*, but was also emotionally connected with this piece of work, as the following quotations confirm. Richard Ellmann, whose autobiography of Oscar Wilde is broadly considered to be the most respectable one, suggests that "Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, with its mysterious satanic hero, exercised fascination upon many famous writers at the time, including Oscar Wilde." (Ellmann, 6) Moreover, Wilde's emotional connection with his great-uncle's book is supported by the fact that, after Wilde's release from Reading Goal (Wilde having been sentenced for homosexual relationships), Wilde took the pseudonym of Sebastian Melmoth. As Gary Schmidgall observes:

And so, began the period of three and a half years during which Oscar was to wander The Continent, [...] His new mood – and its attending melancholic humor – were perfectly reflected in the name he chose to travel under, Sebastian Melmoth: Sebastian from the saint of the persecuted, Melmoth from the itinerant romantic hero of Maturin's novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Schmidgall, 332-333).

Even Wilde himself confirmed the connection between the chosen pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth and Maturin's book *Melmoth* in a letter, when explaining to a friend, why he chose this pseudonym. As Montgomery Hyde quotes from the letter Wilde wrote to Wilkinson in January 1900:

You asked me about 'Melmoth': of course I have not changed my name: in Paris I am as well known as in London: it would be childish. But to prevent postmen having fits I sometimes have my letters inscribed by the name of a curious novel by my great-uncle Maturin: a novel that was part of a romantic revival of the early century, and though imperfect, a pioneer. (Hyde, 454- 455)

2. MAJOR LINKS BETWEEN *MELMOTH THE WANDERER* AND *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

It is arguable that there are obvious links between Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Firstly, *Melmoth the Wanderer* is often denoted to be one of the greatest Gothic novels ever written. However difficult it is, to classify *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as far as genre is concerned, it is generally considered to be partly a Gothic novel. Both of the novels include typical Gothic elements.

One of the most significant ones is the theme of moral corruption and degeneration, including homoerotic impulses.

In *Melmoth*, moral corruption and degeneration flourish from suppressed natural human needs and desires, and are suppressed by some corrupted parts, principles and institutions of society. Such a suppressing of natural human needs and desires transforms people, according to Maturin, into cruel creatures who try to compensate for those suppressed needs and desires by morally corrupted ones-like, for instance, the need for power or even sadism.

The theme of moral corruption and degeneration is typical for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the work, which is generally considered to be the most Decadent novel of the nineteenth century. However, moral corruption and degeneration in *Dorian Gray* are, unlike those in Maturin's work, connected with the liberation from all moral principles, especially with the (homo) sexual liberation, as Clausson argues. This is typical for a fin-de-siecle Gothic novel (Gothic Revival) and such an approach fully accords with the principles of Decadence. The motif of (homo) sexual liberation connected with moral corruption and degeneration is quite usual in the Decadent novels of the Gothic Revival period. Here, Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* should be mentioned as one of the most typical ones.

In *Melmoth*, the homoerotic elements are included mostly in "The Tale of the Spaniard". The homosexual impulses are represented here, according to Patrick Holland, for instance, by a very intimate Alonzo's relationship with his brother or by the way Maturin has fetishized the Saint Sebastian figure, represented by a younger monk who helped another monk Frau Paulo and therefore became a victim himself or by the narrative of the sexual relationship between a woman disguised as a monk and another monk.

As far as the homoerotic hits in *Dorian Gray* are concerned, they are obvious, as it will be explained in Chapter Three in detail. For instance, Basil's or Lord Henry's relationship to

Dorian can be understood by homoerotic hits, as well as Basil's comment on Dorian's corruption of many young men that Nils Clausson emphasizes.

Another significant Gothic element, linking both works, is the atmosphere of mystery and horror. To be more specific, both works use the theme of the man who has sold his soul to the Devil-or has pledged his soul-for either extension of life along with supernatural powers (in the case of Melmoth) or for extension of youth and for not being physically burdened by ageing, mainly because of moral corruption and degeneration (in Dorian's case). After selling their souls to the Devil (or pledging them), both characters accept their roles- the role of the Devil's servant (in Melmoth's case) and the role of the Devil's disciple (in Dorian's). By accepting such roles, both of them become heartless, cruel and they both try to seduce other human beings to sin.

What is more, both authors use the motif of the mysterious magic picture of that Devil's alliant. The portrait of Melmoth and the picture of Dorian Gray have some characteristics in common. Both of them are supernatural, both are alive in a way and both are hidden (in the Blue Chamber, in Melmoth's case; in the attic, in Dorian's).

Although the plot of *Melmoth the Wanderer* has a very complicated Chinese-box narrative structure of stories-within-stories and narratives-within-narratives, there is a central and unifying element:

It is Melmoth, an Irish gentleman, who in the seventeenth century obtained a preternaturally extended life from the Devil at the price of his soul. If he can persuade another to take the bargain off his hands, and assume his existing state, he can be saved, but this he can never manage to effect, no matter how assiduously he haunts those whom despair has made reckless and frantic. ("Internet 5")

This plot contains mystery and horror itself and therefore can be understood by a typical Gothic element. What is more, such a plot offers Maturin a large scope for opening rich scenes full of horror, because Melmoth, as mentioned above, is wandering the world, looking for people in despair. So, he visits places full of terror, for example, the madhouse, in Stanton's tale, or in "The Tale of the Spaniard", the prison of the Spanish Inquisition and the unnatural surroundings of the monastery, full of people changed by these unnatural conditions into cruel creatures. So, in *Melmoth*, the horror flourishes mainly from brilliant descriptions of the horrible situations of people who are in despair, including a sparkling psychological insight into the feelings of those suffering humans.

Another element, which Anne Williams identifies as typically Gothic, and which is linking both works, is a vulnerable, curious, heroin, in *Melmoth the Wanderer* represented by

Immalee. According to Clausson, in *Dorian Gray*, Wilde has transformed this Gothic element into Dorian, at the stage, when Dorian was still innocent.

In addition to that, there is another very important link between *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Maturin, as well as Wilde, criticizes those principles and institutions of society that suppress natural human needs and desires.

As mentioned above, Maturin considers suppressing of natural human affections to be the source of moral corruption which is in strong contradiction with the God's laws, represented in his novel by the Bible. In his criticisms, "Maturin concentrates on the opposition against the Catholic Church and the intense sectarian conflict." ("Internet 6")

Wilde also criticizes the official values of the society, in his case, Victorian society, which, according to him, suppress human needs and desires. But, unlike Maturin, Wilde does not respect any moral values and rules, only the principles of Aestheticism and Decadence.

There are various links between *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and these links will be described and analyzed in detail in Chapter Three.

3. LINKS BETWEEN *MELMOTH THE WANDERER* AND *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

3.1 Moral corruption and degeneration in *Melmoth the Wanderer*

In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, moral corruption and degeneration are usually caused by restraints on natural human needs and desires, which are suppressed by some corrupted parts, principles and institutions of society. A significant example of such an institution is in Maturin's work the Catholic Church, with its whole system based on hypocrisy, corruption by power and wealth, and consequently the sub-institutions of the Catholic Church with the focus on Spanish Inquisition and Spanish monasteries.

Suppressing of natural affections, may, according to Maturin, lead to two possible results. The first one is suffering and consequently moral corruption and degeneration. For example, in "The Tale of the Spaniard", Alonzo is told a horrible story about the cruel punishment of a woman disguised as a monk, who had relationship with another monk within the walls of the monastery, and their relationship was revealed. After that they were punished by the imprisonment in the dungeons of the monastery and let there starve to death. Here is how their degeneration was increasing along with their intensifying sufferings:

For the first hours they tried to comfort each other, - they suggested to each other hopes of liberation [...] They were rapidly becoming objects of hostility to each other, - oh what a feast to me! The third night, - how shall I tell it? but you have bid me go on. All the horrible and loathsome excruciations of famine had been undergone; the agonies of their famished sickness they loathed each other, - they could have cursed each other, if they had had breath to curse. It was on the fourth night that I heard the shriek of the wretched female, - her lover, in the agony of hunger, - had fastened his teeth in her shoulder; - that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated, became a meal to him now." (Maturin, 289, 290, 291)

This extract represents a typical example of the way, how Maturin connects suffering (or the restraints on natural human needs) with moral corruption and degeneration. Step by step, love is being replaced by mutual hate. Along with intensifying sufferings, former lovers are losing their humanity. This process of degeneration is topped by the cannibalistic element.

The second possible consequence of the suppressing of natural affections is, according to Maturin, that people try to compensate for those unfulfilled natural needs and desires by corrupted ones, for instance, by longing for power or sadism.

In the connection with the corrupt desire for power, Maturin criticizes, among others, so called Directors (confessors) and in the connection with longing for power, combined with cruelty and sadism, especially the Spanish Inquisition and some morally corrupted members of Spanish monasteries.

The corruptness and the need for the power of Directors is illustrated and explained in the extract from the letter Juan Moncada wrote to his brother Alonzo:

‘This was the Director’s plan. He thought the hold he had over my father and mother too slight to gratify his ambition of domestic power, or realize his hopes of professional distinction. *The basis of all ecclesiastical power rests upon fear[...]* Those who by their vows are excluded from the interest which natural affections give us in life, must seek for it in the artificial ones of pride and domination, and the Director found it there.’ (Maturin, 176, italics added)

This extract is an explicit accusation of Directors (the sub-institution of the Catholic Church), who, according to Maturin, tried to replace “natural affections given to us in life”, which they avoided, by the artificial, corrupted ones, such as the need for power.

Next, the cruelty, inhumanity and the criminal nature of the Inquisition are described in the two following extracts: “The prisoner underwent the first and the second applications with unshrinking courage, but *on the infliction of the water-torture, which is indeed supportable to humanity*, either to suffer relate, he exclaimed in the gasping intervals, he would disclose everything...”

(Maturin, 80, italics added)

Alonzo’s condemnation to cruel death by the Inquisition:

“Begone, accursed, we deliver you over to the secular arm, praying that it may deal with you not too severely.’ At these terrible words, whose meaning I understood but too well, I uttered one shriek of agony – the only human sound ever heard within the walls of the Inquisition...On my return to my cell, *I felt convinced the whole was a scheme of inquisitorial art, to involve me in self-accusation, (their constant object when they can effect it), and punish me for a crime, while I was guilty only of an extorted confession.*” (Maturin, 325, italics added)

In the first extract, Maturin points the cruelty of inquisition out: “...on the infliction of the water torture, which is indeed supportable to humanity, ” . In the second one, Maturin illustrates criminal nature of The Spanish Inquisition, when pointing out their ways of inquisition that were not based on the aim to reveal the truth but on the target to prove the before stated accusation: “...a scheme of inquisitorial art, to involve me in self-accusation,...and punish me for a crime, while I was guilty only of an extorted confession.”

Next, the description of the moral corruption of people, living within the walls of Spanish monasteries, the corruption flourishing from the repressing of natural affections, is included mainly in “The Tale of the Spaniard”. One example of the heartlessness and cruelty of the occupiers of the Spanish monasteries has been described above in this paper, in the narrative about the cruel, inhuman punishment of the secret lovers that were condemned to the terrible death in the dungeons of the monastery. Sadism, present within the walls of the monastery, is illustrated by the scene dealing with cruel whipping of a young monk who helped another monk Frau Paulo. Later, a young monk died. The scene is described in the sub-head 3.3 of this paper.

3.2 Moral corruption and degeneration in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The theme of moral corruption and degeneration is typical for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the work, which is generally considered to be the most Decadent novel of the nineteenth century. Moral corruption and degeneration in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is connected with the liberation from all moral principles, especially with the (homo) sexual liberation, as Clausson argues.

This is typical for a fin-de-siecle Gothic novels. Such literature is classified as the Gothic Revival and includes such works as Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Machen’s *Great God Pan*, Wells’s *Island of Doctor Moreau* or Stoker’s *Dracula*. Clausson quotes on these fin-de-siecle Gothic texts: “‘One thing can be said at the outset which underlines the meaning of Decadence in connection with these texts’, says Punter about the Gothic revival, ‘and that is that *they are all concerned in one way or another with the problem of degeneration.*’”(“Internet 2 “, italics added)

Here it should be mentioned that some critics, for example Nills Clausson or David Punter, claim that there are more connections between *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and, the above mentioned fin-de-siecle Gothic novels. As Clausson observes: “[...] in my view, the Gothic texts most relevant to Wilde’s novel are not the earlier ones of Maturin [...] and Poe, but the contemporary fin-de-siecle Gothic tales of Stevenson, Machen, Wells, and Stoker, among which David Punter places it in his study *The Literature of Terror* (1980).” (“Internet 2”)

Nevertheless, here it is important to emphasize that Wilde has not probably taken out most of the Gothic elements, which are present in his *Picture of Dorian Gray*, from his

contemporaries' works because *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was firstly published in 1890, whereas Machen's *Great God Pan* came out in 1894, Wells's *Island of Doctor Moreau* in 1896 and Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897. Although Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was firstly published in 1886, Wilde has not probably taken out the Gothic elements even from Stevenson's work. That is to say, that Wilde firstly told "the story of a man and a picture" (Ellmann, 309) to the novelist W.B. Maxwell, when Maxwell was a child, as Richard Ellmann notices in his work. When considering the fact that Maxwell was born in 1866 and he was demonstrably told "the story of a man and a picture" by Wilde, when he (Maxwell) was still a child, the plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* must have existed already approximately in 1880s or even in 1870s, as Wilde's principal autobiographer Ellmann observes:

The ideas and themes he scattered were sometimes reaped by his young admirers. The novelist W.B. Maxwell, while a boy, had heard many stories from Wilde, and wrote one of them down and published it. He confessed to Wilde, whose face clouded, then cleared as he mixed approval with reproach, 'Stealing my story was the act of a gentleman, but not telling me you had stolen it was to ignore the claims of friendship.' Then he suddenly became serious: '*You mustn't take a story that I told you of a man and a picture*. No, absolutely, I want that for myself. I fully mean to write it, and I should be terribly upset if I were forestalled.' This first mention of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* antedated by several years, Maxwell says, the actual composition. (Ellmann, 309, italics added)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Decadence is represented mainly by Dorian himself. As Nassaar observes: "Dorian, as he degenerates, becomes a perfect example of the Decadent, and his picture, as it grows more and more evil, a perfect type of Decadent art". (Nassaar, 37)

After Dorian meets Lord Henry at Basil's studio and after hearing Lord Henry's "subversive" sermon about the supremacy of beauty and youth and about celebrating self-development and looking for pleasures, Basil finishes Dorian's portrait. Although Dorian had sat for several portraits for Basil, this picture is Basil's masterpiece because it mirrors the real Dorian, as he truly is. Undoubtedly, it is also because of Lord Henry's sermon that awakened in Dorian new, "strange" impulses.

Dorian is strongly influenced by Lord Henry's sermon about the supremacy of beauty and youth. For the first time in his life, he is aware of the fact that he loses his youth and beauty day by day. He curses his portrait and expresses the wish: "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! Yes,

there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!” (Murray, 67)

Over the next few weeks Lord Henry’s influence over Dorian grows stronger as the following conversation between Dorian and Lord Henry reflects:

‘I wish now I had not told you about Sibyl Vane’. ‘You could not have helped telling me, Dorian. All through your life you will tell me everything you do’.
‘Yes, Harry, I believe that is true. I cannot help telling you things. You have a curious influence over me’. (Murray, 86, italics added)

Dorian dedicates his life to ‘the new Hedonism’ and to looking for pleasure. Meanwhile his prayer has fulfilled and the portrait is burdened instead of him by his (Dorian’s) first step towards moral corruption, when he causes the suicide of Sibyl Vane by his cruel behavior to her. Lord Henry gives Dorian the so-called “Yellow Book” which serves Dorian as the “educational textbook for a young Decadent”. Influenced by Lord Henry and The Yellow Book, Dorian devotes his life to garnering new experiences and sensations, ignores conventional moral and does not care about the consequences of his actions.

As a part of his Decadent life, Dorian is looking for new and new sensations but these new sensations must be stronger than the previous ones to satisfy him. Thus, he starts to collect various precious, often exotic things from all over the world. The other reason for his pathological desire for collecting exquisite things is that it is one of the ways how Dorian can forget about his increasing fear which he sometimes cannot stand. As Platizky observes:

In an attempt to satisfy his craving for new sensations, Dorian purchases ‘exquisite specimens’ of textiles and embroideries [...] Dorian also houses subtle symphonies of exotic flowers. He collects together from all parts of the world the strangest instruments to be found, [...] Psychologically, Dorian’s compulsion to collect compromises his freedom to do so, for his ‘treasures’ and everything that he collected in his lovely house, were to be for him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape from the fear that seemed to him at times to be almost too great to be born’. Dorian’s obsession with his one-lovely and now self-damning portraying catalyses his compulsive collecting. (“Internet 4”, italics added)

The style, in which *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is written, is often instructive, including the part dealing with Dorian’s obsession with collecting of particular precious things. It begs the question, if *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be understood as “Wilde’s own Yellow Book”, it means “an educational textbook for a Decadent”.

Eighteen years pass. Dorian’s name has being connected more and more with ill fame because of the gossips that partly reflect his real life. One night, Basil comes to Dorian’s place to ask him about those gossips. They argue and during the argument, Dorian decides to show Basil his portrait that mirrors Dorian’s conscience and soul, and therefore is hideous and

horrible now. Basil is horrified when seeing the now hideous picture, his own piece of work, and also the reflection of Dorian's soul and conscience. He begs Dorian to do penance but Dorian refuses because "it is too late". After the disclosure of his secret to Basil, Dorian murders Basil in a bestially way. Basil's murder is the climax of Dorian's moral corruption and degeneration. As Clausson observes:

The Gothic plot in *Dorian Gray*, then, is the typical plot of fin-de-siecle Gothic-degeneration from a higher to a lower state, from the well-formed, respectable upper-class Dr. Jekyll to the bestial, murderous, lower-class Hyde [...] Dorian similarly degenerates to a lower, bestial level of existence. He hides the portrait in the attic, where 'the face painted on the canvas could grow bestial, sodden, and unclean'. ("Internet 2")

Dorian's moral corruption and degeneration are symbolized not only by the hideous changes of his portrait but also by the surroundings he is looking for. Dorian is visiting the districts, tenanted by the lowest classes of society. Moreover, he is visiting the underworld of London, including opium dens, which serve in the novel as a significant symbol of his degeneration. For example, after the bestial murder of Basil, Dorian travels to an opium dense, located in a godforsaken London's district, to forget about his crime, although he has enough opium at his luxury, comfortable home. This reflects Dorian's degeneration as well as Dorian's other visits of derelict sections of London and London's underworld. As Clausson observes:

He (Dorian) remembered wandering through dimly-lit streets with gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by cursing, and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes. He had seen grotesque children huddled upon doorsteps, and had heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts. ("Internet 2"; *emphasized*).

To demonstrate and reflect Dorian's degeneration, Wilde uses here derelict, hideous sections of London, remote from the parts of London, where the welfare upper classes live. Dorian's degeneration is reflected here also by the associations with hideousness, grossness, deterioration, underworld and Evil. As Clausson expresses properly: "The lower classes are described as ape-like, and by his increasing association with them, Dorian becomes bestial and ape-like, too. (Not insignificantly, the word monstrous occurs over twenty times in the novel.)" ("Internet 2")

Dorian's degeneration is remarkably also reflected in the changing character of Dorian's passion for collecting things. As Dorian's degeneration continuous, the character of his collections is changing. His collections deteriorate. At first, Dorian concentrates mainly on

collecting beautiful, exotic things, later on things in one way or another way connected with the Evil. As Platizky observes:

The dissolution over time of both the painting and the artifacts implies a correspondence between the darker site of his portrait and Dorian's compulsion to collect. Much as the ones-handsome features on Basil Halward's canvas become bloated and bloodied, by the end of chapter eleven, Dorian's acquisitions deteriorate from rare germs-garnet, wide stone, and bezoar – that cast out demons, poisons, and plagues to a pantheon of historical tyrants and Renaissance revenge figures that poison their victims and nations. (“Internet 4”)

As mentioned above, Dorian's descending into moral corruption and degeneration are symbolized and illustrated mainly by the changes of his portrait. Dorian's portrait reflects Dorian's ageing and his moral corruption and degeneration not only by getting hideous and horrible, but it also reflects Dorian's descending into degeneration by the growing weight of his portrait. As Dorian's moral corruption and degeneration is increasing, the portrait is getting heavier. Nassaar observes that “the heavier the portrait gets, the more of Dorian's guilt and sin is being transferred into it, until the end when the weight of his sins comes crashing down on his body.” (“Internet 3”)

Nassaar emphasizes the episode when Dorian wants the frame-maker to move the picture to the attic, as the episode, which obviously reflects the relationship between Dorian's continuing degeneration and the growing weight of the portrait. As Nassaar quotes from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: “Something of a loath to carry, sir, ‘gasped a little man, when they reached the top landing. And he whipped his shiny forehead. ‘I am afraid it is rather heavy, ‘murmured Dorian, as he unlocked the door. I don't want to have it hung up. Just lean it against the wall. Thanks.” (“Internet 3”)

When analyzing this episode, Nassaar quite properly emphasizes the fact that the portrait was not hung up, but leaned against the wall and confronts it with the final episode of Dorian's death:

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke, and crept out of their rooms [...] When they entered, they found *hanging on the wall* a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was. (“Internet 3”, italics added)

As Nassaar notices, when the servants entered the room, “*the picture was hanging on the wall, not just leaned against the wall*”. (“Internet 3”, italics added). Nassaar argues that this is not Wilde's technical fault but his intention. He (Nassaar) claims that the crash was not only

the fall of the dead body on the floor but that the crash also symbolizes “the transference of all his (Dorian’s) sins onto him from the portrait.” (“Internet 3”)

3.3 Homosexual impulses in *Melmoth the Wanderer*

As I hope to show, *Melmoth the Wanderer* includes at least three examples of homosexual impulses, if not more.

Firstly, the most significant is the very intimate relationship between Alonzo and his brother Juan, included in “The Tale of the Spaniard”. “This male-male relationship is marked by strongly ‘sensitive’ loyal piece, utterances, and behavior.” (“Internet 7”) When Juan is trying to set his brother Alonzo free, the words used in the scene include obvious homosexual impulses:

’Alonzo, dear Alonzo’, murmured a voice. ’ Juan, dear Juan’, was all I could utter, as I felt my shivering breasts held close to that of the most generous and affectionate of brothers.”[...]”*Juan supported me, consoled me, encouraged me; did all, and more, than a man ever did for a man – than a man ever did, perhaps for the most shrinking and delicate of the other sex under his protection. Oh, with what agony of heart I retrace his manly tenderness.* (Maturin, 294- 295, italics added)

The utterance “Juan did all, and more, than a man ever did for a man-than a man ever did perhaps for the most shrinking and delicate of the other sex under his protection” or the words “manly tenderness”, Maturin uses, are obvious homosexual hits. Patrick Holland even claims that Alonso fetishizes his doomed brother.

Secondly, Holland also argues that the text has fetishized in a similar way the saint Sebastian figure, represented by a younger monk who helped another monk Frau Paulo: “In “The story of Frau Paulo”, accused of irregularity, a younger monk loyally cleaves to Paulo until he himself is haunted to death by the community; the text fetishizes this Saint Sebastian figure, dwelling on its bloody wounds as it solicites readerly homophilia.” (“Internet 7”)

Holland’s claimant is probably based on the following passage in the text:

A naked human being, covered with blood, and uttering screams of rage and torture, flashed by me...Four monks pursued him – they had lights...I was still on my knees, and trembling from head to foot. The victim reached the door, found it shut, and rallied. I turned, and saw a group worthy of Murillo. A more perfect human form never existed than that of this unfortunate youth. He stood in an attitude of despair – he was streaming with blood. The monks, with their lights, their scourges, and their dark habits, seemed like a group of demons who had made pray of a wandering angel,- the group resembled the infernal furies pursuing a mad Orestes. And, indeed, no ancient

sculptor ever designed a figure more exquisite and perfect than that they had so barbarously mangled. (Maturin, 163, italics added)

St. Sebastian is often referred to as “a favorite saint among homosexuals”. St. Sebastian, a favorite of Emperor Diocletian, was a Captain of the Guard in the Roman Army. After he had refused to renounce his Christianity, the Emperor sentenced him to be tied to a tree so that Romanian enemies could riddle him with arrows. The following expressions taken out from the above extract strongly associate and also celebrate the St. Sebastian figure: “A naked human being, covered with blood”; “the victim”; “A more perfect human form never existed than that of this unfortunate youth”; “He was streaming with blood”; “And, indeed, no ancient sculptor ever designed a figure more exquisite and perfect than that they had so barbarously mangled”.

Furthermore, Holland argues that even the relationship between Alonzo and the brutal monk Parricide who was leading Alonzo’s escape from the monastery, includes homosexual impulses:

In fact, even the imagining of extreme male-male hostility[...]as when the brutal monk Parricide who will kill Alonzo’s brother after leading Alonzo, in enforced intimacy, to the side of reunion – the text proleptically offers something like an ‘s&m’ relation, where an elder ‘macho’ figure dominates a younger, gentler figure, who seems to enter into a sympathy dependence. (“Internet 7”)

The third obvious homosexual impulse, present in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, I hope to prove to be unquestionable, is included in the story of the woman disguised as a monk – novice who has sexual relationship with another monk within the walls of the monastery:

The attachment between the young monk and the novice went on. They were for ever in the garden together – they inhaled the odors of the flowers – they cultivated the same cluster of carnations – they entwined themselves as they walked together – when they were in the choir, their voices were like mixed incense. *Friendship is often carried to excess in conventual’s life, but this friendship was too like love.* (Maturin, 282, italics added)

The above mentioned extract includes implicit homoerotic hits and the last sentence can be understood in its context by an explicit one.

3.4 Homoerotic elements in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The Picture of Dorian Gray includes obvious homoerotic elements. Even one of the central ideas of the novel – self-development, proclaimed by Lord Henry and followed by Dorian, includes actually (homo) sexual liberation. According to Nils Clausson, by self-development

Wilde means realizing one's nature and free realization of one's desires without letting the society restrict one's liberation, in this case, especially the (homo)sexual liberation. As Clausson argues:

Lord Henry's philosophy of unfettered self-development can be read as an implicit recommendation to homosexuals to realize their true being, despite the misguided restraints of society and religion. 'The aim of life is self-development,' he tells Dorian: 'To realize one's nature perfectly, - that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self [...] The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion - these are the two things that govern us. ("Internet 2")

Especially the sentence "To realize one's nature perfectly- that is what each of us is here for.", is in the given context the implicit appeal for homosexuals which Clausson means. The sentence: "People are afraid of themselves nowadays is also an implicit homoerotic hit. Furthermore, Clausson observes that Lord Henry explicitly criticizes restrictive laws, particularly the Labouchere Amendment (1885) that criminalized homosexual acts and calls upon violating such laws:

I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream - I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal - to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal, it may be. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the *self-denial that mars our lives*. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. *The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful.* (Maturin, p.61, 62, italics added)

This is Lord Henry's principal sermon that awakes in Dorian the desire for self-development, including the desire for homosexual liberation. By "The self-denial that mars our lives" is obviously meant (also) the denial of homosexual desires that are not bad themselves, but were proclaimed bad by "monstrous laws". The sentence "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it" is an apparent recommendation to homosexuals to realize their desires and to violate "monstrous laws", as well as the wish "to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream".

Dorian's reaction to Lord Henry's sermon speaks for itself:

For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that *entirely fresh influences were at work within him. Yet they seemed to him to have come really from himself.* The few words that Basil's friend had said to him – words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with willful paradox in them – had touched some *secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses.* (Murray, p.62, italics added)

Claussion lays stress especially on the use of such words as “vibrating”, “throbbing”, “secret chord”, “curious pulses” that, according to him and other recent critics, suggest that “A central element of the self-development is Dorian's discovery of his own homosexuality.” (“Internet 2”)

Lord Henry's sermon only awakened Dorian's secret desires as it is obvious from the sentence: “He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him. *Yet they seemed to him to have come really from himself.*” (Murray, 62, italics added).

For that matter, homoerotic elements are mingled through the whole novel. What else than a homoerotic hit is Basil's reluctancy to exhibit Dorian's painting. “I know you will laugh at me, he (Basil) replied, but I really can't exhibit it. I have put too much myself into it.” (Murray, 50) And later he (Basil) further explains “that every portrait is a portrait of the artist, of the artist's spirit and soul, not of his sitter”. (Murray, 52) “The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul.” (Murray, 52) By the sentences “that he had put too much of himself into it (the picture)” and “that he is afraid that he has shown the secret of his own soul”, Basil obviously means that the portrait reflects his (Basil's) homosexual attraction to Dorian.

For that matter, Basil's homosexual attraction to Dorian is unmistakable:

It is quite true that I have worshipped him with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow, I had never loved a woman... Well, from the moment I met him, his personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I quite admit that I adored him madly, extravagantly, absurdly. I was jealous of every one to whom he spoke. I wanted to have him all to myself. I was only happy when I was with him. When I was away from him, he was still present in my art. (“Internet 2”, emphasize added)

Claussion points out another strong homosexual element included in the book. As he comments: “*Dorian exercises a fatal sexual power over young men, especially young aristocrats.*” (“Internet 2”, italics added). In his final, fatal confrontation with Dorian, Hallward asks Dorian:

Why is your friendship so fateful to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guard who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent's only son, and his career? (...)What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him? Dorian, Dorian, your reputation is infamous [...] They say you corrupt everyone whom you become intimate with.

(Wilde, 159, italics added)

The above extract sustains Clausson's claimant that "Dorian exercises a fatal sexual power over young men". Basil is enumerating the whole list of young aristocrats, former Dorian's "friends", who have become wretches because of Dorian's influence.

Another homosexual element, Basil's 'secret' disappearances, is pointed out by Nassaar: "Basil's attachment to Dorian has a homosexual dimension, and his disappearances are probably for the sake of homosexual relief. (This is clear in the earlier, shorter version of the novel but Wilde toned it down considerably in the later version)." (Nassaar, 39)

3.5 The Theme of a "Cyclical Sin"

"Dorian, Dorian, your reputation is infamous [...] *They say you corrupt everyone whom you become intimate with.*"(Murray, 159, italics added), says Basil to Dorian when visiting him to ask him about the rumors.

There is another important element implicitly contained in the two sentences mentioned and emphasized above, the element that cannot be ignored, when discussing Decadence in the context of moral corruption and degeneration. It is the element that Michael Kaylor calls "a cyclical sin". Every Decadent, when descending deeper and deeper into moral corruption and degeneration, looking for new and stranger sensations to find satisfaction, reaches the point, when there are only few sensations left to satisfy him. At this stage, a typical Decadent has two other possibilities to choose between, either to seduce, or to decide not to seduce another person to the corruption. When he chooses the first possibility, the first step is to evoke curiosity in his subject of seduction. The curiosity is naturally followed by the desire for new sensations connected with degeneration. The initially innocent becomes degenerated and then

uses the same pattern to seduce another “victim”. This is the “cyclical sin” Michael Kaylor mentions in his work. As Kaylor observes:

The greater society of Decadents, personalities like Lord Henry and Pater and perhaps Wilde himself, would have considered the “culmination” of corruption to be its own replication, tempting and corrupting Innocents until these Innocents themselves became Decadents capable of tempting and corrupting in turn. This is the cyclical sin [...] (Kaylor, 52)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the first subject of the seduction, the first Innocent, was Dorian. Lord Henry was evidently indulging in influencing Dorian:

Talking to him was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He was answered to every touch and thrill of the bow [...] There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one’s soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one’s own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one’s temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume: there was a real joy in that – perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims[...]He was a marvelous type, too, this lad, whom by so curious a chance he had met in Basil’s studio, or could be fashioned into a marvelous type, at any rate. Grace was his, and the white purity of boyhood, and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us. There was nothing that one could not do with him. He could be made a Titan or a toy. What a pity it was that such beauty was destined to fade! (Murray, 74, 75)

This extract contains not only obvious homoerotic hints, like for example: “He was a marvelous type, too, this lad” or ...”and white purity of boyhood, and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us”. It mainly reflects the joy of a Decadent flourishing from influencing, even making a man be, what the seducer wants him to be. The satisfaction connected with creating a new person actually, flourishes probably partly from the fact that this is a form of Decadent intellectual or artistic way to give birth to a child. Arguably this theme is especially important for homosexuals.

As mentioned above, both central characters try to seduce other human beings to sin. Nevertheless, Dorian has succeeded many times, while Melmoth has not, although he (Melmoth) is very persuasive, as, for instance, his utterance to Stanton in the madhouse shows:

‘You think that the intellectual power is something distinct from the vitality of the soul, or, in other words, that if even your reason should be destroyed, (which it nearly is), your soul might yet enjoy beatitude in the full exercise of its enlarged and exalted faculties, and all the clouds which obscured them be dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness, in whose beams you hope to bask for ever and ever. Now, without

going into any metaphysical subtleties about the distinction between mind and soul, experience must teach you, that there can be no crime into which madmen would not, and do not precipitate themselves; mischief is their occupation, malice their habit, murder their sport, and blasphemy their delight. Whether a soul in this state can be a hopeful one, it is for you to judge; but it seems to me, that with the loss of reason, (and reason cannot long be retained in this place), you lose also the hope of immortality.-‘

Melmoth’s intellectual power is unquestionable. Yet, he is not able to seduce a single one human being to take off his burden. Dorian is much more successful in seduction of human beings to sin.

3.6 Mystery and horror – other typical Gothic elements

Although the theme of mystery is one of the significant features of Gothic literature, both novels have in common that they are both based on the only one explicit mysterious element and that is the central unifying element, the main character and his portrait: Melmoth and his mysterious portrait (in Maturin’s work) and Dorian and especially his picture (in Wilde’s novel). Nevertheless, both of the works deal with the theme of mystery implicitly.

Both works use a typical Gothic element – a mystery of the man, who obtained a preternaturally extended life along with supernatural powers from the Devil at the price of his soul (Melmoth) and the man, who has pledged his soul for the extension of youth and for not being physically burdened by ageing and by moral corruption and degeneration (Dorian).

In Melmoth’s case, it is a Faustian motif, when a man obtains something, what is not naturally set to be given by the God to a human being. Consequently, the man is disowned by the God, what is usually represented by his soul falling for the Devil or for the hell. Nevertheless, Maturin has enlarged the classical Faustian archetype by adding another element. The burden is transferable in this case. Melmoth “can be saved if he can persuade another to take the bargain off his hands, and assume his existing state”. The element of transferability of the bargain is another connection between the two novels, as it will be explained.

Although some critics claim that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* contains the same Faustian archetype, I hope to show, that Wilde intentionally used this Faustian motif only partly and adapted it in a way, it would serve for expressing of the motives Wilde wanted to express.

Firstly, Dorian's fatal prayer, "*expressed in a fit of distress*" (*emphasis added*), can not be understood as an explicit contract with the Devil. It was just the pledge: "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! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!" (Murray, 67)

Secondly, although Dorian also obtained something, what is not set naturally to be given by the God to a human being, Dorian's only punishment is to return, what he obtained. My potential opponents may object that the final part, which is dealing with Dorian's death, implicitly contains the element of Dorian's fall for the Devil: "There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that [...]" (Murray, 214)

Nevertheless, considering the whole context of the novel, its themes and Wilde's philosophy, and also what Wilde could afford to publish, I wish to argue that the only Dorian's 'punishment' was to return, what he unnaturally obtained as a part of his life, to return it where it would belong to, according to Wilde: "In a second letter on Dorian Gray to the editor of the St. Jameses Gazette, Wilde wrote: '*It is proper that limitation should be placed on action. It is not proper that limitations should be placed on art.*' (Letters, p.261)" (Nassaar, 71, italics added) The whole novel is interdigitated by the theme of the supremacy of art above the real life. Any character, that had started to prefer real life to art, was punished. (Sibyl Vane, James Vane). I would like to show that, according to Wilde's philosophy of supremacy of beauty and art and his Decadent philosophy, the story could not have ended in another way than by restoring the portrait (the art). Firstly, Wilde considered art to be superior to real life. Secondly, Wilde's view is that there are no limitations on art but there are limitations on real life. According to Wilde, art can reveal, show and even celebrate the Evil and it will not lose its beauty. It fully corresponds with his Decadent philosophy. On the contrary, Wilde believes that finding joy in Evil and degeneration in real life is 'the journey to the hell'. As Nassaar observes:

In art, one can descend to the bottom of the demon universe and emerge unscathed. This is dramatized in the final pages of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dorian's picture accompanies Dorian to the very depths of the demon universe, but it returns unharmed to its original state. Dorian, on the other hand, dies. *The demonic, then should be fully explored only in art, if the exploration is to remain a beautiful experience.*" [...] "An art that delves into the dark caverns of the soul and fully explores and celebrates the evil within can remain beautiful, but a way of life that seeks fully to translate inner evil into action will finally cease to be beautiful and become an inescapable nightmare. This is Wilde's position in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a position he never abandoned. (Nassaar, 71, 72, italics added)

Dorian, “a perfect example of a Decadent”, as Nassaar observes, lives the life “that seeks fully to translate inner evil into action”, unlike Lord Henry. This fact leads to the expected consequences- Dorian’s life becomes “an inescapable nightmare”, fulfilled by fear and horror. Dorian’s fatal mistake was that he started to prefer real life to art almost from the beginning of the novel. It was his fatal prayer, when Dorian expressed the wish, if only the picture (the art) could bear the burden of his ageing (and later mainly his corruption and degeneration). Dorian did not respect the principle of supremacy of art and the principle that “finding joy in Evil and degeneration in real life leads to an inescapable nightmare”. Dorian even finds joy in watching the deterioration of his portrait, which more and more reflects his sinking into moral corruption and degeneration. (Lord Henry is not aware of the magic character of the picture.) Then, the final scene of Dorian’s death expresses exactly Wilde’s view and can be considered a happy end in fact. By stubbing the picture, Dorian is killing his own corrupted soul and conscience. He dies and all his sins crash onto his body, as Nassaar argues. It can be understood as the explanation of that “cry so horrible in its agony...”. The “cry so horrible in its agony...” does not symbolize Dorian’s fall for the Devil, but the fall of all his sins and heinous crimes onto him. By this act, Dorian’s sins have been transferred from the portrait (the art) into real life. The portrait is now again beautiful and light. The art has been restored. The element of the transferability is another link between Maturin’s novel and Wilde’s work, as mentioned above.

3.6.1 The theme of the portrait of the Devil’s alliant

Both of the novels use the Gothic element of a mysterious picture of the Devil’s alliant, containing horror itself. What is more, the two portraits have some characteristics in common: Both of them are supernatural, both are alive in a way and both are hidden (in the Blue Chamber, in Melmoth’s case; or in the attic, in Dorian’s case).

The mysterious, horrible and supernatural characteristics of Melmoth’s portrait are expressed mainly by the three following passages that deal with the first and the second John’s entering into the Blue Chamber and John’s meeting the apparition of his ancestor:

John’s eyes were in a moment, and as if by magic, riveted on a portrait that hung on the wall, and appeared, even to his untaught eye, far superior to the tribe of family pictures that are left to moulder on the walls of a family mansion. It represented a man of middle age. *There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but the eyes,*

John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. Had he been acquainted with the poetry of Southey, he might have often exclaimed in his after-life,

*Only the eyes had life,
They gleamed with demon light. – THALABA
(Maturin, 53, 54, italics added)*

John's second visit in the Blue Chamber:

"He started, turned away; but, as he turned away, he thought he saw the eyes of the portrait, on which his own was fixed, move, and hurried back to his uncle's bedside." (Maturin, 55, italics added)

John's meeting the apparition of his ancestor:

But (for Melmoth never could decide) was it in a dream or not, that he saw the figure of his ancestor appear at the door? - hesitatingly as he saw him at first on the night of his uncle's death, - saw him enter the room, approach his bed, and heard his whisper, 'You have burdened me, then; but those are flames I can survive. - I am alive, - I am beside you.' Melmoth started, sprung from his bed, - it was broad day-light. He looked round, - there was no human being in the room but himself. He felt a slight pain in the wrist of his right arm. He looked at it, it was black and blue, as from the recent gripe of a strong hand. (Maturin, 106, italics added)

The mysterious, supernatural and horrible essence of the picture of Dorian Gray is obvious. Unlike Melmoth's portrait, which is relatively static, the picture of Dorian Gray mirrors Dorian's ageing and mainly his moral corruption and degeneration in a very flexible way.

Nevertheless, the portraits are not the only source of horror. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, horror flourishes mainly from brilliant descriptions of the horrible situations of human beings, who are in despair, including a sparkling psychological insight into the feelings of those suffering ones. For example, in "The Tale of Guzman's family", Maturin describes the scene, which is horrible in its context. The distraught father, who could not keep his family, decides to murder his own wife and his own children to spare them a much more dreadful death from starving:

-World – world, be wise, and let your children curse you to your face for any thing but felt most when it is least uttered! I have felt it often, but I shall feel it no longer! – And the wretch tottered towards the beds of his children. [...] 'Father! – father!' cried Julia, 'are these your hands? Oh let me live, and I will do any thing – any thing but' – 'Father! – dear father!' cried Ines, 'spare us! – to-morrow may bring another meal!' Maurice, the young child, sprung from his bed, and cried, clinging round his father, 'Oh, dear and was tearing out our throats; and, father, I cried so long, that I thought you never would come. And now – Oh God! Oh God!' - as he felt the hands of the frantic wretch grasping his throat, - 'are you the wolf?' (Maturin, 561, italics added)

The above mentioned extract illustrates, how Maturin uses his imagination and the plot he chose, to show people, who are in despair. The farther has become a wretch as a consequence of suffering and is resolved to kill his own children. Especially, the moment, when the youngest boy calling for help of his father and recognizing that it is his father that wants to kill them, is extremely horrible.

Maturin seems to take delight in descriptions of extreme sufferings and extreme horror which is a consequence of those sufferings. For such extreme situations, Maturin does not need any supernatural instruments. The only thing Maturin needs, to evoke the atmosphere of horror, is his imagination and his psychological insight into those souls that suffer in real life.

The scheme of evoking horror is always the same. Maturin uses his imagination and brilliant psychological insight to find horror in extreme situations, connected with suffering in real life. That has been shown in the above mentioned example from the “Tale of the Guzman’s family”. Maturin’s *Melmoth* is full of such examples. For instance, in Stanton’s tale, when Stanton is imprisoned in a madhouse, he has regularly to watch a terrible performance of a woman who has become mad after loosing all her children by the Great fire of London. Stanton has regularly to watch the performance showing probably only a touch of the real horror that has actually happened:

‘But my children are there!’ she cried in a voice of unspeakable agony, as she seemed to make another effort; ‘here I am – here I am come to save you. – Oh God! They are all blazing! – Take this arm – no, not that, it is scorched and disabled – well, any arm – take hold of my clothes – no, they are blazing too! Well, take me all on fire as I am! – And their hair, how it hisses! – Water, one drop of water for my youngest – he is but an infant – for my youngest, and let me burn!’ (Maturin, 96)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, horror is tightly connected with the theme of moral corruption and degeneration. As the most significant example and the illustration of the contention, Dorian’s bestial murder of Basil should be analyzed: On a dark, foggy night, Dorian is visited by Basil Hallward. Basil wants Dorian to explain the rumors that are spreading about Dorian. There is an argument between them. Finally, Dorian decides to show Basil his work (Dorian’s portrait) that mirrors Dorian’s soul and conscience, and therefore is hideous and terrible now, because it (the picture) reflects all the Dorian’s sins, he had committed so far. Basil is horrified by his own work that reveals the truth about Dorian to him and begs Dorian to do a penance. Dorian refuses and kills Basil in a fit of rage. Then he forces his former “friend” by blackmailing to dispose of the dead body. Although Dorian committed the murder partly as an act of self-protection, the self-protection was not the only motive for the action.

Here it is important to notice the way, Dorian committed Basil's murder, and also the way, he handled the dead body after the murder. As Nassaar notices, although Dorian murdered Basil impulsively as a way of self-protection after revealing his secret to Basil, the style of the murder and the style of handling the dead body reminds the murders of the contemporary serial killer Jack the Ripper:

Something glimmered on the top of the painted chest that faced him. His eyes fell on it. He knew what it was. It was a knife he had brought up, some days before, to cut a piece of cord, and had forgotten to take away with him. He moved slowly towards it, passing Hallward as he hid so. As soon as he got behind him, he seized it, and turned round. Hallward stirred in his chair as he was going to rise. *He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down to the table and stabbing again and again. [...] There was a stifled groan, and the horrible sound of someone choking the blood. Three times the outstretched arms shot compulsively, waving grotesque stiff-fingered hands in the air. He stabbed him twice more, but man did not move. Something began to trickle on the floor. He waited for a moment, still pressing the head down. Then he threw the knife on the table, and listened.* ("Internet 3", italics added)

As Nassaar emphasizes, Dorian not only murdered Basil with a knife, but he (Dorian) was stabbing again and again, maiming the body. Nassaar further emphasizes the link between the fact that Jack the Ripper often disemboweled his victims and removed some inner organs. "In a similar way", Dorian let the dead body cut up and destroy it completely by the help of his former "friend" Allan Cambell, who he (Dorian) forced to do it by blackmailing.

Nassaar further argues that Wilde used the style of the murder, which associates Jack the Ripper's murders, for two reasons. Firstly, he (Wilde) wanted to intensify the horror of Dorian's act and to emphasize Dorian's plunge into pure evil and used as the artistic instrument the association with Jack the Ripper. Secondly, Nassaar, as well as Ellmann, argue that: "Wilde, after his first homosexual experience in 1886, regarded himself as a criminal and wrote as an artist – criminal. It should come to no surprise, then, that he was very interested in the most famous murderer of his days and sought to echo and reflect his crimes in his literature." ("Internet 1")

3.7 Other typical Gothic elements:

There is another typical Gothic element linking both works. It is a vulnerable, curious heroine. As Claesson observes: "In *Art of Darkness: A poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams

identified several conventions 'familiar in Gothic narratives from Walpole to the present: a vulnerable and curious heroine; a wealthy, arbitrary and enigmatic hero / villain, and a grand, mysterious dwelling concealing the violent, implicitly sexual secrets of this home fatale.' ("Internet 2")

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, all the above mentioned Gothic elements are present. A vulnerable and curious heroin is, according to Classon, represented by the initially innocent Dorian and a wealthy, arbitrary and enigmatic hero/villain by Lord Henry, as it will be explained in detail. Dorian's own house can be seen as a kind of a grand, mysterious dwelling concealing the violent, implicitly sexual secrets of this home fatale. The element of mysteriousness is represented mainly by the fact that Dorian's portrait and its secret are hidden there. The violent secret of Dorian's house is the bestial murder of Basil. The implicitly sexual secrets of the dwelling are connected with homosexuality and are clear in the context of Dorian's life and the central theme of the novel. As Clausson further observes, "Wilde transforms the innocent heroine into the 'initially' innocent Dorian." ("Internet 2") Before Dorian meets Lord Henry and falls for his influence, Basil describes him to Lord Henry in the following way: "Dorian is my dearest friend, 'he said. *He has a simple and beautiful nature [...] don't spoil him* (Murray, 58, italics added) In the stage when Dorian is still innocent, Lord Henry sees him like this:

Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. *One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him.* (Murray, 59, 60, italics added)

Dorian's initial innocence is expressed many times in the novel, mainly by mouth of Lord Henry. The two above extracts serve as an obvious illustration of this fact. Basil begs Lord Henry: "He has a simple and beautiful nature[...] don't spoil him." Dorian's innocence is also expressed by mouth of Lord Henry: "One felt that he (Dorian) had kept himself unspotted from the world." This extract includes besides Dorian's initial innocence also homoerotic hits. The description of Dorian's beauty goes beyond the bounds of Aesthetism and also the remark on Basil's worshipping of Dorian can be considered to be a homoerotic hit. Therefore, Dorian is understood as a heroin.

In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the element of a vulnerable, curious heroine is represented by the character of Immalee. Immalee's innocence and curiosity are expressed implicitly many

times in the tale and in the following extract even explicitly: “This led to a discussion, which *Immalee’s* impregnable *innocence though combined with ardent curiosity* and quick apprehension, rendered perfectly harmless to her.” (Maturin, 382)

Another Gothic element, although not present in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, but extremely important in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is a wealthy, arbitrary and enigmatic hero / villain, according to Claesson, represented by Lord Henry. Although Lord Henry presents himself as a Hedonist and proclaims his controversial theories about supremacy of beauty, youth and art, calls upon self-development, connected with ignoring of any other values, and although it is him that inspires Dorian to live a life of a Decadent, Lord Henry does not live a life of a Decadent himself. His life is relatively staid. He visits clubs and other places, where London members of the upper class society meet, and either entertains or provokes the upper classes with his controversial theories proclaimed in the form of witticisms. He never indulges in a sordid behavior. Basil aptly describes him in the first chapter: “You are an extraordinary fellow. You never say a moral thing and you never do a wrong thing.” (Murray, 51)

3.8 The element of the criticism of some principles and institutions of the society linking both pieces of work

Both authors criticized those principles and institutions of society that suppress natural human needs and desires. Maturin considers such a repressing of natural affections to be the source of moral corruption. In his criticisms, Maturin concentrates on the opposition against the Catholic church and “the intense sectarian conflict”. (“Internet 6”) Here it is important to emphasize that Maturin does not criticize Christianity and natural God’s laws represented by the Bible. On the contrary, he strongly respects the Bible as the only source of the God’s laws, the good and the truth. It is people, society and especially some institutions that Maturin blames of misusing the Bible and the basic ideals of Christianity.

In this context, Maturin often criticizes especially the Catholic Church and the sectarian conflicts, as mentioned above. Maturin uses Melmoth’s sermon to Immalee for expressing this criticism: “[...] even in the pure pages of that book (Bible) which, they presume to say, contains their title to peace on earth, and happiness hereafter, a right to hate, plunder and murder each other.” (Maturin, 408)

The unreserved respect to the Bible, as the source of the God's laws, the good and the truth, as well as the criticism of the intense sectarian conflict is apparent for instance from the following extract:

They never dare to dispute that it contains irresistible injunctions, - that those who believe in it should live in habits of peace, benevolence and harmony, - that they should love each other in prosperity, and assist each other in adversity. They dare not deny that the spirit that book inculcates and inspires, is a spirit whose fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, mildness and truth. On these points they never presumed to differ. – they are too plain to be denied, *so they contrive to make matter of difference out of the various habits they wear; and they cut each other's throats for the love of God, on the important subject, whether their jackets should be red or white – or white linen, or black household garments – or whether they should immerse their children in water, or sprinkle them with a few drops of it [...]* (Maturin, 409, italics added)

The emphasized part of the above extract illustrates Maturin's criticism of the sectarian conflict. Maturin criticizes people because they create artificial conflicts based on petty details, whereas they ignore and even violate by their intolerant and brutal behavior essential principles of Christianity that the Bible represents.

Besides the criticism of the sectarian conflict, Maturin focuses on the opposition against the whole system of the Catholic Church, which was, according to Maturin, based on the misuse and misinterpretation of the God's laws expressed by the Bible. Maturin blames the Catholic church of being corrupted by power and wealth, and openly criticizes its sub-institutions, especially the Spanish Inquisition, the unnatural and corrupted surroundings of the Spanish monasteries and also focuses on so called "Directors" (confessors). Maturin believes that as a consequence of repressing of natural affections, people try to compensate the suppressed natural needs and desires by the corrupted ones such as the need for domination or sadism.

All the above mentioned elements-the need for power, sadism and also heartlessness and cruelty, Maturin connects with the Spanish Inquisition which he focuses his opposition against on. The cruelty and inhumanity of this institution is openly criticized for instance in the following extract dealing with the inquisition: "*[...] infliction the water-torture, which is indeed insupportable to humanity, either to suffer or relate, he exclaimed in the gasping intervals, he would disclose everything.*" (Maturin, 80, italics added) Maturin's criticism of the misuse and misinterpretation of the God's laws (represented by the Bible) is tellingly expressed in the following extract dealing with the examination of Alonzo by the Inquisition: "What sin, then have I committed? 'The greatest of all possible sins; you refuse answering the questions put to you at the tribunal of the most holy and merciful Inquisition'". (Maturin,

79) To refuse answering the questions at tribunal “of the most holy and merciful Inquisition” is declared to be the greatest of all possible sins.” Maturin’s attitude to the Spanish Inquisition is also tellingly expressed by his description of the fire of the building of the Inquisition: “The towers of the Inquisition shrunk into cinders – *that tremendous monument of the power, and crime, and gloom of the human mind*, was wasting like a scroll in the fire.” (Maturin, 327, italics added)

Maturin’s criticism of the unnatural surroundings of Spanish monasteries, that were, according to Maturin, full of people, changed by such unnatural conditions into heartless, corrupted and cruel creatures, is many times tellingly expressed in “The Tale of the Spaniard”. Heartlessness and cruelty of the monks and their superiors are described for example in the narrative dealing with the punishment of the two revealed lovers, or by terrible ways of torture of Alonzo.

As mentioned above, in his criticism of the whole system of the Catholic Church and its sub-institutions, Maturin also focuses his criticism on so called “Directors”, who he blames of hypocrisy and misusing their power. Similarly, as Maturin criticizes the Director in “The Tale of the Spaniard”, he criticizes the Director in “The Tale of Immalee”:

However, though defective in education, and somewhat narrow in mind, Father Jose was a good man, and meant well. He loved power, and he was devoted to the interests of the Catholic church ; but he had frequently doubts, (which he kept to himself), of the absolute necessity of celibacy, and he felt (strange effect!) a chill all over him when he heard of the fires of an auto da fe.” (Maturin, 439)

In the same context, Maturin criticizes the whole Spanish society where the Catholic Church was extremely powerful and, moreover, was interconnected with the temporal power. When Juan tried to free Alonzo legally, before the court, they did not succeed because such a precedent would be too dangerous for the whole system:

...but the precedent was too dangerous. The advocate on the other side had remarked, ‘if this succeeds, we shall have all the monks in Spain appealing against their vows.’ Could a stronger argument have been used in favor of my cause? An impulse so universal must surely originate in nature, justice, and truth.’ (Maturin, 242)

Wilde, as well as Maturin, criticizes the official values of the society, in his case, Victorian society, that, according to him, also repressed natural human affections. This Wilde’s view is very tellingly expressed in Lord Henry’s ‘subversive’ sermon to Dorian in Chapter One: “*The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion – these are the two things that govern us.*” (Murray, 61, italics added)

4. CONCLUSION

As it has been stated and proved at the beginning of this paper, there is an obvious influence of Ch.R.Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* on O.Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. This influence has not only been validated by many critics and by the fact that Wilde demonstrably knew his great-uncle's work and was emotionally connected with this piece of work (Wilde's chosen pseudonym 'Sebastian Melmoth'). This influence has also been validated by obvious links between the two works, the links that have been briefly mentioned in Chapter Two and analyzed in Chapter Three.

Firstly, both pieces of work contain typical Gothic elements. As this paper has proved, Wilde has not probably taken these Gothic elements out from his fin-de-siecle contemporaries because *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was firstly published in 1890 (before most of his contemporaries' works). What is more, Wilde firstly came out with the story when telling it to George Maxwell, when he (Maxwell) was a child, it means in 1980s or even 1970s, while Wilde's fin-de-siecle contemporaries Wells, Stevenson, Machen and Stoker published their fin-de-siecle Gothic novels in 1896, 1886, 1894 and 1897.

One of the most significant Gothic elements present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, is the theme of moral corruption and degeneration. In Maturin's work, moral corruption and degeneration are caused by repressing natural human affections. This often makes people try to compensate these natural human needs and desires by the artificial and corrupted ones, such as the need for power or even sadism. According to Maturin, "those, who by their vows are excluded from the interest, which natural affections give us in life, must seek for it in artificial ones for pride and domination" (Maturin,176), as he explicitly proclaims in the letter, Juan Moncada wrote to his brother Alonzo in "The Tale of the Spaniard". This Maturin's view is proclaimed implicitly many times during the novel.

In this context, Maturin connects the above mentioned compensations for those suppressed natural affections by the artificial, corrupted ones with the whole system of the Catholic Church, including its sub-institutions. The corruption by power and wealth, accompanied by cruel and heartless behavior, is connected especially with the Spanish Inquisition. The need for power, sadism, cruelty and heartlessness is mentioned mainly in Stanton's tale and "The Tale of the Spaniard", as it has been sustained in Chapter Three in the extracts which deal with the inquisition. Corrupted, artificial needs and behavior is also often mentioned by Maturin in connection with unnatural surroundings of the Spanish monasteries. Especially, "The Tale of the Spaniard" includes many obvious hits on corrupted, cruel behavior of the

monks and their superiors, as it has been mentioned and proved by the quotations of the extracts dealing with the narration considering the cruel punishment of the two revealed lovers, or by terrible ways of torture of Alonzo. In connection with the artificial need for power as a compensation of natural affections, Maturin also mentions so called "Directors", who, according to Maturin, were often misusing their power, as it has been shown in Chapter Three by the extracts taken out from "The Tale of the Spaniard" and from "The Tale of Immalee".

The theme of moral corruption and degeneration is typical for a fin-de-siecle Gothic Decadent novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This theme is linking both pieces of work. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde tightly connects the theme of moral corruption and degeneration with the liberation from all moral values, especially with the (homo) sexual liberation which is, according to many critics, including Clausson, the central element of the self-development proclaimed by Wilde mainly by mouth of Lord Henry, especially in his (Lord Henry's) principal sermon to Dorian in Chapter One of the book. In Chapter Three of this paper, Dorian's continuing Decadent degeneration is described, as well as the symbols that reflect it.

The most significant symbol reflecting Dorian's moral corruption and degeneration is his portrait. The picture of Dorian Gray not only becomes hideous, reflecting Dorian's ageing and mainly his infamy but it also reflects his degeneration by another characteristic of the portrait, and it is its weight. Nassaar points out the relationship between the growing weight of Dorian's portrait and his degeneration. Nassaar draws attention especially to two scenes, which having been contrasted, reflect Dorian's continuing degeneration. The first scene deals with the moment when Dorian has let his portrait to be removed to the attic. The scene reflects the fact that the Dorian's picture had become 'something of a load to carry' by having been burdened by Dorian's descending into sins. The second scene, Nassaar emphasizes, is the final scene of Dorian's death, when, according to Nassaar, 'the crash Dorian's servants have heard', was not only the crash of the dead body but mainly the symbol of 'the transference of all his (Dorian's) sins onto him from the portrait'."

Wilde also used other elements to reflect or even emphasize Dorian's descending into degeneration. Firstly, it is the bestial murder of Basil. The way Dorian murdered Basil and then handled the body, associates Jack the Ripper's style. Wilde used this association, according to Nassaar, as the artistic instrument, which emphasizes Dorian's descending to bestial, murderous, lower level of existence. Secondly, Dorian visits derelict, hideous districts

of London tenanted by the lowest classes of the society. Moreover, he visits the underworld, including opium dens that serve as a significant symbol of his degeneration. In this context, Wilde uses the association with hideousness, grossness, deterioration and evil, again to reflect and to emphasize Dorian's degeneration from a well-formed, respectable upper-class to a lower-class, even ape-like level of existence, as Clausson argues. Last but not least, Platizky points out the relation between Dorian's degeneration and the changing character of his collections. As Dorian's degeneration continues, his collections deteriorate.

In the context of Decadence, connected with moral corruption and degeneration, the motif of so called 'cyclical sin' is important. According to Michael Kaylor, "the 'culmination' of corruption is its own replication, tempting and corrupting Innocents until those Innocents themselves become Decadents capable of tempting and corrupting in turn", as it has been validated in Chapter Three by quoting the extracts from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that consider Lord Henry's expression of the attraction of influencing someone else or "Dorian's corrupting of many young men, especially aristocrats".

Another element linking both pieces of work is that both works include homoerotic impulses. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* includes at least three homoerotic impulses. The first one is the relationship between Alonzo Moncada and his brother Juan from "The Tale of the Spaniard". As Alonzo's utterances, considering his brother Juan, sustain, Alonzo's relationship to his brother is very intimate and according to Holland, includes obvious homosexual hits. As Holland observes, Alonzo even fetishizes the relationship between him and his brother Juan. The second, demonstrably homoerotic impulse present in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, is the relationship between a woman disguised as a monk and another monk, also included in "The Tale of the Spaniard". The elements of their relationship associating homoerotic impulses have also been mentioned in the extract from *Melmoth the Wanderer* in Chapter Three. Thirdly, the tale of Frau Paolo includes the most significant homosexual impulse, especially the extract that, according to Holland, fetishizes the Saint Sebastian figure of a young monk, the extract, which emphasizes the monk's sacrificial role and the extract mentioning the bloody, exalted scene when the young monk, is personifying the role of a victim of the society covered with blood, beautiful in its state, which obviously associates "the favorite holy of homosexuals" Saint Sebastian. According to Holland, *Melmoth the Wanderer* includes more homosexual hits, to be more precise, the "s&m relationship" between Alonzo and the parricide monk, where "an older 'macho' figure dominates a younger, gentler figure, who seems to enter into a sympathy dependence".

The homoerotic elements are mingled the whole novel of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and, according to some critics, including Clausson, the central element of Dorian's self-development is his (Dorian's) revealing of his homosexuality. It is unquestionable, there are obvious homosexual impulses in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, including Basil's or Lord Henry's relationship to Dorian, Basil's "secret" disappearances that Nassaar interprets as Basil's homosexual relief, or the emphasized Dorian's unique power over the young men, especially aristocrats.

Another typical Gothic element linking *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the theme of mystery and horror. It is interesting that although the theme of mystery is one of the most significant features of Gothic literature, both novels have in common that they are both based on the only one explicit mysterious element and that is the central unifying character and his portrait, it means the man who has either sold his soul to the Devil or has pledged his soul for either the extension of life along with supernatural powers, in Melmoth's case, or for the extension of youth and for not being physically burdened by the age and infamy, in Dorin's case.

Maturin used the Faustian motif of a man who has gained something what is not naturally set to be given by the God to a human being and therefore Melmoth has been disowned by the God and his soul has fallen for the hell. Nevertheless, Maturin has enlarged the classical Faustian archetype by adding another element-the possibility that the burden is transferable.

Wilde intentionally used the Faustian archetype only partly. Although Dorian was given something, what is not naturally given by the God to a human being, too, this paper has proved that, when considering the whole context of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Wilde's views, Dorian's soul has not fallen for the hell. The only Dorian's punishment was to die and by this act to return what he had unnaturally obtained. To return it where it belongs to, according to Wilde, it means into the art. As precisely summarized by Nassaar, Wilde's position has always been that: "An art that delves on the dark caverns of the soul and fully explores and celebrates the evil within can remain beautiful but a way of life that seeks fully to translate inner evil into actor will, finally cease to the beauty and become an inescapable nightmare." So, Wilde intentionally used the Faustian motif only partly. Dorian does not fall for the hell. Nevertheless, the principle of the supremacy of art has to be fulfilled. Dorian violated this principle by his fatal prayer. He started to prefer real life to art. Wilde ingeniously handles the partly Faustian motif and "the portrait of the damned man" when expressing the conflict between the two basic, central themes of his Decadent novel. It is the

theme of self-development and the theme of degeneration. While Dorian lives his real life in accord with self-development, ignoring any moral values, his portrait reflects by increasing hideousness and growing weight his (Dorian's) degeneration. Dorian seeks to translate inner evil into action and the portrait bears the burden of his sins. The final scene of Dorian's death is then the climax, when the principles, Wilde proclaimed, are fulfilled. By stabbing the portrait, Dorian kills his own, corrupted soul, all his sins fall onto him and the picture, "a perfect example of a Decadent art", is restored. So, in both works the burden is transferable which is another element linking both novels. By this action, two basic principles are fulfilled. Firstly, the supremacy of art and secondly the principle (connected with the first one) that in art, evil can be explored and even celebrated and yet remain beautiful "but a way of life that seeks fully to translate inner evil into actor will, finally cease to the beauty and become an inescapable nightmare."

The central, unifying character of the Devil's alliant is connected with another element linking both works. It is the portrait of this Devil's alliant. Both of the mysterious portraits have some characteristics in common. Both of them are supernatural, both are alive in a way and both are hidden, as the extracts from both pieces of work initiated in Chapter Three show.

There is one more typical Gothic element, defined by Anne Williams in her work "*In Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*", that is present in both pieces of work. It is a character of a vulnerable and curious heroin. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, a vulnerable and curious heroin is represented by Immalee. In Maturin's work, Immalee's vulnerability and curiosity is expressed implicitly many times during "The Tale of Immalee" and even explicitly in the extract quoted in Chapter Three. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the element of a vulnerable, curious heroin is represented, according to Clausson, by Dorian himself, at the stage when he (Dorian) was still innocent and unspotted by society. This has been confirmed by the extracts from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that deal with the attitude of Basil and Lord Henry to Dorian. Both extracts include obvious homosexual hits. Clausson's theory about the transformation of the character of a heroin into Dorian is probably partly based on this fact.

Another very important link between the two works is connected with the theme of the criticism of those principles and institutions of society that suppress natural human needs and desires. As mentioned above, during the whole novel, Maturin expresses the view that suppressing of natural human needs and desires makes people try to compensate them by the artificial and corrupted ones, such as the need for power, domination, cruelty or even sadism. Maturin expresses this view even explicitly in the letter Juan Moncada wrote to his brother

Alonzo. Although Maturin highly respects the Bible, as the only source of the God's laws, of the good and the truth, Maturin blames people and especially some institutions of misusing and misinterpreting the content of those "pure pages of that book" (the Bible).

Maturin's criticism is focused on the whole system of the Catholic Church and its sub-institutions and the intense sectarian conflict. Maturin blames the Catholic church of corruption by power and wealth and consequently he criticizes its sub-institutions.

Maturin's opposition is focused on the Spanish Inquisition, as tellingly expressed in Chapter Three of this paper, for example, when describing the fire of the building of the Inquisition: "(...) the tremendous monument of the power, and crime, and gloom of the human mind". In the same context, Maturin criticizes the unnatural surroundings of the Spanish monasteries, full of people changed into cruel, heartless creatures, as the extracts from *Melmoth the Wanderer*, considering Alonzo's or Frau Paolo's cruel torture, confirm.

Maturin also blames so called "Directors" (confessors) of misusing their power in the same context, as it is shown in "The Tale of the Spaniard" or in "The Tale of Immalee".

Wilde, as well as Maturin, criticizes in his *Picture of Dorian Gray* those principles and institutions of the society that suppress natural human needs and desires. In Wilde's case, it is the hypocritical Victorian society that he criticizes, especially in the context of self-development and consequently (homo) sexual liberation. Wilde's view which includes the criticism of the society that suppresses human needs and desires has been illustrated mainly by the quotation of Lord Henry's principal sermon to Dorian in Chapter One *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Lord Henry not only proclaims self-development , including implicit (homo)sexual liberation but he (Lord Henry) even exhorts to breaking the laws that he calls "monstrous", obviously hitting on The Labouchere Amendment that criminalized homosexual relationships. Wilde's opposition against the principles of the Victorian society is also tellingly expressed by his following impressive utter: "The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion- these are the two things that govern us." (Murray, 61)

Resumé:

Ačkoli je vliv Maturinova díla *Melmoth Poutník* na Wildův román *Obraz Doriana Graye* obecně uznáván, nebyla doposud provedena hlubší analýza spojitostí mezi oběma díly. Cílem této práce bylo popsat a následně analyzovat právě tyto spojitosti se zaměřením na způsob, jakým Wilde použil některé prvky díla svého vzdáleného příbuzného při tvorbě vlastního dekadentního románu.

Existenci vlivu Maturinova *Melmotha Poutníka* na Wildův *Obraz Doriana Graye* potvrzují nejen renomovaní kritici. Důležitou roli zde hraje i skutečnost, že Wilde dílo svého prastrýce prokazatelně znal, jak uvádí například Richard Ellmann, Wildův přední životopisec. A co víc, Wilde byl s tímto románem emocionálně spjat (pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth, který si Wilde zvolil po svém propuštění z vězení, a jehož souvislost s Maturinovým románem potvrzuje mimo jiné i Wilde sám v jednom ze svých dopisů).

Kromě prokázané skutečnosti, že Wilde dílo svého prastrýce znal a byl s ním dokonce i emociálně spjat, jsou zde zjevné prvky spojující oba romány. Především, Maturinův *Poutník* je obecně považován za jeden z nejuznávanějších gotických románů. Jakkoliv obtížné je zařadit *Obraz Doriana Graye*, co se žánru týče, obecně je toto Wildovo dílo částečně považováno rovněž za gotický román.

Obě knihy obsahují zjevné společné gotické prvky. Jedním z nejvýznamnějších je téma morálního úpadku a degenerace, včetně homosexuální tematiky.

V *Melmothovi* uvádí Maturin jako zdroj morálního úpadku a degenerace zejména potlačování přirozených lidských potřeb a tužeb, které podle Maturina vede k utrpení nebo k tendenci kompenzovat tyto přirozené, Bohem člověku dané touhy, umělými, nepřirozenými a zkaženými jako je například touha po moci nebo krutost, případně i sadismus. Z potlačování přirozených lidských potřeb a tužeb obviňuje Maturin společnost a především některé její instituce.

V této souvislosti kritizuje celý systém katolické církve, přičemž zaměřuje svou kritiku hlavně na španělskou inkvizici, nepřirozené prostředí španělských klášterů, a rovněž institut takzvaných Domácích zpovědníků.

Španělskou inkvizici Maturin otevřeně označuje za instituci kriminální povahy a často upozorňuje na její nelidskost, krutost, zkorumpovanost mocí a bohatstvím, a nechybí ani otevřené obvinění ze sadismu.

Maturin rovněž kritizuje nepřirozené prostředí španělských klášterů, plných lidí, změněných těmito nepřirozenými podmínkami a potlačováním přirozených potřeb v kruté, nelidské kreatury.

Ve stejném kontextu kritizuje (Maturin) institut takzvaných Domácích zpovědníků. Uvádí zde opět potlačování přirozených lidských sklónů a následnou snahu kompenzovat přirozené lidské touhy umělými, v tomto případě zejména touhou po moci.

Téma morálního úpadku a degenerace je typické pro Wildův *Obraz Doriana Graye*, obecně považovaný za nejvíce dekadentní román devatenáctého století. Nicméně, Wilde, na rozdíl od Maturina, spojuje morální úpadek a degeneraci zejména s osvobozením se od všech společenských, morálních hodnot, a to zvláště s osvobozením se od tehdejších společenských pravidel (a dokonce i zákonů) zakazujících homosexuální vztahy. Podle mnoha kritiků, včetně Nilse Claussa, je dokonce ústředním motivem Dorianova „živelného vývoje“ uvědomění si jeho (Dorianovy) vlastní homosexuality.

Téma osvobození se od společenských pravidel a zákonů namířených proti homosexualitě, ve spojení s tematikou degenerace, je relativně časté v dekadentních románech té doby, které jsou obvykle řazeny do literárního směru- Renaissance gotické literatury. Na

tomto místě by měl zaznít název Stevensonovy knihy *Podivný případ Dr. Jekylla a pana Hyde*, jako jednoho z nejvýznamnějších děl daného literárního směru.

V *Melmothovi* jsou výše zmíněné homosexuální prvky obsaženy zejména ve „Španělově příběhu“. Patrick Holland v této souvislosti upozorňuje především na velmi intimní (skryté homosexuální) vztah Alonza k jeho bratru Juanovi nebo na fetišizaci postavy Sv. Šebestiána („oblíbený svatý mezi homosexuály“), representovanou krvavým umučením mladého mnicha.

Obraz Doriana Graye je homosexuální tematikou zcela naplněn. Kromě ústředního tématu výše zmíněného „živelného vývoje“ (self-development), spočívající zejména v uvědomění si a (realizaci) vlastní (Dorianovy) homosexuality, jsou zde i další zjevné homosexuální prvky. Jedná se například o vztah Basila nebo Lorda Henryho k Dorianovi nebo výjimečnou (sexuální) moc Doriana nad mnoha mladými muži, jak zdůrazňuje Nils Clausson.

Dalším důležitým gotickým prvkem, spojujícím obě díla, je atmosféra tajemna, mystiky a hrůzy. Konkrétně, ústředním mystickým prvkem je postava muže a jeho magického portrétu, který buď přislíbil nebo přímo zaprodal svou duši Dáblu, buď za prodloužený život spolu s nadpřirozenými schopnostmi (Melmoth), nebo za prodloužené mládí a zachování fyzické krásy (Dorian).

V Maturinově *Melmothovi* se jedná o Faustovský motiv muže, který zaprodal svou duši Dáblu za něco, co není jinak lidské bytosti Bohem přirozeně dáno. Poté se ho Bůh zřekne, což je reprezentováno obvykle propadnutím duše onoho muže Dáblu nebo peklu. Maturin nicméně obohatil tento klasický Faustovský archetyp o nový prvek, a to o možnost přenositelnosti tohoto břemene na jinou lidskou bytost.

Wilde rovněž použil Faustovský archetyp, ovšem jenom částečně, jak tato práce prokázala. Dorian sice také obdržel něco, co není Bohem přirozeně dáno lidské bytosti, ovšem v kontextu Wildova dekadentního románu, Dorianova duše nepropadá peklu. Musí se pouze naplnit princip nadřazenosti umění reálnému životu, proti kterému se Dorian svým přáním/slibem vzepřel. Wilde důmyslně pracuje s částečně Faustovským archetypem a rovněž portrétem „prokletého muže“ při vyjádření konfliktu dvou ústředních témat jeho dekadentního románu, kterými jsou „živelný vývoj“ (self-development) a degenerace.

Zatímco Dorian ve svém životě uplatňuje princip „živelného vývoje“ (self-development) spojený s ignorováním jakýchkoli morálních a mravních zásad, jeho portrét zobrazuje jak vizuálně, tak i svou rostoucí tíhou, Dorianův morální úpadek, degeneraci a hříchy.

Na tomto místě je důležité zmínit, že Melmothův portrét a obraz Doriana Graye mají některé společné charakteristiky. Oba mají nadpřirozený charakter, oba jsou svým způsobem živé a oba jsou ukryté. Zatímco Melmothův portrét je relativně statický, Wilde obohatil Dorianův obraz o další rozměr – Dorianův portrét, jak bylo uvedeno výše, přebírá břemeno Dorianova stárnutí, ale zejména jeho hříchy a morální úpadek a degeneraci.

Závěrečná scéna, znázorňující Dorianovu smrt, je tak naplněním principů, které Wilde hlásal. Probodnutím portrétu Dorian zabije svou skutečnou duši, jeho hříchy dopadnou na jeho tělo a obraz (umění) je opět krásný. Naplňuje se tak princip nadřazenosti umění nad reálným životem a zároveň princip, který Wilde rovněž hlásal: Zlo lze objevovat i oslavovat v umění, aniž by tím utrpěla krása umění, nikoliv v reálném životě.

Atmosféra tajemna a nadpřirozena je tedy v obou dílech explicitně representována pouze ústředními postavami a jejich portréty. Atmosféra hrůzy je zastoupena v mnohem větší míře.

V *Melmothovi* hrůza pramení zejména z brilantních popisů prožitků lidí, kteří se ocitli v extrémně zoufalých situacích. Popis jejich utrpení vytváří atmosféru hrůzy hlavně díky Maturinově výjimečné fantazii a psychologickému vhledu do pocitů těchto trpících lidských bytostí.

Wilde pracuje s prvkem hrůzy jako s uměleckým nástrojem, který mu umožňuje zdůraznit hloubku Dorianovy degenerace. Nejvýznamnějším příkladem tohoto „postupu“ je bestiální

způsob, jakým Dorian zavraždil Basila, a jak poté nakládal s jeho tělem. (Obojí asociuje svou hrůzností a provedením vraždy Jacka Rozparovače.)

Posledním gotickým prvkem, společným oběma dílům, je postava zranitelné, zvědavé hrdinky, v Melmothovi představovaná Imálí. Wilde tento prvek, podle Claussona, transformoval do postavy Doriana, ve chvíli, kdy byl (Dorian) ještě nevinný a světem neposkvrněný.

Jak již bylo zmíněno, Maturin kritizuje společnost, především některé její instituce (katolická církev), za potlačování přirozených lidských tužeb, což vede k výše zmíněným následkům. Toto je další důležitá spojitost mezi oběma díly. Stejně tak Wilde kritizuje společnost za potlačování přirozených potřeb a tužeb. Wildův postoj výstižně ilustruje následující epigram vyřčený ústy Lorda Henryho: „Hrůza ze společnosti, což je základ mravnosti, a hrůza z Boha, což je tajemství náboženství, - to dvojí nás ovládá.“

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