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THE GAME OF SEDUCTION IN OSCAR WILDE'S *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*: BEAUTY, UGLINESS, AND EVIL IN ART

Tesis sometida a la consideración de la Comisión del Programa de Estudios de Posgrado en Literatura para optar al grado y título de Maestría Académica en Literatura Inglesa

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....ii

Agradecimientos /Acknowledgements.....iii

Approval Page.....vi

Table of Contents.....vii

Resumen.....x

Abstract.....xi

Introduction: Justification of the Project and the Meaning of "Aesthetics".....1

A. Research Topic: Seduction in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.....1

B. The Scope of Research and Details of the Topic.....-3

C. Research Objectives.....8

D. Project's Feasibility and Methodology.....9

Chapter I: Literary Review.....11

A. Oscar Wilde: His Life, Work, Intertexts, and Literary Criticism on his Production.....11

B. Predecessors: Literary Artistic Movements that Influenced *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.....15

1. Of Ghosts and Dreams: Romantic Origins and Romantic Literature.....15

2. The Victorian Age: A Time for the Literary "Freaks".....22

3. Is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* an Aesthetic or Anti-aesthetic Novel?.....28

4. The Shades of Decadence in the *Fin de Siècle's* Literature.....40

C. Literary Criticism on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.....51

1. On Seduction in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.....51

2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: An Ugly Story to Enjoy through the Looking Glass.....58

3. The Mirror-Painting Function in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.....63

4. The Sympathetic Sublime: A Taste for Cruelty.....67

Chapter II: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.....72

A. Seduction in the Ekphrastic Novel: Words that Excite the Psyche.....72

B. Pleasure—the Sympathetic Sublime and its Taste for Ugliness.....78

1. The Role of the Unconscious in the Sublime Effect of Texts.....94

2. The Sublime in the Ugly: The Seduction of Ugliness.....98

a. The Erotic in the Evil and the Seduction of the Sublime.....109

b. The Erotic Charm.....120

c. The Monster in the Painting: The Double, the Seductive Game, and the Erotic Object. Creation of the Double as an Uncanny Object.....130

d. The Mirror-Painting: The Lacanian Scopic Theory and the Mirror Stage.....135

Chapter III: Mirroring Words and Horror in the Painting.....150

A. *Manifesto* in the Mirror without Interpretation: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s Preface 150

B. Painting a Story through Words: The Ekphrastic Novel in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 152

C. Horror in the Mirror of the Ekphrastic Novel: The Double Hidden in the Painting.....166

Chapter IV: The Disturbing Secret in the Painting-Mirror.....182

Conclusions.....211

Works Cited 216

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación pretende demostrar que *El retrato de Dorian Gray* genera un poderoso efecto "seductor" en el lector como respuesta a distintos elementos de la obra "Victoriana Decadente", junto con el intertexto romántico y gótico de Oscar Wilde y la literatura inglesa de finales del siglo XIX. Como primer factor de seducción la historia utiliza la transposición del arte expuesta en la novela ecfrástica con imágenes "poderosamente atrayentes" para el lector, en su imaginación. Además, el uso de la figura dual del cuadro, en este caso un retrato, desde un punto de vista escópico crea, define y fragmenta los roles de los personajes en relaciones dobles: Lord Henry/Dorian, Basil Halward/Dorian y el retrato/Dorian Gray. Sumado a ello, el intertexto romántico de Oscar Wilde y su trama enigmática ocultan y revelan, a la vez, el secreto que seduce a los protagonistas y el lector (este último en función de testigo también) quienes quedan atrapados en el juego seductor del secreto expuesto en la obra viendo cómo las figuras de la historia se debaten entre el bien y el mal que se convierte en el eje central de la novela.

Palabras claves: Seducción, bien, mal, enigma, imagen, écfrasis, psicoanálisis, escópico, belleza.

Abstract

This research project demonstrates that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can produce a powerful seductive effect on the reader as a response towards specific elements of "Decadent Victorian literature," the intertext of the Romantic and Gothic tradition in Oscar Wilde's writing, and the *fin de siècle* British literature of XIX. The first element of seduction shown in the story is the transposition of art as exposed by the *ekphrastic* novel with "powerfully charming" images for the reader's (imagination). In addition, the use of the "painting" as a dual figure (in this case a picture) seen from a scopic point of view creates, defines, and fragmentizes the roles of the characters involved in double relationships: Lord Henry/Dorian, Basil Halward/Dorian, and the picture/Dorian Gray. Next, the Romantic Movement in Oscar Wilde's writing hides and reveals at the same time the enigmatic plot that seduces characters, and the reader becomes a "silent" witness, observing how the characters in the novel struggle between good and evil contrasted with beauty and ugliness as the theme of the novel.

Key words: Seduction, good, evil, enigma, image, ekphrasis, psychoanalysis, scopic, beauty.

Introduction: Justification of the Project and the Meaning of Aesthetics

"As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skillfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there."

-Oscar Wilde

A. Research Topic: Seduction in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The previous quote from one of the opening scenes in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* represents the essence of this research: seduction,[1] pleasure, and art.[2] Thus, my thesis project based on a "cause-effect" relationship between the artist and the observer of the art, in this case, the reader of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The above example neither explains what the painting is about nor describes it, leaving the reader without any satisfying explanation for why the painter is so pleased with his/her creation. The narrator simply shows how gratifying the portrait seems to be for the painter, and how the sensation experienced by the artist remains with him/her. The function of the reader is to decode the message given in the narrative process through words.

A possible interpretation is that the painter is fascinated with his/her own work. The painter's smile mirrors two outcomes in the artist contemplating his art. The first effect

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[1] Seduction is a group of actions that allow subjects experience an intense feeling of attraction towards something.

[2] The generally accepted concept of "art" has been related with graphic arts such as painting, sculpture, and craving or different musical genre instead of literature. However, for the project's purpose, literature will be included as part of the general concept of "art" since all creative products are examples of art, and through descriptive/narrative scenes and plots literature can represent all the previously mentioned types of art in the reader's imagination.

is the satisfaction produced by pride. Creating the painting is mastering art. The result is comparable to the exercise of power that feeds the artist's "ego." Those who exercise power find delight doing it and enjoy their power. The artist who creates employs his/her power of creation as well. This demarks the difference between those who "can" and those who "cannot." If an artist cannot create, he/she is not an artist. Therefore, the action of creating and its gratification is essential in any kind of artistic production.

The second effect in Oscar Wilde's quote is the satisfaction perceived by the painter through the piece of art made. The artist is pleased with his/her work since he/she finds the painting's topic, shape, texture, and color gratifying. He finds it "likeable" and believes that it meets the standards he/she expects from art. The painter likes what he/she has created and considers it "art." Both actions produce an enjoyable sensation in the portraitist, and thus, in the reader. Therefore, the painter is seduced by his/her own design, and so, the novel seduces the reader.

My project focuses upon the ways in which *The Picture of Dorian Gray* "seduces" readers. It is important to clarify that the proposal does not deal with the fact of "deciding" what to read. The intention of the plan goes deeper and analyzes the reader's unconscious and spontaneous action of "liking" and "sympathizing" with the story. In summary, reading a book or not is a personal decision, but getting immersed in a novel's plot is a product of seduction between the story and whoever reads it.

The reader, as a spectator, becomes a participant of the artistic experience brought to life by literature and represented in the narrative. The lector can see the scenes as they are happening in that precise moment and can identify with and understand the

characters' reactions. The reader can see the painter contemplating his/her painting from the opening scene with a smile on his/her mouth, and can come up with explanations of why the painter is so pleased with his/her creation. Therefore, why is the painter fascinated with his/her art? Why can a reader be seduced by *The Picture of Dorian Gray?*

B. The Scope of Research and Details of the Topic

This is a descriptive research about the techniques of "seduction" the novel exposes, and the examples of "anti-aesthetic intertext and intratext"[3] in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* My thesis project demonstrates how literature acts as a code to be deciphered by readers. Thus, literature is an invitation to readers who find satisfaction in the decoding process of reading. This thesis also explores how art combines sensorial channels that make readers interpret and react towards the message without making a difference between pictorial art and literature. Therefore, words turn out to be "the channel" that becomes visual and literary at the same time as they can "seduce" readers through images that stimulate their imaginations and invite them to decipher what is within the pages of a book. When the reader accepts such an invitation, he/she does it without knowing the content of the literary work. The reader does it because of the gratifying effect literature has on him/her. The reader falls into the seductive "web" of literature as

[3] Inter/Intratextuality is a literary approach developed initially by Julia Kristeva during the 1960s in which she explains that literary texts interact with some others texts during the creation of the literary piece as part of the influences authors receive from previous works, and when those texts are part of the literary piece—so they are within the same text—they form the intratextuality of the text. (Notes of the course *Literature and Cinema*, UCR. 2010)

if the book were a spider and the reader were its prey. Let us see how seduction acts when a reader first finds a book.

Once a reader has decided to look for a book in a bookstore, he or she might find a great number of possible texts to read, so why to choose the *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (or any other particular book)? The decision is based on a series of paratexts that work together to make the reader feel "attracted" to the book and convince him/her to read it such as the cover, the image in the cover, and the brief description in the back of the book. At this stage, the reader immerses him/herself in a decision-making process, that is, whether or not to read *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This is a relatively "logical" process, and discarding a book that lacks the "tempting" invitation of seduction to the reader is a largely emotionless act. However, if the reader "feels tempted" by the book, seduction appears as he/she can identify some aspects in the story that call his/her attention. Thus, the reader begins a dialogue with the story, and consequently, a communicative process is initiated between the reader and a book. The reader has now to decipher what the narrative within the pages of the book signifies.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the reader finds a story based on the search for beauty, and is introduced to a handsome man who does not want to age and desires that his painting ages instead of him. Through a devil's bargain, his wish comes true, and so the portrait ages while he remains young and beautiful. Meanwhile, his heart and behavior turn him into a criminal who finally dies by his own hand while the picture "lives." What makes a story like this "seductive" for any reader? The answer lies in the

topic that will be developed: good versus evil represented by beauty and ugliness[4]–a universal dichotomy that has attracted cultures for centuries.

In addition, the novel is a complex social criticism of Victorian society and human nature, developing topics such as the oppression of peoples, aristocracy versus the masses, and sexual preference as an intertext (due to its author's own sexual preference). Thus, a novel like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* might attract readers interested in these topics. Nevertheless, its main theme remains as the universal dichotomy of good versus evil, mixed with a deep social criticism. The binary oppositions of ugliness/beauty and good/evil in literature are directly linked to the definition of the aesthetic experience[5] in literary works. The search for beauty has been a constant issue of artistic and cultural concern, and may attract readers[6] who are unconsciously interested in aesthetic matters. Consequently, art uses archetypal models of beauty and ugliness in its different

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[4] From here on the concept of "the ugly" will refer to two kinds of ugliness: physical and moral. Therefore, the "ugly" will be a synonym for the horrible, the frightening, the uncanny, the horrifying, the terrifying, the disgusting, the absurd, the strange, the marvelous, the repulsive, the cruel, the vulgar, the insensible, the evil, the negative, the unattractive, the grotesque, and the damned, among others.

[5] A pleasurable sensation caused by art in the spectator regardless its origin.

[6] From now on, I will use the terms "reader" and "subject" combining two different kinds of subjects (one from the psychoanalytical point of view—the "subject" according to Freudian and Lacanian discourse, and a secondary one from the literary point of view as a "reader" using the idea of Umberto Eco's "conceited reader" exposed in "The Theory of Signs and the role of the Reader." According to Eco, since the 1970s, semiotics has evolved in three stages, from which the third stage shifted to pragmatics, which emphasizes the relevance of context in the understanding of texts; where "the newest problematic is not the generation of texts but their reading" (37). The reader's response becomes a strategy for text interpretation giving meaning to the text and a role to the reader. For Eco, isolated "signs" (words) might differ in meaning, whereas when they are within a text, when sings acquire "a new meaning" (The theory of Signs, 37) since "texts are the loci where sense is produced" (38). Eco also differentiates and defines the interpretation of "words" from "images" stating "there is a difference between a *word*, which conveys meaning, an *image*, which represents an object" (39). Therefore, the text not only provides a meaning interpreted by the reader, but also provides an objectification of images also decoded by the reader. Eco asserts that "signs" create a "hypothesis" derived from the text in the reader (who is able to decode the text) and Eco calls this process the *abduction* of texts, which is separated from the joy of the text. Eco insists that texts allow readers have an active participation during the reading process, "the very nature of signs postulates an active role on the part of the interpreter" (45), and he affirms that a reader creates a text by reading it.

expressions. Part of this thesis project deals with the classification of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* within the aesthetic movements.

Likewise, the novel is, of course, a piece of fiction and can also be classified within the genres and conventions of the literary world. Particularly, I am interested in identifying the elements from literary discourse that are predominant in creating the novel's seductive effect. To engage with this analysis, the literary critic must ask a set of questions such as: What literary tendencies predisposed Oscar Wilde's writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray?* Why can a reader be fascinated or repulsed by a novel like Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray?* Is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* an example of beauty and/or ugliness in literature?

At least three literary tendencies influenced Oscar Wilde's writing in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* since he uses a series of elements from the Gothic[7] and the Romantic[8] literary genres, joined with the artistic movement of Decadence from the end of the 1800s. The Byronic Hero with a germ of cruelty and sagacity is the first element characterized in the Victorian Dandy.[9] The Dandy is a classical character from the Victorian era[10] who is the heir of the vampire tradition of Gothic and Romantic literature. Vampires belong to the world of the "undead," making them a great example of a "contradiction" since, in spite of their "eternal life," vampires are dead. They are

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[7] Gothic novels refer mainly to a subgenre of the literary genre called "Romance" either American or British. See Eigner, *The Methaphysical Novel* 3-5.

[8] The Romantic Movement is the heir of the tradition based on fiction. It is first known as "Romance" and later becomes into "Romanticism." Their characteristics will be developed in the following chapter.

[9] The dandy represents the aristocratic European men of the 1800s whose behavior resembled the acts of handsome gentlemen, but the dandies enjoy mundane pleasures. His image is a social mockery towards aristocracy. The figure of the dandy will be developed in further chapters.

[10] The Victorian era refers to the time of Queen Victoria's reign in England (1837-1901). This era will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter.

trapped between two worlds and two conditions, death and life, so they embody the essence of the double. Vampires are also seducers. Their erotic power and their charm seduce their victims to later feed from them and even kill them; which transforms vampires into the ultimate criminals. Furthermore, the Dandy works as a vampire figure with a bit of Byronic hero. The Dandy can be considered even an antihero. The Dandy seduces with his good looks and "honeyed" words, criticizes society strongly, which provokes people's admiration towards him, enjoys all pleasures of life like vampires do, and exercises power upon whoever sees him in much the same way as a vampire – with his voice and glance. Dandies might not commit crimes, but they are "intellectual" criminals. They command and convince others to execute their orders on their behalf. In spite of all those "negative" aspects, many readers feel attracted by the dandies and enjoy stories about the "faked gentlemen" and the "undead," despite the fact that vampires and Dandies often transgress the limits of what the canon has generally defined as morally appropriate.

A second element from the Gothic and Romantic tradition that the story draws from is imagery. That "illusion" of movement, feelings, smells, and textures represented in the description of settings make readers imagine and project themselves in the text. The reader might be able to feel, touch, see, smell, and hear what the writer describes through the identification with the characters and narrators, and the activation of sensorial interpreting processes, as if the reader's imagination were able to "decode" the sensation characters feel and narrators describe in novels. Therefore, the reader can live a sensorial experience sometimes so intense that the setting becomes fascinating,

seductive, and almost hypnotic for him/her. The sensorial experience mostly emphasizes two senses: the sight and hearing of the reader. Thus, the story explores two important senses that can be analyzed/interpreted from a psychoanalytical point of view in the novel—the gaze and the voice.

A third element of Wilde's prose that is directly inherited from the Gothic and the Romantic in the Victorian Decadent tradition is "the fantastic" which allows readers to experience a sense of "freedom" and "relief" from the social oppression and decency rules imposed on them. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is one of many novels that conceded British society to rebel against and free themselves from the strict social and ethical codes of the time by disguising their "resistance" in imaginary characters who represented various forms of evilness. It is in the despicable behaviors denoted in the novel that the reader finds delight. From Victorian to modern readers, all can enjoy the seduction of the depravity that the novel camouflaged. Through its "anti-aesthetics," *The Picture of Dorian Gray* seduces readers who are charmed by an *ekphrastic* text, trapped into a web of "double" secrets, and eroticized by its sublime cruelty.

C. Research Objectives

In order to determine how *The Picture of Dorian Gray* seduces readers, I will analyze the following objectives:

General Objective

Demonstrate that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has a powerful seductive result on the reader through the novel's anti-aesthetics.

Specific Objectives

1. Show how the *ekphrastic* novel uses *imagery* and other sensorial descriptions to create a *transposition of art* effect whereby the readers become characters within the story.
2. Examine the mirroring effect of *ekphrasis* through the "scopic drive" technique hidden in the double fragmented-subject of the portrait and the model Dorian Gray.
3. Describe how the three main male characters (Basil Howard, Lord Henry, and Dorian Gray) interact in secret and seductive double relationships by engaging with the portrait in a seductive-erotic game.[11]
4. Explain how the secrets hidden among these characters eventually come to be known to the reader of the novel through his/her decoding process, making the reader become a "silent witness" of the horrible secret.
5. Prove that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* uses the *sympathetic sublime* effect to charm the reader according to the uncanny content of the novel (the struggle between beauty and ugliness)

D. Project's Feasibility and Methodology

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a well-known novel, and it has been previously analyzed from different angles. Consequently, there is extensive bibliography that can be consulted about it. The thesis project will be based on the study of primary research

[11] The concept of "the game" is explored in Jean Baudrillard's theory in his work *Seduction*. For Baudrillard, the *jouissance* of the game is one of the elements of seduction when the exchange of power between the seducer and the seducee takes place. The participants stay in seduction as they find "delight" in the game. This concept will be developed later in Chapter II.

resources (the novel by Oscar Wilde and his life), and secondary resources (prior studies on the novel written by several scholars and analysis on the theories applied in the novel by different theoreticians). In the following chapters, I will explore the historical background of Wilde's writing and his prose, and I will discuss the aesthetic, literary, and psychoanalytical aspects that create *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Chapter I: Literary Review

A. Oscar Wilde: His Life, Work, Hipertexts, and Literary Criticism on his Production

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born on October 16, 1854 in Dublin, Ireland, the son of Sir William Wilde, an eye and ear specialist physician, and Jane Francesca Elgee, an Irish poet. Wilde's passion for writing started in high school and continued in college. According to James Laver in *Oscar Wilde*, Wilde was an outstanding student of the classics at Trinity College where he won a medal in Greek studies and distinguished himself as an exceptional scholar. The Greek intertext can be seen in most of the author's works. Wilde was also acquainted with the writings of Spinoza, Goethe, Hegel, Darwin, Huxley, Emerson, and Baudelaire, among others. Therefore, according to Laver, Wilde was considered a cultured young man since high school.

During 1881 and 1893, Wilde traveled to America and lectured at different schools about aesthetics. He gave talks on "The Decorative Arts" and "The House Beautiful" in 1882 with great success. He quickly became a significant character in literary and social circles and his work is now well-known all over the world. Some examples of his production include poems and ballads such as: A collection of "Poems" (1881), *Poems* (1884), and *The Ballad of Reading Goal,* published under the name of Sebastian Melmoth, in France (1898). Oscar Wilde's literary productions also include plays such as *Vera and the Nihilists* (1882), *The Duchess of Padua* (1883), *Salomé,* (written in French in 1891), *The House of Pomegranates* (1892), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892),

A Woman of no Importance (1893), *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895), and *An Ideal Husband* (1895).

Wilde's short stories are also well known and acclaimed since some of them were also popularized on TV during the 1980s. "The Selfish Giant" and "The Nightingale and the Rose," taken directly from *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), were adapted as Saturday morning children's TV programs full of fantasy, symbolism, and hopeful messages of happiness, beauty, and spirituality.

Wilde also explored important topics through his essays and other writings, such as the concept of beauty in art, and the role of men and women in society. These works include "The Decay of Lying," a collection of essays published in 1889, "The True Function and Value of Criticism" revised as "The Critic as Artist," papers about literary criticism (1890), "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," a political study (1891), *Intentions* (1891), a masterful collection of manuscript and his last work before dying, and *De Profundis,* a long letter to Lord Alfred Douglas (1897). This research project bases on his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), a work captured between two aesthetic movements, Decadent art and Aestheticism.

In fact, Wilde is one of the early leaders of the "Aesthetic Movement," which precedes the birth of the "Art for Art's sake" belief. Laver affirms that the Decadent Movement is an important literary intertext in Wilde's time. Actually, Laver states that Wilde found his inspiration to write *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the ideals of this movement when reading *À Rebours* by Huysman. This novel was thought to be the "breviary of decadence," and many readers have found similarities between the two texts

regarding their protagonists' roles and plot in general. In *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, Camile Paglia explains that there are two schools of decadence that influenced Oscar Wilde, especially the French "Decadent School," which is one of the best representatives of the Decadent movement in the late 19th century.

The Decadent movement in general establishes principles such as: the appearance of an object created by art, which is androgynous (a sex-repelling characteristic by excellence), the hierarchs, idolaters of the works of art, and victims of demonic nature. This ideology also focuses on Ruskin's social ideals criticizing collective social values in France. Baudelaire and Flaubert led this school. In Oscar Wilde's case, according to Laver, Wilde's *The Happy Prince and other Stories* presents the depravity of the Decadent French Movement but also the ambiguity and sublimity of Decadents' work because the main themes in his tales contain a germ of pessimism and depression. In addition, Laver comments that the Decadents developed metaphysical and moral elements in their writing. Consequently, Wilde's writings establish topics related to profound religious concepts, as the reader can notice in his short stories "The Happy Prince," "The Selfish Giant," and "The Nightingale and the Rose."

Likewise, Oscar Wilde's family plays a significant role in his growth as a writer. Wilde's mother (a writer herself) puts him in touch with a series of Victorian authors—mostly of Romantic tradition—who were relevant for Wilde. For example, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has a similar topic to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, where a portrait is the center of the novel. It is not a coincidence that Wilde chooses to be named

Sebastian Melmoth during the time he spent in France at the end of his life. The symbols of the portrait can also be found in Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin*, and in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Oval Portrait."

In 1883, Wilde married Constance Lloyd. They had a child two years later. The following year his second child Vyvyan was born and Wilde met Robert Ross, to whom Wilde's initiation into homoerotic acts is attributed. His image moved from being considered immoral to criminal because his exhibited homosexual life created controversy in England. His works were censored. For example, Laver recalls that *Salomé* was banned from public performance in London as "indecent" in view of its sexual content and its strong religious criticism.

Although some of his works were prohibited for being "obscene," his supposed homosexuality is the real cause of Oscar Wilde's downfall in England. Wilde became friends with Lord Alfred Douglas whose father (the Marquis of Queensberry) believed they had maintained a homosexual relationship. After Wilde received a letter from the Marquis of Queensberry presuming his homosexuality, Wilde took him to court accusing him of defamation and lost the case.

On May 25, 1895, Wilde was sentenced to two years of hard labor under the Criminal Law Amendment for having performed homosexual acts with young men. Wilde's trial became an open show for the world who enjoyed public humiliation and gossip. The curious issue is that Wilde was not condemned for having a relationship with Alfred Douglas but for having been with male prostitutes. Finally, Wilde was

released from jail in 1897 and went to France where he kept writing under the pseudonym of Sebastian Melmoth. He died at the end of 1900.

B. Predecessors: Literary Artistic Movements that act as Intertexts in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

1. Of Ghosts and Dreams: Romantic Origins and Romantic Literature

Like many Victorian writers, Oscar Wilde was influenced by Romanticism and the Gothic prose from the last decades of the 18th century. The Romantic Movement is the heir of a literary tradition that was initiated with the magic and supernatural short stories of the Middle Ages and the tales from 12th century English literature such as *King Arthur,* the combination of which led to early forms of medieval "romance." Romantic literature is sometimes confused with "Gothic prose," and the division between the two concepts, their characteristics, and their origins have been discussed by authors such as Anne Williams, Edwin M. Eigner, and Leslie Fiedler. Some critics believe that Romanticism predates Gothic prose, other writers think that the word "gothic" comes from the word "romantic," and for still others, the terms "gothic" and "romantic" are interchangeable. For instance, in *Art of Darkness a Poetics of the Gothic,* Anne Williams states that the words "romantic" and "gothic" are "not two, but one" (1). In an apparent contradiction, however, she later comments that: "Gothic's intermittent resurrection as 'romance,' however, raises another set of problems and suggests another story altogether" (3). Williams later states that "early Gothic 'romance' is almost exactly contemporary with the literature we now call 'romantic' (3), suggesting that they are not

actually "one" single kind of literature, but may be "two" kinds of prose existing at the same time, or that, at least, one may be a redefinition of the other.

In any case, dividing literature by labelling it as either "romance" and "gothic" is not appropriate. The word "romance" [according to Dorothy J. Hale in *The Novel. An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*] first appears "as a late response development of Classical Mythology" (100). Its representations started with the oral tradition and developed in tales, short stories, tragedies, ballads, novels, and poetry. The term "romance" appears in the scene previous to the word "gothic," and thus "Gothic" may be considered a sub-genre of "romance." Edwin M. Eigner states in *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America* that "Gothic is only a form of the romance, either the American or the British" (1), adding further weight to the assertion that "Gothic" is simply a "shade" of the variety of romances: metaphysical (including psychological, philosophical, and mystical romance), sentimental, naturalistic, symbolic, and Greek Sophistic romance, among others.

Romance symbolizes a "catharsis" for authors and readers who use their imaginations to escape from the oppression of their lives and so rebel against society. In *The Penguin Book of English Romantic Verse,* David Wright explains that in 1659 the word "romantic" was used to describe a "disassociation of sensibility from which we have never recovered" (14). This disassociation marked the beginning of a new literary genre which separated the real world from which people lived, to the one they escaped to: the "Romantic World." Another form of disassociation that Romantics explored is "diffusion," and Wilde retakes it from Romanticism, demonstrating the capacity to adapt

to literary genres. As Edouard Roditi explains in his analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "The magic formula of Dorian Gray's sinister youth was thus an heirloom in Wilde's family, handed down like some choice recipe from old Maturin, from one of the sources of the Dracula Myth in novels and movies to the *Picture of Dorian Gray*" (49).

Then, in the 18th century, a newer definition of the "romantic" came with the Industrial Revolution, "it was the spiritual and metaphysical implications of the scientific and technological revolution which began in the 17th and 18th centuries, together with the changing view of man's place in the universe that sparked off the Romantic view" (Roditi 14). Works such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley began to represent the impact of science and the Industrial Revolution on humans and society, which marked an important aspect in the development of Romanticism.

One of the emerging cultural tendencies that made romance's rebirth possible was the exaltation of individualism. As Hale puts it, romance "revived in the period that we call romantic as part of the tendency to archaic feudalism and a cult of the hero, or idealized libido" (100). English Romantics used their imaginative worlds to disassociate themselves from their reality of poverty and repression. Characters such as "Dracula" and "Heathcliff" transported readers to imaginary sceneries so that people could forget about their difficult social realities. Gothic romances like *Frankestein* and *Wuthering Heights* also show an extreme exhibition of anxiety and horror in romance, as Martínez González explains in his *Historia crítica del arte*: "the artist seemed to delight us describing in detail, the most horrendous sceneries" (130). Despite the suffering and dismay of Romantic novels, the reader of Romantic literature finds a certain pleasure in

characters such as vampires and witches, in memories of the dead embodied in ghosts, in descriptions of disgusting scenes, and in the fearful sensation of being inside haunted houses.

The topic of "anxiety" is explored in more depth when the use of "the double" appeared in Romantic stories. For instance, Victorian artists use ambiguity (a cause of anxiety) in Romantic tales, which according to Edouard Roditi, in "Fiction as Allegory," usually involve "doubles that resemble anguish" (49). As suggested above, it is possible that doubles appeared and became popular because people needed to escape from the repression generated by Victorian moral standards.

At this point, the analysis discusses how "psychology" blends with Romanticism in Oscar Wilde's prose, which could easily be seen all over Europe during the 1800s. The psychological horror tales of the German composer and writer E.T.A. Hoffmann are among the most popular examples of this literary subdivision of Romanticism. Gustavo Adolfo Becquer's fantastic stories are also recognized as part of this genre. Hoffman, Becquer, and Wilde exposed how human fears and traumas appeared in artistic expressions like the uncanny tale.

Another aspect of Romanticism in literature is the narrative exploration and exaltation of other imaginative arts, such as painting, sculpture, and architecture. Hence, literature adapts many of the pictorial techniques to the reading-writing process. For example, Oscar Wilde, as a writer influenced by Romanticism, combines his Romantic background with his ideology as an aesthete, following the aesthetic principles of *transposition d'art* – projecting a pictorial image into the reader's mind.

Finally, Oscar Wilde creates *The Picture of Dorian Gray* based on the sublime (the extreme feeling of pleasure given by ugliness) since the novel's main theme produces anxiety in the reader, which belongs to the "ugly sensation," so uneasiness is somehow sublime. An example of how distress is represented in Wilde's text is the figure of the "monster," symbolizing the "evil" in human beings. Monsters appear in various forms in literature: vampires, witches, hunchback men, and decapitated horsemen, all of which are related with the depiction of evil and the vulnerability of the human soul to sin.

Is Dorian Gray a "monster?" It was previously said that monsters symbolize human misbehaviors. Dorian is vain, cruel, abusing, and dishonest. Therefore, he is a monster as all his characteristics are human sins. The novel also maintains the idea of the "fantastic" in the "monster." The "double" having been created by the devil's bargain between Dorian and his portrait, blending a character together with an inanimate object and giving the piece magic traits making the painting able to age and become "uglier" strengthens the figure of the "ugly" monster.

However, Dorian and the portrait are neither completely ugly nor beautiful. In literature, monsters do not have to be necessarily monstrous in physical appearance to be called "monsters." As Umberto Eco states in *On Ugliness,* different types of monsters do not identify themselves with the stereotypical image of a monster (ugly), but with one that could resemble monsters in their misbehavior, like villains. Praz, cited by Eco, mentions that a special category of monster inside the ugly is called *the damned hero* which is the evil side of the double.

> The damned hero (often the heir to the Miltonian Devil) that Praz defined as the 'metamorphoses of Satan' continued to feature in painting and literature beyond the Gothic genre, and was present in Romanticism, Realism, and Decadentism. Such characters include Byron's Giaour, and the various villains found in Sue, Balzac, Emily Brontë, Hugo, and Stevenson down to our own day. (Qtd. in Eco: 282)

Therefore, according to Eco and Praz, the damned hero is not truly heroic. He does not rescue damsels in distress or sacrifice himself for the human race. The damned hero is an ambitious, selfish, mean, and cruel being such as Dorian Gray or Lord Henry Wotton. The reader is able to "see" Dorian's cruelty through the imagery exemplified in the picture, and Dorian's sinister double masqueraded in the painting. Consequently, images and imagery play a key role throughout Oscar Wilde's work, allowing emotions to be described emphasizing one of the senses.

In European art, imagery was first related to sculpture and painting, which can be seen in religious murals, sculptural figures in cathedrals, and stained glass windows from the Medieval Ages whose sacred stories instructed the illiterate using fear and awe as their *object d'art.* Like the stained glass windows of cathedrals, literature combines narration with detailed descriptions, allowing the reader to better picture the scene, immersing him/her in the reading process.

The emotions presented in painting or sculpture are also present in the literary narration of fantastic events. This connection of artistic effects fascinates the reader, producing a seductive result that drives the reading process. When an image is masterly

described and narrated, its power is intensified in the reader's psyche, as seen in Romantic writings of unhappiness, which cause two types of anxiety. The first kind of distress is the character's uncertainty and the second is in the reader's own anguish as the product of the reading process.

Likewise, "the illness" is another regular theme in Romantic novels. The more graphic and visceral descriptions of sickness and disease are in stories and paintings, the more attractive they become for the Romantic writer and reader. Apart from being another category of the Romantic Movement, "the ill" is also a part of the grotesque, a subcategory of the ugly in art. "The ill" arises in the descriptions of ravaging plagues and diseases in the cities. Deformed bones and muscles, amputated body parts, bodily fluids, fatigued people, and some other images may be the delight of people and artists, but as Eco mentions: "their ugliness is sublimated when their spiritual or victimized beauty comes out" (302). The ill thus acquire a divine quality similar to the one found in martyrs, as they become religious symbols of purification and sacrifice.

Through the wounds and flagellation of characters, the Romantic writer shows readers the doctrinal value of physical pain and suffering, the spiritual importance of which increases in relation to the intensity of the pain. The ill also represent human emotional pain and sorrow, which diminishes when they come closer to God, whether by accepting or refusing their punishment and destiny, redeeming humanity from their sins. In the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian finds his destiny unbearable and eventually destroys the source of his anxiety. Unfortunately, since he is a double, the source of his misery is himself.

The Romantics saw in art a way to express their repressed feelings, so the Romantic heroes undergo a series of calamities along the stories before they are able to release their agony and suffering. Romantic stories tend to expose the "ugly" part of life through literary strategies such as imagery (the descriptive narrative), the double, monsters, and anxiety, among others. As stated before, Romantics' use of imagination and fantastic plots distinguish their literary production. Romantic art prepares the scene for Decadent artists who emphasize the pessimism and anguish of Romantic ideals. Finally, Victorian writers, such as Oscar Wilde, capture their predecessors' ideas, misunderstood during Queen Victoria's reign. The Victorian Age was a time of revolution with an extended literary production that deserves attention and proper analysis in order to understand and contextualize Oscar Wilde's work accurately.

2. The Victorian Age: A Time for the Literary "Freaks"

The reign of Queen Victoria is a time of contrasts in England. According to Laver, "it is one of the most varied and diverse periods in history of English life and letters" (14). The encyclopedia *England in Literature* characterizes the period from 1837 to 1901 as marked by a rigid code of control in which social appearances are quite important. Religious festivities, as well as holidays such as the Sabbath, are respected. Morality was a key issue during this time, the result of strong religious beliefs. The highly developed Christian cult and the strict social doctrine of the era obliged people to conduct yourself in certain ways. Whenever they behaved badly, they were subjected to public humiliation and social shame.

Firstly, the conservative principles were especially directed to women and children. Some writers of the time, such as Jane Austen—with her depictions of the feminine roles of certain British aristocratic circles in her novels, and Lewis Carroll's non-sensical prose in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass,* criticized behavioral patterns imposed on women (mainly).

England in Literature shows how education was restricted during the Victorian Age mostly to men, while middle class women were limited most of the time to household chores. Only women of higher social classes had access to formal education: "Women were expected to be frail and sheltered creatures, silent, obedient, and decorative, mothers of children equally silent and obedient" (25). The feminist movement that started in the 1870s provoked a deep change in women's dress and behavior, and included the campaigns for equal rights (mainly the right to vote), and the Married Women's Property Act, which gave women the right to own property and keep what they earned. The role of women in Victorian literature is a slight example of social criticism in the 1800s.

The art of Victorian England came to represent the social subjugation of the time, as well as to challenge this repression through social expressions. As mentioned before, women's rights begin to be a leading issue in the Victorian Age. Even though women's acquisition of civil rights marks an important point of transition, the oppression continued on a more individual plane: sexuality. Eugene C. Black, quoted in Miranda Vargas's Master's Thesis *Carnival of Darkness: Seduction and Power in Henry James: The Turn of the Screw,* comments that: "One of several ways in which Victorians dealt

with sex was to pretend it did not exist" (44). Denial, through sexual inhibition and the rejection of physical pleasure, was a simple way for Victorians to react passively towards a controversial topic that challenged the religious and social ideals of the time: sex.

Likewise, education and science evolved during the Victorian Age, with strong interests emerging in taxonomy, biological categories, the human body, and the evolution of species, all derived from the idea of the supremacy of human beings. In *The Monster in the Mirror: Late Victorian Gothic and Anthropology,* Theodora Esther Goss draws a relationship between the Victorian interest in science (particularly Darwin's theory of evolution) and the social repression Victorians suffered. The release of people who reacted to oppression with an exhibitionist behavior created the concept of "freaks" in Victorian society. The reader can interpret the word "freak" to include any alterations to the social standards of "normal" human beings in physical and emotional terms, and which are represented in "the monsters" of literature, discussed previously. In addition, for Goss, the concept of the supremacy of the human being is shown through the complex characters developed in art and literature and who belong to a multifaceted anthropological pattern. Goss states that:

> Victorian anthropology sought to systematize the sort of cultural information contained in the Great Exhibition, providing a comprehensive overview of human development from savage to civilized. Its language was often incorporated into freak shows to advertise the primitive, atavistic character of the performers, who were presented as biological and cultural throwbacks. In

> the second half of nineteenth century anthropology became the primary discipline that defined what it meant to be human and an important focus of both scientific and popular debate particularly because of its basis in Darwinian evolutionary theory. The second of these tendencies was to resist and challenge categorization. (7)

This classification refers to the relative level of "humanity" within the individual, giving monsters the quality of "freaks." Of course, the socially-acceptable traits of humans are shown in the "normal" human beings who are presented as superior to the "freaks." However, the freaks, with their "imaginary" illnesses and monstrosity, are the characters in which people found a release, and through which the Victorian "reality" of oppression could be cleansed and transformed into imaginative fantastic worlds of escape. Reed, cited in Miranda Vargas's thesis, affirms that:

> Victorian [fictional] characters would sin, usually due to their "unruly" emotions or some sort of intellectual pride that made them break the rules and reject the teachings of morality. Then they were redeemed by the power of some cleansing pain, either physical disease or acute spiritual suffering, but more often a combination of the two. (48)

The cleaning effect Reed describes possibly derives from the sublime consequence of Victorian literature inherited from its Romantic ancestors and the Gothic literature revival during the Victorian Age. The sublime (which Kant maintained was produced by people's anxiety) has a final "pleasant" sensation in the reader despite its uncomfortable origin. The reaction of sorrow does not belong to a "satisfying" feeling, however, the

reverted outcome of the intense suffering evolves into a so-called "enjoyable" perception for the reader who "appreciates" and finds "delight" in anguish generated by social oppression.

The purifying sensation experienced by 1800s' people results in the Victorian rebellion against that strict morality, the oppression of the time, and the rejection of labelling. The double standards in decency are shown in many ways. The behavior that some characters developed in stories from the Victorian age exemplify the masculine roles of power during this time, but also show the "hidden" practices that male figures of respect had. As stated by Johns, Myrtle, et al in *England in Literature*: "the model male could and often did rule his household with an iron will, but gambling, swearing, intemperance, and sometimes even smoking were enough to remove him from the ranks of the respectable" (27). Taking the authors' words literally, any glimpse of "mundane" conduct in the Victorian men would be considered "abnormal" and would damn them as "freaks."

In fact, the "freak" is now the "monster" in Victorian literature. The revival of Gothic and Romantic tradition in literature became an "anthropological paradigm," which grew stronger in the last decades of the 1800s, moving towards the beginning of the 1900s. "This paradigm developed in the 1860s and 70s, and endured in the 1920s" (Goss 8). For Goss, the anthropological pattern classifies human beings as superior to animals, and the "civilized" superior to the "savage," due to the intertext of the theory of evolution during the Victorian age. However, Goss explains that the Gothic revival feeds from the pattern and challenges the paradigm itself: "Late nineteenth-century Gothic

fiction challenged the anthropological pattern by introducing the monster" (9), which is both brutal and sophisticated at the same time. For Goss:

> By challenging the hierarchical categorization of the anthropological pattern, late nineteenth-century Gothic fiction also posed a fundamental challenge to its optimistic progressionism. It implied that English men and women were not as different from the animal or savage as they believed, and evolution itself is not always upward. (10)

The anthropological paradigm of the superiority of the human race is thus reverted in the figure of "the monster," since it as a product of human resemblance and shows both sides of human beings: evil and good. Therefore, the revitalization of the Gothic tale in the late Victorian literature also marks the revival of the Goths.[12]

Furthermore, the recovery of the Gothic tale in English literature brings back an emphasis on "secrecy" and "mystery" (both elements of Gothicism), causing a feeling of anxiety[13] in the reader who finds delight in suspense stories. Moving away from mystery and suspense in Gothic tradition, Victorian Realism and Naturalism depicted a more "real" and "grotesque" disgust in society.

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[12] These were Germanic tribes from the 3rd to the 6th centuries and they were called "Goths" due to their savage behavior. The term "Goth" involves the pejorative connotation of "the barbaric as opposed to the civilized". See Goss, *The Monster in the Mirror* 13.

[13] The feeling of anxiety from the Victorian time derives from the type of "anxiety of influence." According to Harold Bloom's theory on poetry, poets are inspired to write by reading some other poets and their work derives from existing poetry. For Bloom, "one poet helps to form another," meaning that authors take former authors as model roles. Bloom's theory explains why two different authors that belong to separated eras might "share" similarities in their art and content in what he calls "intra-poetic relationships" as his theory focuses on poetry. See the whole work of Harold Bloom *The Anxiety of Influence A theory on Poetry.*

Realism and Naturalism emphasized a general social "discontent" in Victorians mainly in lower and middle social classes trying to recreate the "genuine" way in which people lived in and felt at that time. Hence, images of cruelty, poverty, illness, people's desperation, and misery are common themes in Victorian literature. The "decadence" of this era will influence a great number of *fin de siècle* artists like Oscar Wilde, not only in England but in the whole European continent, which will give birth to the Decadent art nurtured by its predecessor, the moral novels. Morality is a subjective social construction, which determines the aesthetic view of an era. Therefore, the concept of aesthetics has to be defined.

3. Is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* an Aesthetic or Anti-aesthetic Novel?

The myth of Narcissus portrays the most handsome man in the world trapped by his own perfect representation in the water. The myth originated in the times of old Greece and Rome, and centuries later another "Narcissus" appears in Victorian narrative that mirrors his fascinating image in a painting: Dorian Gray. The two characters present remarkable differences, though. Narcissus has a "good" nature while Dorian Gray evolves into an evil man. The story transforms Dorian into a non-traditional villain, a damned hero perhaps. Villains are usually ugly inside and outside, portraying the vices of the world, as opposed to heroes and heroines' usual physical beauty and goodness, which are requirements of their heroic condition. If heroes and heroines had not been beautiful, they would not have been taken as "real heroes." Thus, one of the traditional

topics portrayed in literature is the dichotomy of good and evil related to beauty and ugliness in its characters.

Moreover, the conventional roles given to heroes and villains are social products of aesthetic canons and thus the reactions they produce in readers are based on social prejudice. Nevertheless, beauty and ugliness are aspects of personal interpretation and thus are subjective. What someone may consider beautiful, someone else may see it as ugly. Hence, both concepts (beauty and ugliness) develop from and according to a subjective aesthetic judgment driven by emotions and needs to be joined and blended with broader social standards.

The concept of aesthetics is a challenge to define for any art critic, as it has undergone a series of tones and shapes throughout history, while the term keeps adapting to changing social needs and constructions. In order to give a definition of the word "aesthetics" from an "artistic" point of view, it is necessary to explain the relationship between three key concepts: the nature of art, the interpretation of artworks, and personal taste. These three concepts have been developed at different points in the history of aesthetics. This study will focus on the beginning of aesthetics with the Greeks up to the early 1800s aesthetic movement.

In the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the nature of the novel (the nature of art) has been categorized as a dichotomy of good versus evil represented in an aesthetic/anti-aesthetic discourse, a social criticism, a mystery tale, and even a gender based novel. Therefore, its "nature" might depend on what the implied/conceited reader[14] prefers to

[14] Refer to footnote #6 page 5.

emphasize; this enhances the reader's interpretation of art, and his/her subjective taste roles in the reading process as part of an aesthetic/anti-aesthetic, seductive reaction. This is comparable to Rene Girard's concept of "passion and aesthetic happiness" as cited in Dorothy Hale in *The Novel Anthology of Criticism and Theory,* asserting an action-reaction element similar to the "seduction-pleasure" dynamic whose intensity can provoke a "transcendent" reaction in readers.

Hale defines "aesthetic happiness" as "the satisfaction that comes from obtaining true knowledge in the revelation of triangular desire" (290). The triangular desire refers to the dynamics of social relationships according to Rene Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel,* and it is placed in the imagination of the author and the reader. Therefore, aesthetics relates to a pleasurable sensation that knowledge brings to characters and, of course, to readers, up to imaginative transcendence. Hale also explains that the artist experiences aesthetic happiness when:

> The delight of creation is what enables the author to write a novel, for the character to become the author. The happiness felt by the novelist "frees" him from the social world, the world of triangular desire. He ceases to be a participant in this world and becomes instead the creator of the novelist world. His entry into the aesthetic realm enables him to transcend self-satisfaction; he devotes himself to the representation of a hero, another whose connection to himself is not a mendacious subjective projection but is based upon the novelist self-consciousness understanding of the shared plight of the human condition. (290)

Using the concept of "passion and aesthetic happiness" from Girard, the art critic can support previous theories about the painter's reaction at the beginning of the novel when Basil, the painter, contemplates his work of art and smiles at it. Girard explains that the "passion and the aesthetic happiness" is a value and a kind of "delight" for the artist. I call that "delight" "seduction." In fact, readers react similarly to artists. Because of the happiness that art gives, the reader can compare the feeling aesthetics produces with a "delight," so the literary critic has now the argument to support the first element of the literary analysis involved in the aesthetic experience: the nature of literature is to seduce readers.

If aesthetics is concerned with the "delightful" effects of art classified as beautiful, where can all the elements categorized as "ugly" be placed in the artistic interpretation? Do they belong to "aesthetics" or to a different area of art interpretation? "Anti-aesthetics" is a relatively new theory that studies, categorizes, and defines the consequences of art caused by "ugly" elements, which despite its origin, do exercise a seductive and amusing result in the spectator. Both aesthetics and its counterpart seek to understand the emotional responses towards art and the hegemonic canons of a historical time.

Anthony López Get explains in *The Counter Cultural Grotesque in Contemporary Literature, Art, and Other Cultural Productions* that anti-aesthetics is "a variant from the canonical aesthetics that advocates for a more intellectual, not only emotional, response to social and political issues" (48). Thus the anti-aesthetics is a modification of aesthetics that involves serious reasoning based on social aspects, joined with an intense

emotional reaction of the reader. Given that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* presents a social criticism and moral discussion disguised within a thematic exploration of the conflict between beauty and ugliness, can readers categorize the novel as either aesthetic or anti-aesthetic? The novel can be catalogued as "anti-aesthetic," using the definition offered by López. While for some readers, the novel's main topic may seem to relate exclusively to beauty and its rejection of ugliness, for the analytical reader, the novel camouflages a social criticism and a moral debate in Victorian society, allowing Victorians to embrace the dark side of their behavior and to deconstruct their rigid moral codes. In fact, the novel's ending reinforces the existence of evil and good in human nature as a social construction apart from being a simple magical trick used by the narrator in which the ugly old man appears dead while the picture shows a beautiful young boy. Additionally, the novel transcends to a religious-moral level in which redemption appears as the ultimate sacrifice to "free" Victorian sinner's souls.

Since the effect of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* requires a deeper analysis from the reader, and also produces a higher level of seduction in the reader, the novel is thus a seductive anti-aesthetic story. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s complexity of interpretation calls the attention of readers who find delight in amoral topics and thus their personal taste might be related to texts that represent good and evil, the grotesque, or the fantastic. As a consequence, the reader has now to define which example of anti-aesthetics *The Picture of Dorian Gray* belongs to as there are different kinds of anti-aesthetics according to historical time and literary approaches.

The novel belongs to the British literature of the 1800s, when the term anti-aesthetics had not even been considered. (The study of anti-aesthetics belongs to the 1900s.) Therefore, its classification remains in the "aesthetic" or it is classified with a concept that resembles the social awareness López exposes in his theory. A brief historic study of aesthetics is thus necessary.

The aesthetic view of art has evolved throughout time and every historical era and artistic movement contributed to "re-shaping" the meaning of aesthetics. For Milton C Nahm's *Readings in Philosophy of Arts and Aesthetics,* philosophy, aesthetics, and art have changed through time. For instance, Nahm states that, for the ancient Greeks, the meaning of aesthetics was a blurred concept, "but it was also clear that the philosophers expressed at an early period the most diverse and often contrary opinions concerning the nature of art, the character of judgments concerning works of art, and the puzzling problem of what beauty is" (21). Aesthetics is still a "blurred" concept, since subjective interpretation has become an increasingly common way to define aesthetic appreciation.

Aesthetics is first linked to the "shape" of the piece of art and some scientists and experts on areas like mathematics and philosophy have developed their own aesthetic theories relating to their own areas of study. For example, in Greek philosophy and science, Pythagoras related art with numbers with his consideration of *The Aesthetics of Proportion.* Centuries later, during the Medieval Age, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* reinforced Pythagoras' ideas and defined the delight of beauty as a product of symmetry, order, and certainty. The "aesthetic effect" of art for Pythagoras and Aristotle is based on symmetrical, perfectly organized shapes. Nevertheless, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is

not an example of this aesthetics, since it deals with the fight between beauty and ugliness rather than proportion and symmetry. The novel fits more into Heraclitus' conception of art as a exemplification of life, the sensations of which are the most important result art can produce. The philosopher gives a different tone to artistic interpretation since he relates aesthetics with its outcome and not its "shape," an idea that is supported by Plato's ideas on art as an "imitation" of reality—as in the Myth of the Cavern.

The (anti)-aesthetics in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* could also be classified as a kind of "moral (anti)-aesthetics," although, in Plato's time, morality and aesthetics were not yet linked. Centuries later, that kind of "anti-aesthetics" will be related to social thinking, when catharsis appears in tragedy. In fact, the "releasing sensation" found in the *catharsis* of tragedies is the first real encounter of aesthetics and literature. For some authors, like S. H. Butcher, the concept of *catharsis* and its use in art is linked directly to the release of social pressures, a process that ends up purifying the soul. While for some others, like Nahm, Burcher's ideas on the purification of the soul in art are less convincing, as the cathartic process causes a negative effect. For Nham, some tragedies might not reach the point of purifying the spectators' and characters' souls and exalting human qualities as they typically belong to "flaw tragedies," portraying the vices and negative characteristics of human beings instead of their best qualities. Contrary to Nahm, tragedy succeeds exposing the negative and positive aspects of a person, and allows readers to understand the human complexity as a subjective and social construction. Due to this, the seduction of tragedies lies in the clear representation of the

glory of human beings, but also their flaws. Therefore, tragedies are able to seduce readers and spectators despite the miserable and even pessimistic content they portray in their characters and their plots. Tragedy demonstrates that the literary aesthetic experience (the delight in literature) is not only characterized in the shape of art, but also in the message that the piece of art hides, which is similar to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* even though it is not a tragedy. Therefore, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is "comparable" to the anti-aesthetic effect of the tragedy.

Leaving the importance of desiring subjects and social constructions behind, the moral codes in aesthetics raise during the Medieval Age, and God acquires a relevant role in artistic interpretation and the aesthetic experience. The quest for knowledge increases during this time. Monasteries and abbeys became centers of erudition, preserving books as treasures in their libraries and hiding the delight of "the aesthetics of the Middle Age."

A fictional work of literature that centralizes the theme of the preservation of knowledge and the imposition of "God" in art and its importance in artistic production is Umberto Eco 1983's novel *The Name of the Rose (Il nome della rosa),* which is a pioneer book on this topic. His studies on aesthetics represent an important contribution to artistic interpretation and criticism as in *Aesthetics on the Middle Ages*, *On Beauty,* and *On Ugliness*. Eco was one of the recent authors interested in the question of aesthetics through history, and one of the few scholars who explored the aesthetics of the Middle Ages in depth, as well as the modern concept of "anti-aesthetics" with his treaty *On Ugliness*. This concept will be studied later in the following chapters.

By the Middle Ages, the concept of aesthetic interpretation did not rely anymore on the idea of human perfection (the nature of art was to resemble human characteristics for the Greeks) but on a divine conception making it a moral, social-construction. St. Augustine's *The City of God* exemplifies the "seduction" of evil that reinforces "good" as a "mockery" of immorality and sin.

During the Middle Ages, (the nature of) art and its interpretation was based on God—the only creator. St. Augustine comments:

> That the contrary propensities in good and bad angels have arisen, not from a difference in their nature and origin, since God, the good Author and Creator of all essences, created them both, but from a difference in their wills and desires, it is impossible to doubt. While some steadfastly continued in that which was the common good of all, namely, in God Himself, and in His eternity, truth, and love; others, being enamored rather of their own power, as if they could be their own good, lapsed to this private good. Of their own, from that higher and beatific good which was common to all, and, bartering the lofty dignity of eternity for the inflation of pride, the most assured verity for the slyness of vanity, uniting love for factious partisanship, they became proud, deceived, envious. (*The City of God. Book XII*, Chapter 1)

St. Augustine explains that two kinds of "beings" have been created: those that follow God's will and those who are captivated by mundane life (evil). Both are, however, products of God, so both beings belong to his creation. Therefore, the artistic production of the Medieval Age exhibits different kinds of art with human and divine traits: good

and evil which are contradictory positions; however, the two of them co-exist, which is a sub-theme that is hidden in *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* and one of them will prevail.

The "double" personality of Dorian appears from beginning to end, and the reader finds two Dorians: one evil and another one good. The two parts co-exist in Dorian until the fight for domination becomes unbearable for the character, and Dorian decides to get rid of his suffering for once and all. The main character's transgressive journey, for the keen reader, represents a dehumanization process with moral and criminal attitudes only found in evil. Therefore, Dorian becomes the evil "monster" after being the lamb (an innocent and unexperienced boy). Nevertheless, Dorian's evil reverts with his suicide as an act of redemption and, therefore, makes him a "rectified," even "expiated," character for God. This is the reason why the narrator brings the old and ugly Dorian Gray back to the final scene. Dorian's "real" looks can be shown to the world as they are. Now Dorian's "body" is not cursed, but cleaned by his own hand. The protagonist of the novel is given back to the readers in its weakest but most religiously significant "shape" as it is an instrument of God, a moral tale, showing the *antitheses* of evil.

According to Saint Augustine, the existence of both elements (good and evil) is comparable with a figure of speech used mainly in poetry called *antitheses* that exemplifies coexistence between two opposite elements. For Saint Augustine, good and evil both have a purpose to exist. God already anticipated how evil can be used in favor of goodness, reinforcing his magnificence by diminishing the power of evil and fooling the devil as it opposes God: "For God would never have created any, I do not say angel, but even man, whose future wickedness He foreknew, unless He had equally known to

what uses in behalf of the good He could turn him, thus embellishing, the course of the ages, as it were an exquisite poem set off with *antitheses*" (*The City of God, Book XI,* Chapter 18). Therefore, the purpose of both concepts is assuring the existence of the other, so both can be themes of art and both have an aesthetic effect on the reader as they come from the greatest creator—God—and although it seems that evil tries to conquer good, it is through evil that goodness is also strengthened. In the same way, St. Augustine defines antitheses as an "ornamentation of speech," presenting a disguised meaning to be deciphered, which is another element of seduction for the reader: "decoding" the secret. For what are called antitheses are among the most elegant of the ornaments of speech. They might be named in Latin "oppositions," or, to speak more accurately, "contrapositions"; but this word is not in common use among us, though the Latin, and indeed the languages of all nations, avail themselves of the same ornaments of style. (*City of God. Book XI,* Chapter XVIII)

The function of ornamentation is to allow the ideas of good and evil to reveal themselves. Language is the code through which this ornamentation is presented, and literature uses language as a communication beyond that code. Hence, good and evil are portrayed in literary works and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* shows readers human vices, sin, and corruption with a clear anti-aesthetic air since Dorian's dehumanization "delights" readers.

In conclusion, what makes a literary work appealing to people? What makes readers be attracted to any story? Is it its content? Is it the way that the text is written or the ideas presented in its pages? Is the aesthetic concept described by the ancient Greeks the

right idea to follow? Or is it Saint Augustine's argument on the antitheses of art what makes someone like or dislike a novel? All questions are "right" as they belong to aesthetic social constructions and have been accepted by a majority at a certain point in time. The nature of art and the interpretation of art by subjective constructions are part of what aesthetics is about and what makes someone like or dislike a text. Therefore, someone's subjective taste for a text is an independent choice as an individual reaction towards that specific text. Thus the book has a "no se qué" that seduces the reader and at the same time makes the reader feel "anxiety" as a product of the story.

Fray Benito Jerónimo Feijoo reinforces the concept of "aesthetic happiness" as a "delight of knowledge" by the "uncertainty" and "the charm" aesthetic happiness produce:

> In many productions of Nature and even of Art, beyond those perfections subject to their comprehension, *another kind of mysterious beauty which torments their intelligence in proportion as it pleases their taste, which their senses can touch and reason cannot decipher*; so it is that when they wish to explain it, not finding words or concepts that satisfy their idea of it, they let themselves fall, discouraged, into the formless assertion that a certain thing has an *"I Know not what" which pleases, which enchants, which bewitches; and there is no profit in asking them for a clearer revelation of this natural mystery*. (Qtd. in Nham: 336. Emphasis mine)

The *I know not what* "charms" and "satisfies" in spite of the "anguish" it causes on readers. Therefore, the reader finds joy in what displeases him/her, which is a kind of

masochist pleasure. The reader of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* finds ecstasy in "ugliness." Wilde's novel offers to the reader a repelling/fascinating effect, an indefinite charm that fascinates and scares at the same time. Furthermore, the novel is a social representation and thus a moral lesson disguised within indecency. Consequently, the literary critic can reaffirm now the previous answer given to the question made at the beginning of the section: Is the novel aesthetic or anti-aesthetic? *The Picture of Dorian Gray* belongs to the anti-aesthetic moral novels of the late Victorian era seen from a philosophical-aesthetic point of view. In fact, the novel goes beyond morality and touches the darkest sentiments of human beings, leaving space for decadence.

4. The Shades of Decadence in the *Fin de Siècle's* Literature

"Decadence" is the key word that defines the literary features of the late 1800s in Europe. Decadent art emphasizes the sensation of suffering symbolized in art and literature, and as such, Decadents combine two contradictory pleasures: the aesthetic pleasure produced by art—mostly attained to beauty—as well as the delight for the sublime that the piece of art exemplifies and causes, which attains primarily to ugliness. Probably, Decadent art took the imaginative-fantastic traits from the Romantic and the Gothic literature and redeveloped them in light of the Victorian theme of reacting to social repression.

Decadent art is also classified within the *fin de siècle* literature which comprises the intertexts of two centuries, unified into a single era of literature and art. Arthur Symons comments in "The Decadent Movement in Literature" that: "After a fashion it is no

doubt that decadence has all the qualities that mark the end of great periods, the qualities that we find in the Greek, the Latin decadence" (858). Let us say that the literary works during this time compile a series of characteristics of literary movements in vogue before, during, and after the end of the century, so they are examples of "combined" literary genres. For instance, in *Fallen Beauty: Aesthetics and Ethics in Decadent Literature*, Moriam Hampton classifies Decadent art as a literary genre that evolved into Modernism[15]: "the Decadent Movement comes of age during the Victorian *fin de siècle,* which affects the shift to Modernist literature and art" (2). Therefore, Decadence is related, in a certain way, to Modernism. In addition to the comparison of Decadent art with "modernism," critics have classified Decadent art into four "kinds" that are wrongly perceived separately when they are actually "examples" of the same art: *The Tragic Generation, the Decadent Romantic School, Impressionism,* and *Symbolism* (better known as *French Symbolism*).

Symons clarifies how Decadence refined itself in countries along Europe and then expanded to the rest of the world. Therefore, there are "kinds" of this artistic movement represented by regions and authors. "The latest movement in European literature has been called by many names, none of them quite exact or comprehensive—Decadence, Symbolism, Impressionism, for instance" (858). Particularly, a new "kind" of Decadent art appears named after the author. For instance, in Oscar Wilde's work, some authors

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[15] Modernism is a philosophical and artistic movement that, during the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, spread along Europe and North America. It distinguishes by "mixing" a great variety of arts that are born from "new," "paradigm-breaking," and "experimental ideas during this time that revolutionized arts and the way people interpreted it such as Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Imagism, Expressionism, among other artistic approaches.

call it "the Wildean Decadent Gothic," as in Ellen Margaret Crowell's *Aristocratic Drag: The Dandy in Irish and Southern Fiction.* This means that throughout the late Victorian age, every author added his/her own ideas and style to the Decadent art exhibited in his/her work. For the purpose of this project, "Decadent art" mainly refers to the artistic and literary movement in general because there are other authors during the Victorian Age who followed this movement, not only Oscar Wilde.

Romanticism is clearly exposed in Decadent art, despite Symons' denial of its intertext. Symons states that "the most representative literature of the day—the writing which appeals to, which has done so much to the form, the younger generation—is certainly not classic, nor it has any relation with that old antithesis of the Classics, the Romantic" (858). However, decadents do combine elements from Romanticism with ideals from Aestheticism (a movement which emphasizes the principle of beauty and delight in art shown through intense feeling in their creation, especially in poems). Aestheticism promotes the idea of artistic creation without taking into account the "logical" use of art. That is, the artist creates in order to please him/herself. Art does not have any specific function but entertainment, which is the main goal of the branch of Decadent art known as Symbolism or *art for art's sake,* one of whose well-known illustrative authors is Oscar Wilde.

Contrary to the Aesthetes of Symbolism and "anguish" in art, Hampton explains in *Fallen Beauty: Aesthetics and Ethics in Decadent Literature* that Decadent art mixed with the scientific ideology of the time in England and created a kind of art focused on "deterioration" and the collapse of the British society: "As mentioned, the Victorian *fin*

de siècle presents the most prolific period of decadent writing and art, and it is during these years that social scientists develop degeneration theory" (4). The author explains that Decadence in art subdivides into three phases: "Romanticism, literature of *fin de siècle,* and Modernism" (5).

In opposition to the idea of Decadence as "deterioration" and its subdivision into distinct categories, Symons finds common traits in different kinds of Decadent art: "an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-sub-utilizing refinement upon refinement, and a spiritual and moral perversity" (858-9). The key and leading quality of the characteristics of decadence mentioned above is its "spiritual and moral perversity" because that is what critics interpret as the "deteriorated negative feeling" or in Symons' words, the "new, and beautiful, and interesting disease" (859). The fact that decadence is considered "a disease" or a "deterioration" involves pessimist views about the concept of decadence and its intertext in art and literature. Therefore, pejorative words can be associated with Decadent art such as: ugly, futile, violent, perverse, immoral, and unhealthy; as Symons states: "Healthy we cannot call it, and healthy it does not wish to be considered" (859).

Decadence can thus be understood as a "sickness" that spread through art and literature, related to the "death" of the nineteenth century in Europe. It is a illness with an intoxicating fascination, with transformative and divine qualities. For Symons, Decadence exposes the "disease" of the aristocracy of French and English societies: "For its very disease of form, this literature is certainly typical of a civilization grown

over luxurious, over-inquiring, too languid for the relief of action, too uncertain for any emphasis in opinion or in conduct" (859).

In truth, the divine quality of Decadent art is rooted in its sublime content. Eco explains that the "sublime is not concerned so much with the artistic effects as with the reaction to those natural phenomena dominated by the formless, the painful, and the terrifying" (272). Consequently, the sublime is the reaction of readers to any artistic element that causes a "negative" impression to then reverse its "dangerous" feeling and become a "gratifying" sensation. Originally, the sublime pertains to natural phenomena whose power and intensity cause an inexplicable reply within the reader, for instance, the awe of mountains. Burke, quoted by Eco in *The Aesthetics of the Middle Ages,* explains that the sublime appears when:

> Seeing a storm, a rough sea, rugged cliffs, glaciers, abysses, boundless stretches of land, caves and waterfalls, when we can appreciate emptiness, darkness, solitude, silence and the storm—all impressions that can prove delight when we feel horror for something that cannot possess us and cannot harm us. (262)

The reader can "delight" in horror. Thus, Decadent art has to be understood and interpreted through "anti-aesthetics" and not "aesthetics." The source of pleasure from Decadent art differs from where aesthetics originates. Decadent art emphasizes ugliness and evil whereas Aestheticism emphasizes beauty. Therefore, although both artistic movements can produce similar reactions in the audience, they are born from different artistic principles.

Decadent literature exalts the reader's senses and imagination through words. For Symons, Decadents look for "the very essence of truth—the truth of appearances to the senses, of the visible world to the eyes that we see, and the truth of the spiritual things to the spiritual vision" (859), which leads Decadent art to be essentially a "pictorial" art. Decadent art became particularly influential in visual arts and literature since these two kinds of art correlate to and complement each other. Symons calls this iconographic consequence of decadence in literature projected into the reader as the "soul" (859) and the "opera-glass—a special, unique way of seeing things" (860). Some other authors call this effect as "transposition of art" and *trompe-l'œil*. This concept will be explored in more depth in a later chapter.

Decadents saw life in a unique way, and they projected that vision through stories, poems, plays and some other instances of literature, driving the reader's reaction to a certain point of intensity in emotion, almost ecstatic. The "deterioration" of society mentioned by Hampton creates a morbid and even illogical intensity as Symons states referring to decadent art's style as: "a style too ambitious of impossibilities" (860).

The impossibility of decadent writings is one of the defining characteristics of this literary genre. The unfeasibility develops a sensation of uncertainty and ambiguity in the reader that, despite the nominally negative result of the reading, provokes a "pleasant" sensation in the reader. As Symons affirms, this is the purpose of Decadent literature, to promote an intense sensation that appeals to the "soul": "it is a desperate endeavor to give sensation, to flash the impression of the moment, and preserve the very heat and motion of life" (860).

Karl Beckson reaffirms Symons's comment on the impracticability of Decadent art in *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose.* Beckson insists on the use of illogical and ambivalent plots as a revolutionary tool of Decadent writing. Beckson remarks that ambivalence is such an important element in Decadent art that none of the artists and critics agrees on the essence of the Decadent movement *per se*; this is a way to reinforce that sense of vagueness that Decadents embrace in their movement. According to Beckson:

> For some [critics] the decade conjures yellow visions of Decadence, of putrescence in life and art, with its loss of the complete view of man in nature, perhaps best symbolized by fetid hothouses where monstrous orchids seemingly artificial, are cultivated as a challenge to nature and an assertion to man's cunning. For others, the 1890s suggest the artists protest against a spiritually bankrupt civilization. (3)

Symons and Beckson differ in positions regarding the essence of Decadent art, but by the fact that Decadent art presents so many faces, the literary critic can interpret this not as variety but as ambivalence.

From a social point of view, as it has been demonstrated by scholars before, Decadents try to make readers react to the social problems of their time using symbols, as in Baudelaire's writing about the "monstrous orchids seemingly artificial, [which] are cultivated as a challenge to nature and an assertion to man's cunning" (Beckson 3). For Moriam Hampton, Decadents created an elaborate

social-criticism system using "deterioration" as their tool: "In contrast to pursuing pleasure in natural beauty or in upholding the moral law, decadent sensibility cultivates repulsive tastes by turning to what is most repellent in self and society" (16). Decadent literature thus includes an aspect of social criticism.

Imagination is another key element in Decadent art. Hampton agrees with Beckson in the idea that imagination—as exposed by Baudelaire in *The Evil Flowers*—is a literary tendency Decadents use to establish their own "sensibility": "Baudelaire values rare flora that blur the line between metals and organic life. These exotic flowers flaunting their unwholesome form, appeal to decadent sensibility" (14). Baudelaire uses flowers—an imaginative literary resource—as a representation of evil in order to produce a specific side-effect in the audience, a kind of sensibility, but as a taste for evil.

The "imaginative resource" Symons refers to raises as a result of the pictorial image in the text. The mixture of emotions and description in the story become instancces of "imagination" for both the writer and the reader immersed in the text: "To express the inexpressible, he [the author in general] speaks of beautiful eyes behind a veil, of the palpitating sunlight of noon, of the blue swarm of clear stars in a cool autumn sky, and the verse in which he makes this confession of faith has the exquisite troubled beauty" (860).

It is remarkable that Symons chooses the word "troubled" to describe the sensation of beauty in the Decadent text since it means that the beautiful cause is not completely beautiful but "troubled," a word associated mainly to an "uncomfortable" sensation. Let

us remember that suffering is also a sensation, and thus it can be imagined as well. Hampton agrees with this idea: "As a response to the ideology of progress, the decadents deem suffering an inescapable part of the human condition. In other words, to live is to suffer" (63), and that suffering is not just pleasant but "exquisite." The exquisiteness of the sublime in the reader reaches its highest point by evoking a sensation of delight through words. Symons comments that there is a "magic of words": "The mere magic of words—words which evoke pictures, which recall sensations—can go no further" (860). If the "perception" produced in the reader is so "strong" that it cannot go further, the "sensation" literature creates has reached the maximum level of "intensity" the reader can experience as an effect of communication between the reader and the text. Hence, the "feeling" that the text promotes acquires a "divine" quality for the reader since God is the only one who can make his followers react so "passionately." Thus, the literary "sentiment" Symons describes becomes a "symbol" of divinity.

As a consequence of the intense impression Decadent art creates, Ellen Margaret Crowell categorizes Oscar Wilde as an exponent of Decadent art that exalts the negative aspects of life, so the codes hidden in the patterns to be deciphered can provoke what Symons calls a "vague spiritual fear, which it creates out of our nervous apprehension" (864). If the figure is created in and by the reader's fear, it is thus a product of the unconscious traumas of the reader, and so fear manifests through art as a way of "releasing" and "healing" the trauma. For Symons, authors such as Swift, Poe, and Coleridge, show a series of features in their writings that became products of the reader's subjective and social anxiety and they

act like "windows" (better said "mirrors") in their works. Symons' allegory of the text as a "window," (using its literal meaning), demarks the importance of anguish in literature and reveals the "hidden" in the text, since a window is essentially a framed piece of glass that someone can see through. The text hides examples of human uncertainty and trauma, and yet it is through the text that the "disturbances" are unveiled.

Thus, Decadent art exposes a series of deep inter-subjective shocks to the reader, and simultaneously presents a deep social-criticism of Victorian society. Let us remember that Europe faced a transition period characterized by the exercise of political power upon groups in different countries: England, Spain, France, Ireland, among others. As a result, the use of art as a way to expose the wounds repressed in the unconscious is embodied in the writing of the time, an effect which becomes "charming" for Victorians.

For Decadents, putrid images and ugly faces have a certain "delight" hidden in their powerful and persuasive influence upon the audience. Moriam Hampton explains that "the decadent genealogy suggests a turn toward the ugly, grotesque, and artificial as modern variations on the beautiful" (5). Consequently, Decadent art can be related to all the concepts attained to "the ugly." For instance, Crowell comments that "for Wilde, every ruin, and perhaps especially the national ruin of frustrated rebellion, is a *human* condition to be analyzed and aestheticized" (114). This pleasant sensation caused by the appreciation of ugliness is joined by a thirst for "dis-pleasure."

The "pleasure" produced by ugliness is directed to a certain public that finds suffering "bearable" as Decadents did, yet they have not been the only culture interested in ugliness as an aesthetic category. Eco explains that the cult to ugliness is an antique tradition inherited from the primitive stage of humanity, since beauty and ugliness are born from the same principles: seduction and pleasure. In fact, the ugly has been considered a separate aesthetic category for many cultures. Decadent art is thus a representative of the ugly in art. The topic of ugliness will be further developed in the following chapters as part of this project's literary theoretical framework.

As a result of the ugliness-beauty clash, the dichotomy has become relevant in literary contexts. Writers like Oscar Wilde succeeded expressing the battle between good and evil in aesthetic-decadent terms. Due to Wilde's fruitful exposition of decadent art, this analysis will study *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s anti-aesthetic philosophy, and the role of seduction in the novel using different literary strategies to expose the erotic principle hidden in the "ugly narrative" of Decadent art. The analysis will be divided into different sections. The first section (this one) has briefly exposed the author's life, several literary and philosophical effects in the text (Romanticism, the Gothic, Aestheticism, and Decadent art), and the historical and social contexts when the novel takes place (Victorian age). Now the thesis project will turn to a discussion of how the novel seduces readers by using *ekphrasis,* the secret and pleasant game of the double, and the sublime seduction of cruelty. Consequently, it is necessary to explore what previous scholars have analyzed in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* under the above cited themes.

C. Literary Criticism on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

1. On Seduction in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

How has seduction been analyzed by past critics of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*? Undoubtedly, many authors have focused on the theme of seduction in the novel, relating it to aspects that are not relevant to this analysis but worth mentioning, as they belong to the different approaches to seduction in Oscar Wilde's novel. One of the most popular themes that authors relate to the word "seduction" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is its supposed "homoerotic" subtext in relation to Oscar Wilde's own sexuality shown specifically through a homoerotic *"ménage a trois"* between Basil, Lord Henry, and Dorian. Therefore, it is compulsory to ask: Is the novel exclusively an example of masculine homoerotic love or a homosocial relationship among the three main masculine characters?

The novel is neither an example of a sexual text nor homoerotic writing. Only the author can tell us definitively if this is a homoerotic text or not, and he is dead. Therefore, readers will never know if *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is homoerotic or not. The novel has been labelled as homoerotic based on a "supposition." Readers and critics do know that Oscar Wilde was judged because of his sexual orientation after he was found with male prostitutes. However, the homosexuality of the text is simply an interpretation that lacks strong arguments to support this position.

In fact, many critics tend to analyze the same aspect in Victorian novels such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but most of them always end up combining seduction with the homoerotic discourse popularized in literature during the 1800s. Dejan Kuzmanovic in

Seduction, Rhetoric, Masculinity, and Homoeroticism in Wilde, Gide, Stoker, and Forster has been one of the critics who has analyzed Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its seductive content. However, his dissertation analyses seduction from a homoerotic "relation" point of view.

In addition, Quesada Monge in his novel *La oruga blanca: Un retrato de Oscar Wilde,* argues that the homosexual subtext of the text is the way through which Oscar Wilde manifests his own homosexuality. Contrary to Quesada Monge and Kuzmanovic, this project does not discuss Oscar Wilde's sexual orientation because the main theme of study is how seduction is presented in the novel, not gender identity. Quesada Monge studied homosexuality as a social-construction of rebellion for Victorians by saying that "la homosexualidad emerge a manera de rebeldia" (59). Quesada Monge presents a "biased" position and lacks a gender-based perspective. Therefore, his argument is not strong enough to defend his position about the novel.

Like Quesada Monge and Kuzmanovic, other authors have analyzed the homoerotic content of the novel, including Joseph Carrol, whose psycho-biographical theory identifies Oscar Wilde's own "homosexuality" as a representation in the triangle of Basil-Dorian-Lord Henry. Joseph Carrol's moral discussion in *Aestheticism, Homoeroticism, and Christian Guilt in The Picture of Dorian Gray* about the novel's homoerotic text and the moral codes of the Victorians is another example. Nevertheless, Kuzmanovic's analysis is closer to this research project since the critic also explored the theme of "seduction" in the novel.

Kuzmanovic uses three main psychoanalytical theories to support his research. He analyzes Jacques Lacan, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean Laplanche's ideas, which are based on their predecessor and the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. Kuzmanovic takes the ideas of the construction of the subject in what he calls "the rhetoric of seduction," relating the concept of seduction with a power relationship between the seducer—who exercises control over the seduced one—and the seducee, who simply "stays" within the seduction.

Kuzmanovic explores the definition of a "subject" from the perspective of who dominates upon the other. The other either refuses to be commanded by the seducer or ends up accepting what he/she is being imposed to be finally be trapped by a "seductive" power. The seducee's personality is already defined. However, seduction can be redefined according to the seducee's reaction towards the "seductive power" of the seducer. If the seducee rejects his/her seducer, his/her identity remains intact. On the contrary, if the seducee obeys his/her seducer, his/her personality is redefined according to what the seducer wants.

In addition to the construction of the subject as one of the parties involved in a power relationship—both sexual and non-sexual—Kuzmanovic adheres what he calls the construction of the "authentic" masculine homosexual identity, justifying a series of events in vogue during the time of Oscar Wilde's trials called the "turn of the century seduction anxiety" (6). According to the author, British society suffered from an intense feeling of seductive uncertainty as a result of the fusion of different kinds of anguish mixed all together during the cultural change of the two centuries (1800s-1900s),

affecting aspects of social life like gender, sexuality, class, and personal identity. An example of this concern is the relevance given to Oscar Wilde's scandals and trials. Victorians were afraid of the unknown and tried to hide whatever resembled a closure to the mysterious. Therefore, the importance of Oscar Wilde's trials was simply that they "brought to light" what Victorians wanted to keep hidden: a possible homosexual act, but at the same time, the morbid exhibition of Oscar Wilde's humiliation seduced them and awoke in them an uncontrollable desire for evil. One way or another, Victorians were seduced by Oscar Wilde's trails, suggesting that British society interpreted the anxiety of seduction as the "fear" to become either a seducer or seducee.

Despite Kuzmanovic's attention to the construction of the subject, his analysis focuses only on the definition of "personality" in seduction, and mainly in a masculine context within the novel. In contrast, this project sees how seduction reveals itself in at least three different ways in the text, through: the *ekphrastic* novel, secrecy, and the fight between good and evil. Seduction is a game in which all parties involved fall into an ecstatic plot of fascinating imagery, enigmas and secrets, doubles and mirrors—or in this case, paintings. The project also aims to explore *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a whole work of art, one that makes subjective and fascinating reading for those readers who find "beauty" hidden in "ugly-evil" plots.

In *Seduction, Rhetoric, Masculinity, and Homoeroticism in Wilde, Gide, Stoker, and Forster,* Kuzmanovic presents Baudrillard's theory in opposition to Laplanche's: "While for Laplanche seduction is that which initiates the individual into sexuality, for Jean Baudrillard is opposed to sexuality" (31). According to Kuzmanovic, Baudrillard

presents seduction as something "evil and deceitful" (32) in relation to the social and religious views of the time. The author also explains how Baudrillard develops a feminist discourse in his writing by showing how women could access social positions through the acquisition of power through seduction, as Baudrillard divides seduction into feminine and masculine. The critic forgets to mention that Baudrillard points out the existence of a "transvestite" seduction apart from the two kinds of seduction cited above. Therefore, Kuzmanovic fails to cite all the types of seduction Baudrillard defines. Finally, Kuzmanovic confirms Baudrillard's social view of seduction when he affirms that: "It is when pleasure seeks openly to be autonomous, that it is truly a product of the Law" (Qtd. in Kuzmanovic: 27-8). Contrarily to Kuzmanovic, Baudrillard's theory can be linked to the psychoanalytical principles found in the Lacanian theories of language (signifier/signified) and how seduction—as it opposes to sexuality—might be found in a game of seductive literary strategies developed to acquire and exercise power. Therefore, Dejan Kuzmanovic's view may differ from the ecstatic game of seduction that will be demonstrated in the following chapters and represents a parallel interpretation of seduction in Oscar Wilde's novel.

The mixture of aestheticism and sexuality is the second most popular tendency among analyses of seduction in *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* after the homoerotic content. Meredith L. Collins comments on a series of topics that are related to this research such as Aestheticism and Decadence. Also, she explores the characteristics of the aesthetic novel, which deals with the cult to beauty as a reaction to the cultural oppression during the Victorian reign created by the hedonism the movement raised, and

this reaction formed two schools that are sometimes confused as one: "Sometimes aestheticism and decadence blend together, and sometimes they differ more significantly" (4). She even identifies the precursor of the Decadent school, Arthur Symons.

For Collins, there is a thin line between one movement and the other, and the division between both of them lies in the capacity of transgression when one century ends and a new one begins. Collins cites Symons to explain how the end of the century redefines art and literature:

> Symons associates decadence with dead languages, endings, artificiality, selfishness, instability, and transgression. He frames all of these qualities in terms of a culture in decline. They could apply to the style, content, or progenitors of decadence, but clearly he draws a parallel between the culture that produced certain ancient writings in Latin that are called decadent and those labeled similarly by his contemporaries. (5)

The present analysis aims to show how decadence reverts itself and mirrors beauty through human deterioration. Contrary to Collins, I argue that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be classified as a Decadent novel instead of an aesthetic one because of the inverted use of physical and moral ugliness presented in the text. Accordingly, the novel is not an aesthetic text, but an "anti-aesthetic" one.

Another issue that Collins emphasizes is the relationship between sexuality and eroticism as developed by the Aesthetic novel theory according to the second most important aesthete—William Pater. Collins comments on Pater's principles, stating that,

"[Pater] argues against the idea that the viewer should distance him or herself from art, saying instead that he or she should be as receptive as possible to its stimulation, making the experience primarily a sensuous and individual one" (Collins xxii). Pater calls this experience a "sensually motivated gaze" (Collins xxii) and it is indeed important to remark the use of the word "gaze" as the definition of this ecstatic effect of art in the reader since it is through the gaze that the subject encounters "the real," as Narcissus watches his image in the water. The sensually motivated gaze corresponds to the way the subject, as a reader, can react to the images created by literature: "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What consequence does it really have on me? Does it give me pleasure? And if so, what sort or degree of pleasure?" (Collins xxii).

Collins mentions that Pater emphasizes the fact that this seduction of art is "nonproductive" since it does not necessarily require us to react with a lesson learned from the text, or a deep analysis of all the ideas this "magic" develops in the reader. The "nonproductive sensualism" is an emotionless gratification, leading to a simple liking or disliking of the text. Collins combines the concept of nonproductive sensuality with sexuality and gives it a social and an individualized significance. According to her, productive sexuality refers mainly to the traditional concept of sexuality itself (reproductive sexuality) giving it a more social and biological frame, whereas "nonproductive sensuality" refers mainly to the reaction of the passive subject as a receptor of the sensorial experience (Collins xxiii), which gives the nonproductive sensuality a more general and open frame of reaction, not merely sexual.

Collins investigates a series of novels classified as "aesthetic" in her dissertation, beginning with *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* The literary critic explains why the novel is an example of aestheticism using different aspects. The first is the use of imagery in the novel following the ideals of Aestheticism in Victorian society. Collins explains how the novel uses selected images and colors to follow the aesthetic canons during the Victorian time. As an example, Collins refers to the use of blue and white china as a representation of the high standards of the Victorian materialistic society, and the yellow roses, at the beginning of the novel, with a sulfur smell, to embody the use of a mixture of colors and smells (sinestesia) in order to produce an unpleasant sensation in the reader. Collins points out how imagery becomes an important aspect in the narrative of the novel; however, she does not concentrate on the seduction hidden in imagery. The remarkable aspect of the whole analysis Collins presents for this project is her recognition of the relevance of imagery and the division between Aestheticism and Decadent art.

2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: An Ugly Story to Enjoy through the Looking Glass

"In everyday conversation, decadence denotes something excessive which we have the right to enjoy," says Moriam Hampton. This quote summarizes, but does not yet exemplify, one of the pillars of the thesis project. Decadence interpreted as "ugliness" is shown in the novel through the social decomposition of its characters, the reader's amazement for Dorian Gray's cruelty, Lord Henry's sardonic and philosophical comments, and the *fin de siè*cle literature that exemplifies the death of a century. All together, these elements create the "metaphorical ugliness" or "evilness" in art. Despite

The Picture of Dorian Gray's ugliness, the "charm" is so intense and "excessive" that it becomes "attractive" for the reader, as he/she has the primitive right to enjoy.

In *Fallen Beauty Aesthetics and Ethics of Decadent Literature,* Morian Hampton considers that "although at times writers seem to equate the aesthetic with beauty, the decadent genealogy suggests a turn toward the ugly, grotesque, and artificial as modern variations on the beautiful" (5). During the late 1800s, readers tended to enjoy more texts that clearly exposed ugliness or evilness. Therefore, the reader betrays "beauty" and embraces the "charm" of a certain kind of an irresistible ugliness.

Hampton summarizes the main characteristics of Decadence in art. It becomes a popular approach for many writers from late Victorian era until the 1960s. Decadence covers a great variety of texts—even intertexts and intratexts—Romantic and Modernist artists, women writers, and the movement of the Degenerative theory[16]—inspired in Adolph Hitler's *Degenerative Art,* which was a reaction against the Modernism of the 1900s.

Hampton also identifies three phases of Decadent art: "Romanticism, the Victorian *fin de siècle,* and late Modernism" (5), which have been previously cited. Decadent literature usually portrays certain topics related to morality—which is well known in Oscar Wilde's writing, and the *Picture of Dorian Gray* follows this tradition. Still, psychoanalysis becomes a complement for the quest of morality and inserted the

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[16] The Degenerative theory arose in the 1900s in Europe and mixed scientific evolution with class divisions. The scientific ideals of the time created a social division of classes based on the "degeneration" of species, meaning that lower social classes are genetically and physically less adaptable and less prepared to survive than higher class individuals. The Degenerative Art emphasizes the decline of the human race.

"ambiguous, unconscious, libidinal, often destructive aspects" (25) within the moral dichotomy generally presented in literary texts. Hampton refers to these aspects as the "violent" origins of morality, relating them directly with the unconscious traumas of the reader:

> As the psychoanalytic version of the conscience, the superego reigns over the self, condoning or condemning behavior relative to an individual's familial, social, and historical situation. Because it stresses ambiguity and the violent sadistic side of morality, the psychoanalytic concept of the superego provides a context for understanding decadent writing's confrontation with the moral law. (25)

Hampton's main ideas about *The Picture of Dorian Gray* deal precisely with morality and how Wilde presents this concept. For instance, in the beginning of the novel's preface, the importance of virtue as part of beauty is exhibited. The critic then explains that sexual morality is also exposed in the novel, as Wilde himself provoked moral debates about sexuality in general during the late Victorian age, as he was subject to what Hampton calls "perverse desires" (69), such as homosexuality.

Finally, Hampton uses Walter Pater and Immanuel Kant's ideas to explain the reversed effect on the analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* The critic believes that the moral discourse presented in the novel is only a "superficial morality" (71). The novel presents a reverted result in pleasure while transforming the story into an example of the sublime: "Instead of eliciting pleasure, the image of ugliness evokes pain within

Dorian" (84), and it is precisely in the suffering represented that "seduction" starts. Hampton comments on Dorian's character that:

> Dorian's devotion to beauty, while seeming to affirm aestheticism initially, depends, instead, on his repulsion from ugliness. The portrait affects Dorian immediately, arousing pleasure, yet soon propels his imagination in an abhorrent manner. He envisions the decay of such beauty, for him a ghastly prospect, and one that erupts from within the spectator. (85)

Although Hampton's analysis comes close to what this project intends to demonstrate, she simply thinks that Dorian Gray does not feel any kind of gratification in the "image of ugliness," and even implies that this causes his deterioration and decay. The critic simply remains in the obvious and does not see the journey that complex characters go through in order to evolve. Dorian does enjoy ugliness, and he does feel pain at the same time as part of his own journey and expiation process. The key in Dorian Gray's redemption is his escape from his own cruelty.

It is demonstrated that Decadent art can fascinate any reader by the perversion it portrays. It is thus the critic's duty to explain the fascinating and seductive effect of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in relation to beauty, ugliness, and evil. Some critics have already tried to explain some points about the three above cited elements. Deborah S. McLeod's dissertation *Beauty, Objectification, and Transcendence: Modernist Aesthetics in The Picture of Dorian Gray and Pale Fire* articulates the closest ideas to what this analysis intends to demonstrate: that art has no morality, and that readers can enjoy "art's amorality" as a product of subjective interpretation. Therefore, art can

mirror cruelty and the representation of that cruel image can have a "charming" result on the reader, while someone else might feel disgusted with it. In McLeod's words, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* "demonstrates the trust that many modernists held in the ability of beauty to offer transcendence over the limits and suffering of mortal life." Consequently, the "beauty" of the story lies in the "suffering" it embodies.

The most interesting aspect of her analysis is the division she makes of the main characters into three categories: artist (the aesthetic creator, Basil), the manipulator of the Other's beauty (Lord Henry), and the aesthetic object, the character that is immersed in the aesthetic charm (Dorian). McLeod tries to explain how appreciation of art subdivides the characters of the novel according to their roles, in the redefinition of beauty, and the view of time: "Objectified because of their extraordinary appearance, these individuals succumb to despair and near madness, much like Ophelia, and they in turn treat others with a heartless cruelty similar to what they have been subjected to" (26-7). Although McLeod's analysis focuses more on character analysis, power relationships, and the definition of subject-objectification process, her idea of transcendence is essential to the analysis since both critics (McLeod and me) believe that transcendence in the characters and the novel demonstrate how a work of art becomes "beautiful" in someone's eyes:

> For the artists—Basil Hallward, Sibyl Vane, and John Shade—this power means that earthly beauty can provide insight into the nominal world. They seek artistic inspiration and find their art transformed by their experiences with beauty. For the spectators—Lord Henry and Charles Kinbote—beauty

> serves as a way to transcend the pain of daily existence. By watching and manipulating beauty, they achieve temporary relief from life's sorrows. For those treated as objects—Dorian Gray and Hazel Shade—the expectations of beauty drive them to a frustrating search for any form of transcendence. (55)

"Watching" is emphasized in her analysis, but she does not develop this idea from a psychoanalytical point of view. The novel and its psychic effect on both the characters and the reader is clearly defined. In contrast, this thesis project addresses the power of *ekphrasis*[17] from the scopic point of view in the story and how readers perceive its outcome in the text. In addition, this project explores how the formation of the subject and the later creation of doubles seduces readers with enigmatic pleasure.

3. The Mirror-Painting Function in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Abraham Jacob Nellickal's *Looking through Words: Histories of the Visual Image in Nineteenth-Century Literature* analyzes literary productions from the 1800s in which the use of themes related to a painting or a photograph is common. For the purpose of the project, the words "portrait," "photograph," "picture," and "painting" will be used interchangeably, since their functions are the same: showing an image of an "X subject."

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[17] The concept of *ekphrasis* according to A.W. Hefferman is "the impulse in literature—the desire to represent visual objects in a nonvisual medium, i.e. language—that can be located across periods and genres. Studies on this literary phenomenon have often despaired at finding a valid definition that can encompass the diverse terrain that *ekphrasis* covers. But the most serviceable definition of *ekphrasis* that has become the basis of a number of recent theorizations is one that limits itself to the 'verbal representation of visual representation.'" See Nellickal, *Looking through Words* 16.

His analysis contemplates *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in relation to photography "and explores the novel's discursive engagement with the legal debates on copyright and authorship occasioned by the advent of photography" (5). His interpretation of the novel as an example of photography indicates one of the few analysis on this novel that is based on an intertextual, scopic analysis, taking the idea of "tradition" as a literary production source:

> My [Nellickal Abraham Jacob's] focus is on the connections between the spontaneously kinetic image in Wilde's novel and the anxieties of authorship produced by the ambivalent provenance of the photographic image. The perceived auto-origination of the photograph is explored in terms of its encounter with the discourse of copyright—a brush with the law that ultimately ushers the photograph into the regime of authorship and property relations. (11)

Nellickal examines *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from a socio-historical perspective, since his main topic is the anxiety that photographs raised in people when Oscar Wilde wrote the novel. Indeed, he also remarks that as Oscar Wilde was in the eye of the storm, and that there were legal issues projected in the novel as adjacent topics to his trials, including copyright. Apart from the historical overview Nellickal presents, his dissertation also summarizes the history of photography and all the implications and reactions that this development raised in the artistic, spiritual, scientific, and intellectual areas in the late 1800s. Nellickal's pillar point of development lies in the lack of

recognition of photojournalists. He insisted that the art of the photograph remained "authorless" in contrast with pictorial arts or literature. As Nellickal explains:

> The history of the birth and reception of photography in England and France in the nineteenth century reveals an overwhelmingly large number of reactions to photography that were impressed or disturbed by it precisely because of its perceived authorless nature. In fact, the nineteenth century provides ample testimony to the fact that photographs were often regarded as being significantly independent of human mediation. (106)

Clearly, photographs adapted a certain type of "charm" with the effect they produced on people for Nellickal, giving photography a supernatural feature with certain qualities from pictorial arts. Therefore, we may ask the question: is photography good or evil? It is thus necessary for the critic to ask: is a photograph a representation of reality? Nellickal asks the same question relating it to the novel: "Is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* actually a photograph of Dorian Gray?" (103). The answer will be hidden in a further question Nellickal himself asks later: "how do pictures structure the way we understand the relationship between appearance and reality?" (130) For Nellickal, the photograph works like a "mirror" that reflects the subject's image, but the image is not the "real" subject in the photograph. It is a dichotomy between appearances and reality that implies the answer to the question.

A photograph is an exemplification of reality, and a portrait works in the same way, like a mirror. The seductive charm of the looking glass captivates the subject reflected in it. However, the subject sees an image that is not entirely real, as the subject cannot see

his/her back from the mirror. The subject is thus "fragmented." Therefore, the function of the portrait as a mirror creates a seductive result according to the Lacanian theory of the Mirror Stage and the double. Notoriously, Nellickal links photography with the concept of the double, but does not focus on the seduction it creates in characters and readers. Rather, his focus is related to the legal implications of copyrights and the anonymity of authorship, which is a separate topic.

This thesis project studies the picture as a "painting-mirror" that resembles the characters (in this case Dorian Gray), but seduces readers with its pictorial effect and defines the characters as fragmented subjects. Despite the separation Nellickal articulates between the painting and the characters, he could have intended to compare the portrait with a mirror at some point in his analysis as he remarks that "the image loses its *imagic* quality and turns into the magic mirror of Dorian's moral transgressions" (148). Thus, the critic is aware of the "mirror" qualities in Dorian Gray's picture, but he prefers to emphasize copyright and the legal implications of authorship instead of the seductive role of the double in the novel.

The photograph is created from a machine and Nellickal explains it clearly. Still, the painting is created by a person and it is an expression of the unconscious according to Freud and Lacan; thereby, the photo and the portrait differ in their origin, although they both act as reflecting mirrors. The author even retakes "the *magic* picture tradition" as part of his analysis, which this project will consider later in addition to the concept of *ekphrasis* applied to the structure of the novel.

4. The Sympathetic Sublime: A Taste for Cruelty

The topic of the sublime has been previously analyzed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Ellen Scheible in *The Sublime Moment: Confrontation, Colonization, and the Modern Irish Novel,* in which she argues that the historical background of the novel creates a sublime effect as a product of the British colonization in Ireland. Despite the fact that the critic acknowledges the sublime in her analysis, Scheible fails to link the sublime in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with an aesthetic experience.

According to Scheible, the sublime is subjective and relates to two psychoanalytic topics: the uncanny and mythology—the origin of psychoanalysis: "In the discourse of the sublime, subjectivity undergoes an uncanny and mythological transformation where it must sometimes masquerade as a foreign and unfamiliar experience in order to be recognized" (Introduction). Without relating the uncanny experience with the sublime result directly, Scheible does it unintentionally. The author describes the uncanny as being "disguising" for the subject since the uncanny manifests through a "masqueraded," "foreign," and "unfamiliar experience" elements attaining to the sublime. Hence, Scheible accidentally links the uncanny experience with the sublime through the fear to the "unknown."

Scheible bases her research on theoreticians such as Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure of Psychology and Transcendence,* which applies a more linguistic and literary approach (signifier-signified relationship), and Neil Hertz's *The End of the Line,* which takes a more psychoanalytic view, relating the sublime with the reading process and the action of "reading-seeing" (6-7). This thesis

project will develop the "reading-seeing" point but will associate it with the aesthetic experience, not to historical aspects as Scheible did.

According to Neil Hertz, the sublime effect hidden in the reading process is equivalent to the sublime result the reader experiences since reading is equal to seeing. Hertz's point directly links the concept of the sublime with the scopic drive from psychoanalysis, and also explains the outcome of the "omniscient spectator" that some other critics have studied before.

First, Scheible presents Luke Gibbon's *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Sublime,* which portraits language as a physical manifestation of the sublime. Scheible cites Gibbon's interpretation of Edmund Burke's representation of "'the body in pain', that links terror to the aesthetic experience" (Qtd. in Scheible: 8), and links this theory with a cultural and historical image currently used by Irish writers as an example of the colonial suffering they went through, what Scheible calls the "wounds of history" (8).

Scheible will later study Edmund Burke's theory in depth, relating it with the colonization process of Ireland and Adam Smith's "sympathetic reader," that ends up developing into the "sympathetic sublime" (26-7), a concept that feeds from the traumas of all eighteenth century people, and reverses its effect from a painful experience to become a "pleasant" one. Scheible associates this concept with the public executions of that time. However, it is the analysis of the concept of "the reader" what will be rescued from her dissertation and the study of Edmund Burke's ideas for the purposes of this work:

> Senses alone do not produce sympathetic feelings in Smith's illustration of the voyeuristic, public spectacle that torture generated in the eighteenth century. Instead the imagination must first force the witness to identify with the pain of the sufferer before the witness can feel the pain, himself. Smith is careful to stress that the witness is not an unselfish being, psychically or mentally; the pain he feels is always his own pain, stimulated by the observation of the person in pain. Sympathy evokes individual and personal reproductions of another's experience, but paradoxically, it is never replica; it is always the witness's own experience to begin with. So, the body that the witness "enters into" is the visual body of the other in the spectacle, but the experience of being in that body and feeling that pain is the experience of the witness alone. The torture of another body—the distance between self and other—becomes the catalyst for an individual exploration into the self. (28)

The literary critic establishes "suffering" as the "witness' own experience" and refuses to see it as a "replica" (a feeling of pain that repeats in the reader to finally associate pain with the social executions of the time as "spectacles").

Similarly, to Scheible, this analysis attempts to prove that the role of the "witness" in the text is that of the "reader," an "observer" that perceives the images through words, and participates actively as if the story in the novel was his/her own, but does not "kill" the story by taking it as "only" his or hers. A "witness" is essential for any possible psychoanalytic analysis. A witness is someone who observes and gives testimony of what he/she has seen. The witness gives credibility to what has been observed and

presents it to the world as "reality" because the witness has taken someone else's reality as his/her own and gives testimony of it. Therefore, the witness can tell "someone else's story" and sympathize[18] with it reacting towards the story. In fact, the reader can be considered as an active participant of the reading process when the reaction takes place. However, both the story and the reader are separated elements of the communication process. Thus, the reader becomes the final character in the story, the witness, who sees and "knows it all," becoming into an "omniscient reader and witness," (which Scheible acknowledges in her analysis), but he/she does it in parallelism to the text. In this sense, the reader can "split" him/herself and become part of the story while he/she reads.

Any reader can be seen erroneously as a double of the main character. However, the reader cannot be seen as a double because his/her own identification is given through gazing. As Scheible explains, the pain that the reader suffers is not a "replica" of the character's pain. Thus, the reader is "separated" from the text, but immersed in the story and redefined by the text when he/she identifies with the suffering of the character, causing them to experience anxiety for his/her own suffering, inspired by the text. Therefore, the reader is not a double but a "fragmented element" of the story in anxiety, a silent witness of the characters' pain. The double can only appear within the same characters in the story as it is seen in the relationships between Basil-Dorian, Lord Henry-Dorian, and Dorian and his painting. The three main characters are mirrored in

[18] This literary analysis will use the term "sympathy" as a synonym for the word "empathy" to refer to the term Adam Smith uses to describe the relationship the reader establishes with the text as a "sympathetic reader" and the *sympathetic sublime* from Edmund Burke (cited in Ellen Scheible's dissertation).

the "picture"[19] of a portrait, a picture capable of representing the wildest instincts and deepest fears hidden in human nature.

Collins, Hampton, Beckson, McLeod, and Scheible have analyzed diverse topics in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Nevertheless, none of the scholars consulted for the literary review of this thesis project examined "seduction" as the main theme. Additionally, the novel seduces readers due to its magnetic plot that draws on two powerful literary themes: secrecy and the dichotomy of good and evil. Consequently, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* seduces readers with a tripartite technique of images, secrecy, and cruelty. My thesis project will show how the three elements interact in the story and trap readers with their seduction. The first element to study is the *ekphrastic novel.*

[19] The picture is a concept that Lacan explores based on the theory of paintings created by René Callois. The *picture* is part of the Scopic Model that Lacan creates, which embraces the subject. For further reference see Lacan, *Book XI.*

Chapter II: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

A. Seduction in the Ekphrastic Novel: Words that Excite the Reader's Psyche

The word *ekphrasis* comes from ancient Greece and combines two artistic genres: the literary and pictorial arts. It relates to the way in which a picture is represented through words. Contrary to the rebuses or pictograms (words exemplified through pictures to emphasize concepts, letters, and sounds) popular in the Egyptian and Japanese cultures as well as the art of the Middle Ages, *ekphrasis* gives texts the properties of pictures in color, shape, and texture in order to excite the reader's imagination.

This concept is also known as *transposition of art*[20] for the Romantic and Decadent movement—or *trompe-l'œil* according to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Sabrina E. Drai Wengier's dissertation *The Politics and Poetics of Ekphrasis in Nineteenth-Century French Art Novels* is one of the best studies on the use of *ekphrasis* in literature. Another literary critic who has used the concept of *ekphrasis* applied to literature is Jacob Abraham Nellickal with his work on the use of photography in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (discussed in Chapter I). However, Drai Wengier's analysis provides a much more detailed development of this concept, its relationship to literature, and the various kinds of *ekphrasis*—although her study only considers French literature.

Writing skills, narrating techniques, and phrasing methods allow a text to captivate the audience's attention, linking the action of "creating" with the action of "perceiving"

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[20]The concept of transposition of art is also developed by the counterpart of Decadent art (French Symbolism) whose psychoanalytical version *trompe-l'œil* will be analyzed later.

and "observing." Therefore, the main sense that is affected through *ekphrasis* is sight. According to Ruth Webb in *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, *ekphrasis* refers to "a speech that brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes" (Qtd. in Sabrina E. Drai: 1). *Ekphrasis* "makes the audience imagine a scene" (Drai Wengier 3). Through *ekphrasis,* the reader's imagination is stimulated, making him/her become a participant in the reading process by visualizing the scene in his/her mind as if the reader were a "witness." In this way, according to Drai Wengier, *ekphrasis* "has to do with the performance making the audience into spectators" (4).

Ekphrasis lets readers participate in a dual reader-text relationship, in which the reader will react to what he or she is "observing" and thus immerses himself or herself in the story. Drai Wengier classifies this strategy of exchange between the text and the reader as "seductive"[21] and emphasizes the reaction of the subject over the characteristics of the object: "The idea of *ekphrasis* as performance asserts its seductive aspect and emphasizes the fact that it is not a solitary enterprise" (16). Drai Wengier's ideas correspond with the reader-response theories formulated during the 1930s to 1950s by several theoreticians such as Louise Rosenblatt in *Literature as Exploration* trying to explain the reactions of readers towards different texts[22] and thus support the "eroticism" of texts. Therefore, ekphrastic novels are erotic and powerfully attract readers provoking a reaction in them.

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[21] The concepts of seduction and eroticism will be studied in this same chapter later.

[22] The theories of Reader-Response insisted on the importance of interaction between readers and texts and how the reaction of readers is affected by gender, culture, age, background knowledge, individual expectations, and reading contexts. Opposite to New Structuralism, in which the text is rigid and says it all through its format, the Reader-Response theory focuses on the reader and his/her reaction than in the text itself.

The general features of *ekphrasis* tend to be confused with a term that was in vogue during the nineteenth century: *mimesis*[23] which was inherited from Greek philosophy and has been described as the capacity of substitution of objects. The critic can interpret this capacity as the "imitation" of objects. For instance, the painting of railroad tracks may captivate the reader with its effect, and thus might make him/her believe the railroad tracks painted in the canvas are "real." Therefore, it is a mimesis of the original object. However, Drai Wengier differentiates these concepts and their consequences on the reader: "*Ekphrasis* does not rely on the mimetic as it does not stand for the work of art. *Mimetic* tries to substitute the painting, it is more like an illusion, *ekphrasis* merely represents it" (Drai Wengier 20).

The concept of *ekphrasis* is also known as "word painting" according to Murray Krieger: "Because *ekphrasis* establishes a bridge and forces a link between painting and literature, it has been regarded as promoting the notion of the sister arts" (Qtd. in Drai Wengier: 21). Curiously, the "sister arts" demonstrate that both arts—painting and literature—are complementary and can be taken as parallel arts since a scene from a novel or an extract of a poem can be "painted" (image), and the painted image can be narrated and described (*ekphrasis*).

Writers can develop kinds of "writing" according to the artistic movements by which they are influenced and so there are different kinds of *ekphrasis*. In fact, Drai Wengier mentions that there are as many kinds of *ekphrasis* as necessary according to the

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[23] Mimesis is a "substitute" for the work of art. See Drai Wengier, *The Politics and Poetics of Ekphrasis* 14.

reader's interpretation. Examples may be: notional, poetic, narrative, versatile, and social. In addition, Tamar Yacobi's *Pictorial Novels and Narrative Ekphrasis* explains that the *ekphrastic* novel emulates a certain movement or artist by showing the artist's *ekphrastic* mode of writing (Qtd. in Drai Wengier: 31-2). Therefore, the selected kind of *ekphrasis* is based on the artist's interpretation, the reader's understanding of the text, and the social and artistic movements that have come before.

Narration mixed with the descriptive content of a text make the *ekphrastic* effect possible in the sensations that a text describing an image produces in the reader. The readers' sensations transform a text from simple descriptive paragraphs to a complex text, and thus, the reader can develop a series of reactions, which may vary from happiness and joy up to terror and disgust. The variety of words in a language allows the writer to emulate and exemplify diverse sensations of the possible pictorial properties that painting and sculptures may have on spectators. Ruth Webb clarifies a key aspect of *ekphrasis*: it is not a simple description; in fact, it is more than that and it is related to "the narrative quality" of the text:

> By assuming that *ekphrasis* goes beyond and outdoes the image, one also represents the story-telling power of an image and the range of emotions and reactions it can elicit in the viewers [...]. As a performance, *ekphrasis* is more concerned with the effect than with the referent. (Qtd. in Grai Wengier: 7)

The camouflage of colors, shapes, or textures in the written text allows the reader to "re-invent" them. The reader cannot "feel" the softness of rose petals and cannot smell the perfume of the lilies, however, the reader can link the actions, objects, and situations

described in the text and refer them to previous knowledge in which those sensations are activated through the reader's senses. Murray Krieger's *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* explains, in a simpler way, the result of this concept on the reader: "*Ekphrasis* is a product of the lack [of visual aspects]" (Qtd. in Drai Wengier: 22). Due to the absence of visual stimuli, the imagination of the reader visualizes them, producing a recreation of a scene. Thus it is in the "lack" where the reader's stimulation is activated as it creates a dynamic participation of the reader in the reading process. The reader moves from a "passive" role to a lively one in the story.

The fact that *ekphrasis* deals with the lack of visual aspects links this term to psychoanalytic theory in three ways: the "absence as void," the definition of the subject as the lack, and "the visual aspect as drive." Firstly, "lack" refers mainly to the binary opposition of "absence and presence" in the symbolic order (also seen in the two other orders, real and imaginary) where "nothing exists except upon an assumed foundation of absence" (Qtd. in Dylan Evans: 10). In the absence of colors, the reader can imagine them "as if they were there present in the text." A red rose differs for every reader since each reader has a different notion of color and shape thus the red rose becomes a signifier with "n" number of interpretations. Therefore, "lack" intensifies the linguistic relationship of a signifier with as many "signified" images readers activate in their memories.

Secondly, the mother places her son/daughter (the subject) in front of a mirror where he or she can see his/her reflection. The mother demands the child to identify with the image seen in the mirror as "his/ herself." Mom tells the baby: "That is you." The

identification of the subject with his/her image in the mirror fragments his/her self in two: the subject in front of the mirror, and his/her own image revealed in the mirror or the Other. From this moment on, the subject "desires" to find "his/her image in the mirror" as it has been presented as the "real" image. However, the image disappears, which produces a profound anxiety in the subject who looks for his/her Other-half to "be" complete and release his/her anxiety. The image in the mirror thus becomes the subject's imaginary object of desire.

Thirdly, the reader "finds" a "visual" meaning in the text. In the absence of colors, there are words, which have a meaning of "color" for the reader. The reader "contributes" to the text with the activation of his/her pictorial memory using its imagination. The reader brings the text to "life." Therefore, the reader finds what is missing in the text, and this "finding" is rewarding as the reader becomes an active participant of the reading process. To sum up, what is lacking in the text is not lost; it is there inside the text, in front of the reader's eyes, veiled within the text. The reader simply decodes the text to find meaning.

When the reader finds the image in the text, he/she is also immersed in the story due to its "charm." However, the "magnetism" might not be "pleasant" from the beginning as it signifies facing and even questioning the reader's anxiety and fears. The reader can be exposed to scenes that might challenge his/her moral principles, social conventions, and subjective ideologies. However, the images are so well described that the reader feels a certain kind of "attraction" by the way they are presented. This "appeal" produces the "charming effect," making it become a "sublime" text. Mitchell. W. J. T in "Picture

Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation" states that "*Ekphrasis* expresses our fear of 'merging with others' and the *ekphrastic* process is a working through of the self/other dialectic" (Qtd. in Drai Wengier: 163). Therefore, the *ekphrastic* novel permits the reader to identify with the text through the reading process and to face his/her fear of "merging with others." It is in the sympathy of self-identification with the text where the reader finds pleasure. The text is not a challenging text anymore, but a "pleasant" one. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is thus a "trial" for the reader who might develop a "sympathy" for the novel, regardless its "ugly" content.

B. Pleasure—the Sympathetic Sublime and its Taste for Ugliness

An exhaustive definition of what ugliness is denotes a challenge, especially from the aesthetic point of view. Umberto Eco, in *On Ugliness*, mentions that "the concepts of beauty and ugliness are relative to cultures" (3). That relativity does not constitute the only perception of people and artists, but also the view of the epoch they live in. Beauty and ugliness have changed through time and they have also developed certain characteristics. In the case of ugliness, there are many famous art works seen as "ugly," which are not "truly" ugly as perceived by some other people and art critics, like the gargoyles of Notredame's Cathedral, Picasso's cubist works, futurist productions, the Greeks' interest in nudism, or the grotesque images of recent films like *The Passion* by Mel Gilson, in which the cruel representations of Jesus Christ's suffering fascinate some people and disgust others.

Although Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke explain that the reader experiences a "sublime" sensation in the presence of the ugly, academicians have not yet completely accepted the aesthetic (meaning "pleasant") effect of ugliness on the audience. As explained by Conde De Listowel in his *Historia crítica de la estética moderna,* and in agreement with Umberto Eco, the ugly is considered a "modification" of the aesthetic experience, a kind of art able to produce the same "charm" or "seduction" that any kind of "beautiful" art can create. The ugly is currently known as *feismo* in pictorial arts and *anti-aesthetics*[24] in literary and philosophical fields.

Consequently, the concept of ugliness is complex to define since classifying something as ugly or beautiful is mostly a matter of subjective interpretation. One of the most common mistakes at defining it is categorizing ugliness by saying what it is not. Ugliness has what Eco, in *On Ugliness*, calls an "autonomy of ugliness" (16) meaning that ugliness defines and redefines itself through time. In fact, Eco reaffirms Charles Darwin's point of view by saying that "what arouses disgust in a given culture does not arouse it in another and vice-versa" (16). Therefore, something that was considered ugly by a culture at a certain time in history might not be considered ugly for a culture in another time. Labeling something as beautiful or ugly is a matter of independent reading.

There is thus a thin line that divides beauty from ugliness. The fascination that beauty gives is concerned with the senses so that everything that is "beautiful" is assumed to produce a "good" feeling in the reader, not repulsion. "Cuando una

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[24] The anti-aesthetics appears not only in literature that deals with the grotesque, but also explores contemporary artistic approaches in painting, photography, cinema, sculpture, and some other urban arts like graffiti and tattooing, for instance. For further reference, see López Get, *The Countercultural Grotesque* 47-67.

experiencia estética nos proporciona deleite puro, penetrante, genuino, sin traza alguna de conflicto, desarmonía o dolor, estamos en condiciones de llamarla una experiencia de lo bello" (De Listowel 255). On the contrary, if this "delightful" sensation comes from a deep feeling of sorrow or terror, this reaction does not belong to the beautiful, but to ugliness. Therefore, the classification of something as beautiful or ugly depends on the reader's subjective experience and background.

The theories discussed above deal with the artist's creative mind and, in turn, the reader's insight. For instance, a topic ambivalently regarded as beautiful or ugly is eroticism, depending on how people are raised into and immersed within a cultural pattern. Agnes Heller's essay, "What Went Wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful?" explains that erotic desire, which is something traditionally "seen" as evil and prohibited in certain societies, is part of the beautiful: "The rapture, the desire (Eros), and the satisfaction cannot be eliminated from the Beautiful. The Beautiful is erotic" (Heller 5). The critic classifies eroticism into the beautiful because of the gratifying sensation it produces on people, even though it might be considered "evil" and "sinful" for most societies, due to religious and moral standpoints. Accordingly, eroticism can be also classified within the "ugly" because of its moral implications.

The "ugly" might have a sublime effect depending on how the reader experiences it. In *On the Sublime and the Beautiful,* Edmund Burke discusses the results that "words" and, by extension, literature have on readers, arguing that words have a dissimilar outcome from other kinds of art:

> but as to words; they seem to me to affect us in a manner very different from that in which we are affected by natural objects, or by painting or architecture; yet words have as considerable a share in exciting ideas of beauty and of the sublime as many of those, and sometimes a much greater than any of them (77).

Burke also mentions that literature can either cause a beautiful effect or an ugly one on the reader, and considers that words have a potentially more powerful consequence on readers than other artistic expressions, such as painting and sculpture, do on their observers.

Burke compares the sublime result that literature can cause on readers to sexual ecstasy,[25] as the reader is driven by his/her own needs into a strong trance of mixed emotions of terror, awe, and horror. In order to further explore how the reader can be driven into a state of ecstasy through the reading process, this project will focus on the theories of H. R. Marshall, particularly his "Theory of Pleasure," and the concept of the "Sublime" (previously mentioned), as discussed by Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke.

As part of the literary review for this thesis, the concept of the "sublime" has already been briefly explored by one of the critics: Ellen Scheible, who has extensively described the concept of the sublime in relation to Edmund Burke's theory, presented in her dissertation as the *sympathetic sublime.* Although her dissertation is relevant for this project, we will focus on the creator of the *sympathetic sublime* concept: Edmund Burke. Marshall and Kant's theories will be studied as well in support of Edmund Burke's

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[25] The word "ecstasy" will be interpreted as the maximum level of fascination a subject can experience, resulting in a trance of joy either produced by art or physical gratification. In the following sections, this concept will be compared to the *sublime* in Kant and Burke, the *charm* in Baudrillard, and the *fascinum* in Lacan.

views. In order to understand the concept of the *sympathetic sublime*, this literary project will also explore the relationship between pleasure and displeasure.

The symbiotic relationships between delight,[26] pleasure, and indifference, and their aesthetic properties on the reader have been analyzed by H.R. Marshall and Edmund Burke. Marshall, cited by De Listowel, explains the effects the reader experiences when he or she encounters a certain object and reacts emotively: "Cuando la energía de la reacción de un estímulo es mayor que el equivalente de la energía involucrada en el estímulo, experimentamos placer, cuando es menor, es desagrado; cuando hay un perfecto equilibrio de las dos tenemos un estado de completa neutralidad o indiferencia" (De Listowel 17).

Essentially, Marshall proposes that if *"the reaction is more powerful than the stimulus, there is a pleasurable sensation in the subject"* but when this reaction is less strong than the stimulus, it is unpleasant. Therefore, the reader can react differently to the same stimuli either liking or disliking it, or simply ignoring the object if this does not produce any "inner" outcome on the reader at all. The person who reads relates the concept of pleasure, and thus displeasure, with the "taste" since, as Burke mentions, "taste is natural, it is common to all" (7). What someone might like, someone else might not like it, but there is a common aspect among them: people all like, dislike, or ignore something. "Taste" depends on the reader's preferences, the subjective predilection, the

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[26] Delight is a relative pleasure that accompanies the removal of pain. See Burke, *On the Sublime and the Beautiful* 14-15.

social formation of the reader's principles, and the capacity of reasoning. Burke comments:

> That what is called taste, in its most general acceptation, is not a simple idea, but is partly made up of a perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty, concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the human passions, manners, and actions. (9)

Therefore, the concepts of "taste" and "pleasure and displeasure" are linked as a cause-effect relationship rooted in the realities of daily life. Burke states that "the pleasure of all the senses, of the sight, and even of the taste, the most ambiguous of the senses, is the same in all, high and low, learned and unlearned" (6). Consequently, "pleasure and displeasure" are present in every single aspect of the reader's life, and they can be developed by either physical stimuli or emotional causes.

For instance, Marshall links the reader's reaction to the body by establishing the existence of "*minor and major senses*" in which sight and hearing (the eyes and ears) are the major pleasant senses: "La superioridad de la vista y el oído, como fuentes de placer, comparadas con los sentidos inferiores, es debida en no escasa medida al gran número y a la variedad de las fibras sensoriales involucradas" (De Listowel 21-22). Marshall presents a physical explanation of why sight and hearing play a key role in the human psyche, which Edmund Burke also supports: "the principle of pleasure derived from sight is the same in all" (5). Likewise, Burke mentions that "the eye is not the only organ of sensation by which a sublime passion may be produced. Sounds have a great power in

these as in most other passions" (38). Thus, according to both critics, the major senses, which can develop a possible "reaction" in the reader, are sight and hearing.

In addition, Marshall clarifies that there are particular objects that will cause a pleasant aesthetic effect, such as color, light, and sound. They all belong to the main senses and their outcomes would be considered "beautiful." Besides, these objects will be used to judge other elements as "beautiful" or "ugly" according to the variations they make such as volume, texture, and light, establishing canons of beauty and ugliness depending on the reader's perception. On the contrary, aesthetics creates patterns, which are not related to the reader's perception but to social canons relating the patterns exclusively to "beauty." Burke states that: "it is my design to consider beauty as distinguished from the sublime" (43), so Burke separates the aesthetic effects of beauty from the sublime conclusion of ugliness. As Burke clarifies, it is "his design" (meaning his decision) to make the difference among the results, as a particular criteria. Therefore, the distinction of an object as beautiful or ugly is subjective and does not have anything to do with its physical features.

However, Marshall argues that objects have an immediateness of beauty and ugliness. These immediate traits are called *il bello immediate* or *il bello di raporto* and *il bello sensible* or *il bello interno* (De Listowel 23). Therefore, if Marshall is interpreted literally, then it can be said that there are two kinds of beauty: the immediate beauty and the internal beauty. Consequently, there are also two kinds of ugliness, according to the law of contrasts: the immediate ugliness, which refers more to external ugly aspects of

an object—and the internal ugliness, which would be related to the moral nature and inner self.

Literature portrays countless examples of how Marshall's theory of pleasure can be proven, how the immediate ugliness is represented, and how, by using the reader's perception and the law of contrasts, characters can be classified into the internal and/or immediate ugliness. For instance, the Hunchback of Notredame can be classified as an example of immediate ugliness as he is physically ugly outside, while the beautiful voice of the sirens in Greek and Roman mythology can be classified as internal ugliness since the charm in their voices' final goal is capturing men to devour them as their prey. Although Marshall establishes that there will always be objects that embody moral and physical beauty and ugliness at the same time, the Theory of Pleasure emphasizes the reader's perception and reaction over the object.

Therefore, as a reader, the subject is free to love or reject a character like Mr. Hyde from *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Indeed, according to the Theory of Pleasure, the reader can perceive Mr. Hyde as a fascinating character, inviting the reader immerse him/herself into an "ecstatic" sensation of cruelty. If the fascinating reaction that a character like Mr. Hyde produces in the reader wins over Mr. Hyde's own cruelty and external ugliness, it becomes thus an example of pleasure in the reader due to the sublime effect of the ugly. Mr. Hyde is thus a case of total ugliness: immediate and internal.

The fascination that the reader experiences in the presence of the ugly (as portrayed by literature) is another form of the sublime. The ugly is the only element that can create

a sublime sensation in the reader according to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his essay *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, "Lo bello y Lo sublime. Ensayo de estética y moral," and Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime. For Burke, the sublime is:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*, that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied with the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. (16)

The sublime thus generates a powerful emotion that the reader cannot resist and traps him/her into a kind of ongoing ecstasy. Kant explains that the sublime sentiment in the reader is a product of his/her own sensibility towards the ugly. For Burke, however, the pleasure has levels that might reach certain minor effects on readers (admiration, reverence, and respect), up to the major result of the sublime, which is a feeling compared to "astonishment" or "the state of the soul in which all its emotions are suspended with some degree of horror" (Burke 25).

In addition, for Burke, this sensibility originates in different roots: "Objects should be capable of exciting pain or pleasure from other causes" (12). For Kant, the reader reacts differently towards the object, with a unique sensorial response depending on how the object impresses him/her: "de ahí proviene que algunos sientan placer con lo que a otros produce asco" (Kant 5). Burke supports Kant's idea, and the critic does not

separate the concept of pleasure from pain as both co-exist: "Pleasure does not have its origin in the removal of pain or danger" (14). In fact, if there is any removal of pain from pleasure, Burke states that the reader is in a state of "relative pleasure" or "delight" (Burke 14).

Kant also explains that the sublime is usually joined by the feeling of terror, melancholy, a simple sensation of awe, or a feeling of beauty. According to Kant, if terror accompanies the sublime, it belongs to the *terrifying sublime*. If melancholy joins the sublime, it belongs to *the noble*, and if the reader experiences a sublime effect that relates to the feeling of beauty, the reader experiences *the marvelous* (2). On the other hand, for Burke, the sublime has variable consequences on readers, which depend entirely upon: "a greater degree of natural sensibility or from a closer and longer attention to the object" (8). Therefore, for Burke, the sublime depends on the reader's own perception and on the kind of object that produces the sublime outcome on the subject.

Contrary to Kant's classifications, Burke adds more elements that can create a sublime result such as power, terror, pain, passion, nature, arts, curiosity, sympathy, suddenness, excess, light, darkness, and imagery in general (sounds, smells, and textures). All these aspects may create impressions of the sublime. For instance, passion might be originated by feelings like love or grief, social issues, judgment or reasoning, or even human instincts like self-preservation. Burke comments that: "the passions which concern self-preservation turn mostly on pain or danger. The ideas of pain, sickness, and death, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror, but life and health,

though they put people in a capacity of being affected with pleasure, make no such impression by the simply enjoyment" (Burke 16). The common denominator among all those aspects is the effect they create on the reader, which is basically related to a negative permanent sense of anxiety upon the reader. Burke asserts that readers simply "enjoy" their states of love, sadness, pain, and danger producing a feeling of permanent "loss" in the subject, who prefers to remain on this state. The permanence of this perception of "loss" is thus a necessary requirement for the sublime to take place:

> When men describe in which manner they are affected by pain or danger, they do not dwell on the pleasure of health and the comfort of society, and lament the *loss* of these satisfactions: the whole turns upon the actual pains and horrors which they endure. But if you listen to the complaints of a forsaken lover, you observe that he insists largely on the pleasure which he enjoyed, or hoped to enjoy, and on the perfection of the object of his desires; it is the *loss* which is always uppermost in his mind. The violent effect produced by love, which has sometimes been even wrought up to madness, is no objection to the rule which we seek to establish. (Burke 17)

In spite of the powerful attraction the sublime evokes, the reader cannot be in the presence of the sublime for a long time since such over-exposure can cause a repulsive result. Burke supports the idea that the reader cannot be in close contact to the sublime since the repulsive consequences can appear, as in the case of Dorian Gray. He has been exposed to the sublime until his own "pleasure" commands him. Dorian's excessive

immersion in the sublime transforms the pleasant sensation of the sublime into a disgusting feeling, which eventually "kills" Dorian.

In support of Burke's ideas, Kant mentions that the reader's sensitivity for the sublime can be classified into five categories depending on the kind of sublime effect the reader experiences: the extravagant, the monstrous, the fantastic, the mad, and the frivolous:

> La cualidad de lo sublime terrible, cuando se hace completamente monstruoso, cae en lo extravagante. Cosas fuera de lo natural, por cuanto en ellas se pretende lo sublime, aunque poco o nada se consiga, son las monstruosidades. Quien guste de lo extravagante o crea en él, es un fantástico. La inclinación a lo monstruoso origina el chiflado (Grillenfanger). Por otra parte, el sentimiento de lo bello degenera cuando en el falta por completo lo noble y entonces se le denomina frívolo. (5)

It is no coincidence that literature depicts many of the results described above by Kant as part of the sublime. Mad scientists, monsters, and extravagant characters can be seen in literary genres such as the Fantastic, the Gothic, the Romantic, and the Decadent.

Literature exemplifies the reader's perception for the sublime in what could be seen as representations of human afflictions such as madness, sorrow, loneliness, and melancholy, and it is through the use of literary techniques that the sublime appears. For instance, Burke emphasizes the use of description in order to exalt emotion and imagination in the text: "that we take an extraordinary part in the passions of others, and that we are easily affected and brought into sympathy by any tokens which are shown of

them; and there are no tokens which can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words" (82). Therefore, it is through description that the reader's imagination is stimulated and the sublime can appear as a reaction.

Through sympathy, Burke explains how the reader identifies him/herself with all the elements in the story he/she reads, and how description allows the reader to picture the story through the use of their imagination, allowing the reader to develop a feeling similar to "affection" that is created by the power of words:

> If words have all their possible extend of power, three effects arise in the psyche of the hearer. The first is the *sound*, the second, the *picture*, or representation of the thing signified by the sound; the third is, the *affection* of the soul produced by one or by both of the foregoing. (Burke 79)

Therefore, according to Burke and Kant's theories, literature has two functions relative to the reader's reaction: the first can be called a "picture function" (employing the word "picture" as a synonym for "image," "imitation," or "representation" in the reader's mind), while the second function replaces the subject's image with an extended description of it in the text and becomes a "substitution" of the real image, which Burke describes. In this sense, words would not be imitating but substituting realities, as it is seen in poetry:

> Poetry is indeed an imitation so far as it describes the manners and passions of men which their words can express; where *animi motus effert interprete lingua*. There is strictly imitation; and all merely *dramatic* poetry is of this sort. But *descriptive* poetry operates chiefly by *substitution;* by the means of

> sounds, which by custom have the effect of realities. Nothing is an imitation further than as it resembles some other thing; and words undoubtedly have no sort of resemblance to the ideas for which they stand. (Burke 82)

It is through these ideas that the reader experiences the sublime due to the sympathy he/she develops for the image that is being presented in the text. The situation can be abnormal, meaning that it is not a frequent situation seen in everyday life, but that can take place in the reader's psyche even if the reader has never been in such a situation before:

> There are many things of a very affecting nature which can seldom occur in the reality, but the words that represent them often do; and thus they have an opportunity of making a deep impression and taking root in the mind, whilst the idea of the reality was transient, and to some perhaps never really occurred in any shape, to whom it is notwithstanding very affecting, as war, death, famine, etc. (Burke 82)

Through the reading process, the reader is able to identify him or herself, to be free, and to imagine him/herself as characters of the stories he/she reads. However, Burke also comments that the combination of the text with the reader's own reality is part of the sublime result of the reading process:

> By words we have it in our power to make such *combinations* as we cannot possibly do otherwise. By this power of combining we are able, by the addition of well-chosen circumstances, to give a new life and force to the simple object. In painting we may represent any fine figure we please; but we

> never can give it those enlivening touches which it may receive from words. (82)

With the charming and powerful seductive effect that the reading has upon readers, they develop "sympathy" for any aspect of the reading process: a character, a setting (place), a melody, a phrase, an animal, an element of the story, or the whole plot. The reader is attracted by a singular element in the story and thus develops a pleasant sensation in relation to that specific aspect, which makes the story be pleasant for him/her. It is through sympathy that the reader meets the sublime:

> It is by the first of these passions that we enter into the concepts of others; that we are moved as they are moved, and are never suffered to be indifferent spectators of almost anything which men can do or suffer. For sympathy must be considered as a substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many aspects as he is affected; so that this passion may either partake of the nature of those which regard self-preservation, and turning upon pain may be a source of the sublime. (Burke 19)

According to Burke, all kinds of art can activate a sublime reaction in the reader, and it is true that some kinds of literature, like *tragedy,* tend to have a sublime outcome on the reader by the "sympathy" that is developed and the "passion" that is transmitted to the readers:

> It is by this principle that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another, and are often capable of grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery, and death itself. It is a common observation

> that objects which in the reality would shock are in a tragical, and such like representations, the source of a very high species of pleasure. (Burke 19)

In this way, the reader might develop a higher level of sympathy for the text. For Kant, the reader's preference for the sublime is directly linked to the reader's own temperament of reaction towards certain situations, and depending on this emotional state, the reader has a major or minor tendency for the sublime. For instance, the melancholic reader tends to develop a more sublime effect than other temperaments:

> No se llama melancólico a un hombre porque substrayéndose a los goces de la vida, se consume en una sombría tristeza, sino porque sus sentimientos intensificados más allá de cierto punto dirigido, merced a determinadas causas, en una falsa dirección, acabarían en esta tristeza más fácilmente que la de los otros. Este temperamento tiene, principalmente, *sensibilidad para lo sublime*. Aun la belleza, a la cual es igualmente sensible, no le encanta tan solo, sino que, llenándole de asombro le conmueve. El placer de las diversiones es en él más serio; pero por lo mismo, no menor. Todas las conmociones de lo sublime tienen algo más fascinador en sí que el inquieto encanto de lo bello. (Kant 8)

Therefore, if the subject's own temperament drives him/her to develop a hyper sensibility for the sublime, the same will happen in literature. The sensibility for the sublime could be represented in the pages of a story, in the characters, in the writer's imagery. In this case, if the "right" reader finds the "right" text, the sublime might appear in the predisposed melancholic reactions of readers who can develop "sympathy"

for the sublime ideas in the text. It is in the reader's unconscious where the pre-disposed "tastes" and "reactions" are kept. Consequently, this project will explore the presence of the unconscious in the reading process and its relation to the irruption of the sublime.

1. The Role of the Unconscious in the Sublime Effect of Texts

Dylan Evans, in his *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis,* explains the meaning of the word "unconscious" and how it is expressed in the subject. When the word "unconscious" is used as an adjective, "it simply refers to mental processes that are not the subject of the conscious attention at a given moment" (217), describing mainly the processes of the unconscious, spontaneous, involuntary actions, for instance. However, when the word refers to a noun, "(the unconscious *das Unbewußte),* it designates one of the physical systems which Freud described in his first theory of psychic structure (the 'first topographical model')" (217). In his first theory of the unconscious, Freud explains that the psyche is divided in three parts, the "conscious" (Cs), the "preconscious" (Pcs), and the "unconscious" (Ucs). The unconscious is not merely outside the consciousness but also "radically separated from the consciousness by repression and thus cannot enter the consciousness-preconscious system without distortion" (217). This is the part of the psyche that captures all the repressed thoughts of the subject such as traumas and fears, and it is usually expressed through distorted images. This is also the "area" where predisposed thoughts are believed to be hidden, sanctioned, and kept.

Nevertheless, in his second model, Freud elaborates "the structural theory" in which the psyche is divided into three agencies of subjectivity—*id*, *ego*[27], and *superego*. Evans explains that: "in this model, no one agency is identical to the unconscious, since even the ego and the superego have unconscious parts" (217). Contrary to popular conceptions, the unconscious is neither the opposite of the conscious nor "that which is repressed" (218). Evans emphasizes that the unconscious has been misunderstood since it is not directly related to the instincts, so it is not instinctual. In fact, "it is linguistic" (218). For psychoanalysis, the unconscious is the consequence of the language upon the subject. The word can have a special meaning for the subject depending on his/her personal background and the meaning the subject gives to that word produces an "effect." Hence, language exemplifies meaning, in the same way that a word is a "signifier" for a subject. Therefore, the word has a signifier/signified role in the Lacanian theory similar to what is found in linguistics. According to Lacan, the signifier is located in the symbolic order where language is born.

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[27] Ego (*Ich* for Freud, and *moi* or *je* for Lacan). The ego is a construction formed by the identification with the specular image in the Mirror Stage. It is thus the place where the subject becomes alienated from himself, transforming himself into the counter image. The ego is an imaginary formation as opposed to the subject, which is a product of the symbolic. The ego manifests itself as a "symptom." The ego is thus a 'set of illusions.' The ego is resistant to any growth or change.

For Lacan, the term *ego* has two contradictory meanings in Freud. In the theory on narcissism: the ego takes sides against the object. In the context of the 'structural model,' the ego takes sides with the object. The ego is linked with the pleasure principle and with the perception-consciousness system, contradicting its role with the pleasure principle.

In Lacan's view, the aim of the analyst is neither to teach the analysand how to live with his/her ego, nor to strengthen it. Otherwise, the subject will be resistant to the treatment and so alienated. "By undermining the fixity of the ego, psychoanalytic treatment aims to restore the dialectic of desire and reinitiate the coming-into-being of the subject." See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 52.

Therefore, the opposite of the ego is the subject, that is why, in psychoanalysis, the term "individual" does not exist and "subject" is used instead (divided and alienated).

This implies that, for Lacan, the unconscious has its own language and communicates with the subject. Consequently, the unconscious speaks and manifests, meaning that the unconscious has its own "discourse" (218), as Dylan Evans explains. As a result, the unconscious speaks "in its own way," and it might use the articulated language (verbal or written) as a way of expression. Some of the examples when the unconscious "appears" and "expresses" itself are jokes, parapraxes, slips of the tongue, and dreams (called "formations of the unconscious"). If the unconscious speaks and uses language to communicate, a written text may also be considered a way of expression for the unconscious since a text is a graphical representation of language.

Depending on the content portrayed by the unconscious in the text, the reader can relate the content with the subjective history hidden in his/her unconscious, and the reader can react towards what is in the text as if a mechanism is recalled and activated in the unconscious. For instance, traumas are anxious situations of the subject's history that he or she does not want to face and thus blocks them in his/her unconscious in order to continue with his/her life as if those events never took place. When there is an element in a text that makes the reader remember those disturbing cirscunstances, the trauma activates, and the reader experiences a sublime/shocking reaction. For that reason, literature is an expression of the unconscious. For Lacan and Freud, all kinds of art have the potential to manifest and express the psyche. For instance, Evans reaffirms the importance that literature (and some other arts) has for psychoanalysis:

> Freud also dedicated a number of papers to analyzing particular works of art, especially works of literature, which he argued could be useful to

> psychoanalysis in two main ways. Firstly, these works often express in poetic form truths which psychoanalysis only discovers later by more laborious means. Second, Freud also argued that a close psychoanalytic reading of works of literature could uncover elements of the author's psyche. (13)

Although Freud and Lacan both recognize the importance of artistic production as an expression of the psyche, Lacan prefers to analyse the *analysand*'s discourse instead of other works of art, giving a communicative and linguistic characteristic to the story that the patient tells his/her analyst as a kind of "story-text." It is through the "story-text" that the analyst decodes what the patient's unconscious wants to say, similar to how a reader interprets literature.

However, Lacan insists that the psychoanalyst does not make a "literary analysis" despite his acknowledgement of the importance of using literature as "tool" to decipher "something about psychoanalysis" (Evans 14). For Lacan, the psychoanalyst does not exercise literary criticism but "psycho analysis," only using literary texts to extract "pieces" that work as linguistic metaphors to "illustrate a mode of analytic interpretation and psychoanalytic concepts" (Evans 14). Thus Lacan contributes to the concept of "psychoanalytic literary criticism," wherein literature can be seen to exemplify the expression of the unconscious in written language.

This project asserts that texts like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are more than simple examples of how literature can be analyzed from a psychoanalytical approach, having the additional function of the powerful seductive effect captured in sublime contexts. This thesis exhibits how psychoanalytic theories such as the Scopic Drive, and

psychoanalytic examples, like the fragmented subject, are not just merely present in the text, but actively seduce readers by inviting them to decode and understand the content. Let us remember that seduction "challenges" the reader. In other words, texts seduce readers who find delight in analytic complexity related to psychic issues. In the *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the crucial psychic problem is the enigmatic anxiety related to the secret of the painting and its "evil power" over the characters (mainly Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward). In fact, it is the anxiety that the secret produces that becomes pleasant for most of the characters and keeps them in a sublime ecstasy until their anguish destroys them. Their own "ugliness" kills them despite it seduces them. Therefore, how can ugliness "seduce" readers? It does it through the sublime effect.

2. The Sublime in the Ugly: The Seduction of Ugliness

The sublime, the beautiful, and the ugly could be interlinked in the same story since all three are human aspects, which are represented in literature. A clear example of a text with all three elements is *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Kant explains that "una edad avanzada se une con los caracteres de lo sublime; en cambio, la juventud, con los de lo bello" (4). Since *The Picture of Dorian Gray* exhibits the struggle between aging and youth, the reader faces a text that struggles for power, and power is seductive. For Kant, the ugly dominates the scene of seduction since only ugliness has a more powerful consequence on the reader than beauty, and thus ugliness becomes sublime for the reader. If ugliness is so seductive, why is it that people are so afraid of it?

The subject has to live both the experience of youth and aging. In the early stage of life, he or she will be immersed in the order of the beautiful (youth), but as time goes by, the subject experiences a series of physical and mental changes that drive him/her towards the ugly of aging. Many of the normal reactions during this final stage include feelings classified by Kant and Burke under the sublime: terror, melancholy, loneliness, sorrow, and awe, among others.

Most of these feelings produce a high level of anxiety in the subject, whose reaction can become so unbearable that the subject might want to "die." That is why despite the seduction of ugliness, people are afraid of it. Aging is the road to death. In spite of how seductive the road can be, it is a path to human fatality. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is thus an example of the sublime horror of human decline, how this process happens, and why it seduces and scares readers at the same time.

The Picture of Dorian Gray might cause a feeling of anguish in the reader since it presents situations that seduce because of the moral ugliness represented in the cruelty that repels readers. The *Picture of Dorian Gray* is seductive for the reader who enjoys a competition for seduction. The story develops a moral debate between beauty and ugliness using the physical aspect as a means of exemplifying the ethical discussion exposed in the novel. In fact, the narrator clearly defines that the text will focus on this topic when he writes:

> The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proven. No artist

> has ethical sympathies [...]. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. (Wilde 3)

Literature is an expression of the deepest thoughts hidden in the author's psyche, regardless of the nature of these thoughts. If the assumption that forbidden visions are hidden in the unconscious is accepted, and that the unconscious "speaks out" through its different means, then readers would expect literature to develop texts with a focus on vice, cruelty, immorality, and evilness, exposing "the forbidden" parts of the human psyche in the text in what Freud calls "the return of the repressed."

Traditionally, some theories and literary critics concentrate more on beauty as Agnes Heller does in "What Went Wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful?"

> Beauty enchants us, troubles us, appeases us, causes joy, rapture, it is revealing, captivatig, gives us pleasure—we enjoy it, it elevates us, it makes us ecstatic. Beauty is never a mere mental experience; it is the experience of emotions, passions, desires, senses—of feelings. When we experience beauty, normally, our senses are also aroused—we hear the beautiful sound, we see the beautiful sight, and sometimes, although rarely, we also touch and smell the beautiful things. (5)

The consequence from the beautiful described above is similar and comparable to the ecstasy that the reader experiences in the presence of the sublime, although the source that produces each kind of "pleasure" is dissimilar. The series of reactions that the beautiful causes drive the reader into an "elevated" feeling according to Heller, which is similar to what Kant and Burke attribute to the sublime, with a common feeling of

"immensity," and "awe." Heller even relates beauty with passion, the senses, and desires, the same aspects that develop the sublime. Therefore, the reactions from beauty and ugliness are similar for some critics. As a result, even for the literary critics, the effects of "beauty" or "ugliness" on readers are confusing and not well delimited. Contrary to Heller, however, this project clearly delimits the sublime from the ordinary pleasure experienced by the reader in the presence of the beautiful, following the theories of Marshall, Burke, and Kant. From this perspective, the sublime cannot be caused by any beautiful source.

Previously, it has been defined that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an anti-aesthetic moral novel because of the emphasis the novel makes in the struggle between good and evil. In fact, the dichotomy between good and evil became a major literary trend in British and American literature, developing what are known as "metaphysical novels"[28] whose exponents are well-recognized writers of Romantic fiction like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville in American literature. The metaphysical novel exposes dichotomies between good and evil as part of the deep religious context of Romanticism, exploring the concepts of moral and physical evil.

Umberto Eco in *On Ugliness* mentions that the first and most complete *Aesthetics of Ugliness,* written in 1853 by Karl Rosenkratz, draws an analogy between ugliness and

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[28] The Metaphysical novel was a major genre of Romance that flourished in England and America during the middle decades of the nineteenth century and thus met the late century literature of the 1800s. Previously, the genre was studied only in poetry like John Donne's work. It had powerful aesthetic and philosophical roots in Romanticism and was closely related to idealistic fiction in Germany, France, and Italy. Among the stylistic elements of the metaphysical fiction, the reader finds an antagonistic authorial tone, static and only semi-realistic characterization, and an eccentric plot structure. Metaphysical novelists saw themselves as Romantic reformers and secular prophets overthrowing the world view of their contemporaries. One of the objectives of the metaphysical novel is questioning reality and the vision of God as reality, even questioning the existence of God. See Eigner, *The Metaphysical Novel* 3-5.

moral evil: "Just as evil and sin are the opposites of good, whose hell they represent, so is ugliness 'the hell of beauty'" (16). Therefore, as in beauty, there is moral and physical ugliness as well. When Conde De Listowel refers to beauty in *Historia crítica de la estética moderna*, he finds two kinds of beauty: physical and moral, "esto abarcaría el alma bella tanto como el cuerpo bello" (257). Additionally, Agnes Heller states in "What Went Wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful?" that: "beautiful can be the shapes and the forms, the things, men and women, the soul, every living being, actions, characters, states of mind, friendship, love, propositions, the psyche, the spirit, the body, gestures, the behavior and so on" (1). The same objects seen here as beautiful can also be sources of ugliness.

Heller also explains that "we use—as we always did—the category-pair ugly/beautiful as a category-pair or value-orientation" (1), and argues that this value-oriented analysis has a powerful social base: "the general category-pair of value-orientation (good-bad) in its unspecified, undifferentiated way, stands for 'according to the rules of the customs' and 'contrary to the rules of the customs' respectively" (1). The traditional thought is that everything that comes from God (the rules of the customs according to Heller) is good and beautiful whereas everything that goes against him is ugly and evil.

Therefore, the question arises: Are beauty/ugliness and good/evil either "natural" or "socially constructed"? They are both, but their roles might defer depending on subjective interpretation. For instance, the gargoyles in Gothic cathedrals are not beautiful. They are horrifying. They are "externally ugly" and what they represent is

ugly—the devil—but through the reverted roles of art in the Law of Contrasts (a concept that will be studied in the next section),[29] they become agents of the magnificence of God upon the devil. The reverted outcome of art in the reader's mind is beautiful and awesome, and it is through the terrifying effect they cause on the reader that they are sublime. Consequently, ugliness and beauty can be physical or moral depending on how they are physically built and socially constructed, and their products can be transposed.

Reinforcing what Heller exposes the metaphysical novel exhibits this purifying and seductive function of art—and so of literature—since it accomplishes the "transference of evil," that is a concept developed in social anthropology in order to explain the "riddance of evil" in societies and the use of human free will. Different artistic movements along history as in Decadence, Romanticism, and Gothicism have nurtured from this socio-cultural expressions that belong to ancestral everyday life rituals, as human beings need to "get rid of" pain, sorrow, and anxiety to reestablish the order of life and, by doing so, subjects remove the source of all negative "evil" aspects and "heal" their souls. Therefore, people try to reach "goodness" despite their sins.

Theodore H. Gaster in *The New Golden Bough* a study on Sir James George Frazer's socio-anthropological analysis of magic and religion, *The Golden Bough,* states that "evil" as embodied in illness, sin, and misfortune is transferable to inanimate objects and

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[29] The Law of the Contrasts is a concept that Agnes Heller develops in her lecture "What Went Wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful" and that the Conde of De Listowel cites in his study on aesthetics referring to Basch and Lipps' ideas. The Law of the Contrasts establishes that, by contrast, an element that is naturally ugly (physically and morally) can develop an immediate contrary result n the reader and thus produce an effect that belongs to the beautiful and not the ugly. This concept is developed mainly in religious context using the devil as an example of God's power. Previously, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine of Hippo had mentioned that the use of scary images in cathedrals during Medieval Age was an aesthetic tool to make people remember the magnificence of God, "contrasting" it with the decadence of the devil.

animals so that the subject can be cured and redeemed of his/her sin. "At the outset it is to be observed that the evil of which a man seeks to rid himself need not be transferred to a person, it may equally well be transferred to an animal or thing, though in the last case the thing is often only a vehicle to convey the trouble to the first person who touches it" (509). Therefore, evil can "infest" objects, and remain trapped inside them until it is liberated and eliminated. The portrait of Dorian Gray is "the object" that imprisons Dorian's evil and captures it exercising power upon the character in the story who tries to keep his satanic bargain hidden from the world, but why can a picture (a thing) exercise power upon a character? The portrait does it through the "fantastic" power of evil and its representation in the "magic painting" tradition, with a deep, powerful, religious and moral implication in its literary function.

Undoubtedly, society and religion are both sources of behavioral patterns subjects must follow in order to live in diverse social groups and co-exist in harmony according to the established rules by the groups. Literature works as a depiction of social environment and oppression peoples live at a certain time in history. Consequently, literary art exemplifies the dogmatic "fears" inherited and imposed on subjects' minds to implement rigid moral codes, such as the existence of "evil" and "good."

The chief exorcist from the Vatican, Gabriele Amorth, explains in *An Exorcist Tells his Story* that the devil "tempts" subjects in order to let them know evil exists and one of the ways the devil shows itself to them is through "demonic invasions in houses, objects or animals" (21), which corresponds to the literary resources of "haunted houses," "evil animals," and "magic paintings." Gabriele Amorth provides an explanation about the

infestation of objects with evil manifestations and "transfers" to the object itself. A transference that is exemplified in magical objects such as voodoo dolls. In fact, Frazer and Gasper explain that the "transference of evil" can also be effective in subjects—acting as scapegoats. "Again, men sometimes play the part of a scapegoat by diverting to themselves the evils that threaten others" (515). As a result, the transference of evil is shown in objects and human beings.

Therefore, evil is a "dogmatic and metaphysical tool" exposed in literature and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an example of it since haunted houses, serial killers, mad scientists or men, and "magic paintings" like the portrait of Dorian Gray are a representation of evil in society shown through fiction. This project will focus on the seduction of moral ugliness exposed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* using physical traits of ugliness as evidence of "evil" as part of a metaphysical secret plot, but how does moral ugliness appear in texts? It does it through the actions of characters.

Plotinus in *The Enneads*, cited by Eco, defines how moral ugliness is born and works:

> Let us consider an ugly soul, intemperate and unjust. It is full of a great number of desires and the most profound anxieties. Fearful out of cowardice, envious out of meanness of spirit [...] it lives the life of the passions of the body and finds pleasure only in ugliness. Would we not say that the ugliness of this soul has come upon it from the outside like an illness that harms it, makes it impure and turns it into a confused tangle of ills? [...] The soul lives a life in the shadow of the impurity of evil, a life contaminated by the germs

> of death. It is not able to see what a soul must see: it cannot longer repose within its own being because it is constantly drawn to external things, which are inferior and darker than the night. Impure, overwhelmed on all sides by the attraction of sensible things, it has blended with many characteristics of the body. Since the soul has accepted the form of matter, which is different from it, it has been contaminated by it, and its very nature has been polluted by that which is inferior to it. (Qtd. in Eco: 26)

Plotinus constantly makes references to "external" nature of the "source" of evilness in the reader's soul. The author states that the source comes "from outside like an illness that harms." Plotinus even compares the source with a "germ" that "contaminates" the soul and "pollutes" nature. Plotinus states that evilness is constructed by social and cultural codes, as there is an "external" agent that takes the reader as a "host" for evilness to be reproduced since the subject is "not able to see what a soul must see," and thus facilitates the growth of evilness as it is "full of a great number of desires and the most profound anxieties," which enable him/her to fight against evilness. This project of analysis will demonstrate how Dorian Gray is the perfect "host" for evil, how he becomes deathly seduced and "sick with cruelty":

> [...]Para Basch, la representación de lo feo en el arte está ampliamente justificada por la ley del contraste. Para Lipps aquello en lo cual proyectamos un disvalor o negación de la vida, conflicto, debilidad, o deseo, es feo, y su función esencial es servir de contraste a lo bello. Dessoir admite el valor

> propio de la fealdad, tanto como una deliberada representación del vicio o la enfermedad, como para realzar el esplendor de la belleza. (De Listowel 258)

Briefly, the initial use of "the ugly" in art was to contrast with the magnificence of God mainly in the beginning of Christian religion with the fall of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. The ugly is not just the opposite of the beautiful. The ugly, as stated at the beginning of this thesis, has become a synonym of aspects portrayed in arts and related to what the subject does not accept easily such as "cruelty," "hypocrisy," "pain," "sexuality," "sorrow," "absurdity," "violence," "insolence," "vulgarity," "repulsiveness," among other unbearable signifiers.

However, it is through art that these "unbearable truths" become "bearable" for the reader. Here art functions like a veil, which does not allow the reader to see "the real" that surrounds him/her, so the effect of that "ugliness" embodied in art is less strong that it really is, which is also affected by the cultural perception. Therefore, everything can be called "ugly" depending on how the person perceives it, as well as the kind of reaction it has on the spectator, and becomes "anti-aesthetic":

> todo lo que carece voluntariamente de valor estético [for the subject], esto puede suceder ya sea porque un objeto está en conflicto con una de las grandes normas estéticas, o porque su naturaleza es opuesta a la de alguna de las categorías de lo bello. [...] aquello que produce en nosotros un sentimiento de dolor y molestia debido a las dificultades que debemos vencer antes de que estemos en condiciones de captar al objeto como un todo orgánico. (Qtd. in De Listowel: 258)

The effect of the ugly is a mixed result between pleasure and pain. For instance, a perverse theme expressed in literature can become a source of the ugly with a "bit" of pleasure:

> A diferencia de lo bello, nuestra percepción de lo feo en el arte o la naturaleza provoca un sentimiento de molestia y hasta de dolor, que se mezcla inmediatamente con cualquier satisfacción que podamos obtener para crear un sentimiento mixto, un deleite acre, un placer definidamente teñido y coloreado por el dolor. (Qtd. in De Listowel: 259)

The fascinating-repulsive consequence of the ugly has always been a topic of art. Without the fascinating outcome of "the ugly" in art, there would not have been space in the literary history of Greek and Roman tragedy, the fantastic writings of the Romantic and Gothic novels, the Decadent poets, Naturalism, Realism, Magical Realism in Latin America, the Theatre of the Absurd, the writings of the Lost Generation, the erotic novel, the Marquis de Sade's work, the colonial and post-colonial novel, among other literary genres. All the previous genres were nurtured from the "unbearable truths" of life: sorrow, pain, desperation, repression, oppression, natural deformity, incongruence, and anxiety. It is through the contrasting effect of art that people read these novels and fall into their seductive charm. Texts seduce and thus readers are eroticized. Therefore, eroticism and seduction have to be defined.

a. The Erotic in the Evil and the Seduction of the Sublime

The terms "seduction" and "eroticism" are difficult to define, and their use is often confused. For the purpose of this project, "seduction" is understood as the group of actions that allow subjects experience an intense feeling of attraction towards something, while "eroticism" is the result of seduction that subjects feel when they are seduced (attracted by something) and the development of a pleasant sensation because of this action. In other words, seduction is the "action" and eroticism is the "effect." In literature, the reader witnesses this cause-effect pattern of seduction and eroticism.

The term "erotic" comes from "eros." Roland Chemama in his *Diccionario del psicoanálisis. Diccionario actual de los significantes, conceptos y matemas del psiconálisis (Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse. Dictionnaire actuel des significant, concepts et mathèmes de la psychanalyse)* explains that the word "eros" is linked with the life drives of Freudian psychoanalysis, and thus includes a broad variety of concepts beyond "sexuality." Chemana agrees that the concept of "eros" is associated to "amour" or love, but is not limited to only love: "La referencia al dios Griego del Amor permite en efecto demarcar un campo bastante vasto desde la perversión hasta la pulsión" (132). Consequently, something erotic might not be linked to love, but it can "raise" a similar feeling.

According to Aldo Carotenuto in *Eros y Pathos. Matices del sufrimiento en el amor*, love has the power to "charm" and captures people into a relation based on inmediate and intense "attraction": "un fenómeno caraterístico de la experiencia amorosa es que la presencia del otro nos cautiva con una intensidad e inmediatez que no volveremos a

encontrar en otra ocasión. El amante está hechizado y cautivado con la imagen del otro" (Carotenuto 21). Put differently, the lover is in love with the beloved one and vice versa, and their love is based on the "image" or perception of the lover and beloved one. This concept of "love" can include sexuality, but not be fully represented by it.

The "charm" is what drives lovers to fall in love, and can thus be seen as an example of "seduction," as can other actions that raise this feeling. Furthermore, the effect that "charm" produces on those who feel it is "erotic." In this sense, seduction and eroticism are related to the "image" and "charm" in the participants of love. Consequently, the words "seduction" and "eroticism" can belong to a non-sexual context, despite the traditional interpretation and link between them. According to Ronald Chemama, love and sex have important differences, and all cases related to either one or the other have to be analyzed separately. From this perspective, seduction, eroticism, and love interact together, but they cannot be seen as synonyms. Their interaction has been analyzed by Jean Braudrillard in *Seduction*, in which he focuses on the "action" of seduction and its manifestations in non-sexual contexts.

Seduction requires at least "two parties" that interact, seducing each other either using artifice or another element to create an attraction among themselves. Therefore, there are two roles in seduction. The "seducer" starts the action that seduces, and the "seducee" is seduced and receives the effect of seduction, which he/she finds "erotic." Their roles as seducer or seducee reverse,[30] and the seducee is reciprocally able to

[30] The verb "reverse" refers to the action of adapting something else's role. For example, in carnivals all roles are reversed as men disguise themselves as animals, women, and objects. Sex roles are altered when the subject disguises him/herself, adopting the features and role reproduced in the disguise.

seduce. Whoever is the seducer can become the seducee and vice versa. Baudrillard develops his theory on how subjects are seduced by objects as part of the order of language, in which subjects and objects are immersed. Seduction cannot take place without language—either verbal or non-verbal.

In *Seduction,* Baudrillard defines the elements that interact within the seductive "charm": artifice, the secret and the reversibility of roles, the law of the game, the *jouissance* of the game and the anxiety it produces, and the *trompe l'oeil* or illusion. The first element is artifice. Baudrillard explains that: "Above all, seduction supposes not a signified desire, but the beauty of an artifice" (7), so an "unreal" element can be taken as "real" in seduction, which is the quality of artifice: disguising. A synonym for artifice is trick. According to Baudrillard, the techniques that help the subject seduce are often developed with ornamentation, decoration, and other attractive elements and methods, which generates an "artificial" image in the reader who perceives them. An example of ornamentation and decoration is make-up and the intensity that it brings to the body. The lipstick enhances the vivid color in lips, and thus make them more "attractive." In relation to the discussion of love and eroticism, intensity is one of the elements that seduce and make the object "erotic."

The second element is "the secret" or *enigma*: "The seductive initiatory quality of that which is not said, even though it gets around. Thus I know another's secret but do not reveal it and he knows that I know, but does not acknowledge it. The intensity between us is this secret about the secret" (Baudrillard 84). The secret invites the participants to get immersed in a "game," with both being seduced by the action of

playing. There has to be a secret between them in order to start the game. Otherwise, there is no game. When something is not said, it immediately recalls to what has been said before, or what has not been said at all. The secret is thus related to the second main sense: hearing and consequently to the voice. Therefore the secret involves an interaction of communication and knowledge: "just as seduction flows beneath the obscenity of speech. It is the opposite of communication and yet it can be shared" (84), let us remember that seduction takes place in language, and the voice refers directly to verbal language, the said and unsaid word, the invocatory. The game starts when somebody knows that someone else hides something, and it is forbidden to say or reveal it. This causes anxiety in those who participate in the game. Thus, the secret resembles a game of communication between sender and receiver for the content of the message, which can be revealed or unsaid. This relationship of silence vs. revelation is what seduces and charms; its intensity lays on the fact that nobody else can know the secret, and so participants say nothing about it. If the secret is revealed, it loses its "power" and "magic" and can even destroy the seduction and its participants.

There are roles among the participants who know the secret. The first would be a kind of "extorting character" in the figure of the seducer who knows the secret, can say it, and exercises power upon whoever the secret is about, taking advantage of him/her. On the other hand, the seducee (the second role) cannot do anything but submit to the Other's desires, implying that the "game of the secret" is also a game for power.

The participants of the game can also suffer "anxiety" as a result of the secret, leading both parties to end up exercising a similar level of power over the other as the

two of them are involved in the secret and the price they pay for it. "The secret maintains its power only at the price of remaining unspoken" (84). Applied to literature, the fact of knowing or keeping a secret is what makes engaging with a narrative so fascinating; readers want to know what the secret is, so it becomes an enigma, and those who know the answer enjoy knowing it: "being an enigma, enigmatically possesses its own resolution, and so aspires to remain in secret and in the joys of secrecy" (85). The "enigmatic pleasure" thus provokes seduction and the participants find it "erotic."

The third element of seduction is hidden in the secret as it is an "implied" part of it. Baudrillard mentions that the secret is not inside the "law" (by which he means the "commitment" the parties make in the secret) but outside it. The secret cannot be regulated by any kind of rule established by people, but it is controlled by the "word" of honor, or the unspoken agreement between the two parties participating in the game, making the charm of the game a challenge against the impulse to "reveal" the secret, which is also a challenge against language itself whose main aim is communication. Subjects like talking, but with the secret, they cannot do it; it is prohibited: "Seduction is immediately reversible, and its reversibility is constituted by the challenge it implies and the secret in which it is absorbed" (Baudrillard 86). Therefore, the secret creates another category of seduction, the seduction of "committing" to the secret, which produces anxiety in those who keep and know the secret; plus a secondary seduction hidden in the "respect" for the secret itself. It is in the pact that both parties make that anxiety appears.

The fourth element of seduction is the *jouissance* of the game. The seduction of the game is not found in winning or losing the game, but in "playing" the game, and enjoying it: "I play. You play. We both play." "We 'love to play.'" Being immersed in the game, participating in it, is seductive and erotic. The mechanics of the game follow the same principles the secret develops. The game starts with an invitation from one of the parties to play. One of the parties challenges the other to play: "to be or not to be part of the game. That is the question." When the challenge appears, the game makes the participants commit when they are tricked by the artifice of the game.

Baudrillard explains that the seducer wants the seducee to fall into his/her trap, so the seducer "tricks" the seducee, making him/her believe the seducer wants something "different" to what he/she really does. The seducer persuades the seducee that he or she is not being seduced (when indeed he/she is), and as a end, the seducee falls into the seducer's trap. Hence, the game is a challenge: being or not being seduced. However, the seducee can also "trick" his/her seducer. Consequently, the seducee can become a seducer, making the would-be seducer fall into his/her own trap. As a result, the challenge in the game can lead the parties to exchange their roles. Both parties can perform either role, and when they exchange roles, seduction strengthens. It is all an illusion, which is the fifth element in seduction, *trompe-l'œil*.

The illusory[31] effect or *trompe-l'œil* is a well-established technique in art. J.J. Martínez González affirms in *Historia crítica del arte* that pictorial arts like painting and

[31] I will use the term illusion in order to respect Baudrillard's theory. However, this term mainly refers to "appearance." In fact, a good example of how the illusion appears is in the optic effect that the mirage of the oasis has on thirsty people who perceive a miraculous appearance of water in the middle of the desert.

sculpture present a similar illusory result to the one Jean Baudrillard describes in his theory. Both create an illusion in the observer. The illusion gives paintings and sculptures qualities that do not necessarily belong to them, such as depth, projection, and movement, for instance (Martínez González 77). This is the *trompe l'oeil* and the *transposition of art* effect from pictorial arts that has been discussed previously as part of the features in Romance. This illusion is mainly an optic consequence.

Optics plays a relevant role in the use of the *trompe-l'œil* effect. It is related to one of the major senses: sight, and is also linked to the gaze. Martínez González explains that the perspective of railroad tracks has an optic feeling in the observer, seeming to converge in a certain point in the distance, although they cannot produce it because they are just part of a painting. The railroads are similar to the ones subjects see in real life, but they are just drawings not railroads. Hence, the railroads are not real, but a simulation of real railroads.

Indeed, Baudrillard uses the terms "absurd," and "monstrous" to give the reader an idea about how to describe the outcome. In the previous example, the term that better fits the optical effect of the portrait is "absurd," since lines drawn are not real railroads and do not project in the distance. The lines recreate what the reader sees in the picture, so what Baudrillard explains is that reality is the representation of what our eyes want to perceive and what others want us to see. The best example of an illusory concern in the literary context is when the painting changes instead of Dorian Gray. Dorian's soul becomes corrupted through time, and his portrait ages and gets uglier with every act of cruelty Dorian commits. Whoever sees Dorian is amazed, as he remains young and

beautiful while others age; this is the "mirage" that the novel creates. The young and handsome Dorian is simply an illusory effect, in this case, an optical deceitful result. In fact, the illusion hides an "intention" and "mocks" reality through excess and transgression. The excess hidden in the false, monstrous influence of Dorian's satanic bargain captivates whoever observes him, and also charms readers because of its sublime horror.

However, Dorian's transgression redeems him in the end of the story when he stabs his portrait, and the knife bounces back towards him. Dorian finds redemption from his sins by killing "himself" and "mocking" his own cruelty. He finally "destroys" the source of evil, and Dorian's body comes back to "normal." His now "exposed ugliness" has reverted itself, and has come back to its original form: the signs of age. The novel might have decoded a powerful religious message of hope in this event, showing the readers that cruelty enhances the power of goodness as it shows that being "good" will always remain in the end when cruelty has reached an uncontrollable and unbearable limit. The illusion of ugliness in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a "masqueraded artifice" of hope. Therefore, the novel exemplifies "the beauty of ugliness" from a religious and metaphysical point of view through a mockery.

St. Bonaventure explained the beauty of the ugly using an "illusory" image. The demon can be beautiful if it mocks itself. The devil makes readers doubt about him in its ugliness and thus strengthens faith in God. Baudrillard explains that:

> The *trompe-l'œil* does not seek to confuse itself with the real. Consciously produced by means of play, it presents itself as a simulacrum.[32] By mimicking the third dimension, it questions the reality of this dimension; and by mimicking and exceeding the effects of the real, it radically questions the reality principle.
>
> [...] The real is relinquished *by the very excess of its appearances*. The objects resemble themselves too much, this resemblance being like a second state; and by virtue of this *allegorical* resemblance, and of diagonal lighting, they point to the irony of too much reality. (68)

Part of the resemblance that Baudrillard mentions as a "simulacrum" is created through language, so the critic insists on the reversibility of symbols in language through the illusory result. In other words, the *trompe-l'œil* or *transposition of art* does not recreate the real world but presents an abolition of this real world; a trick, an illusion.

The *trompe-l'œil* is portrayed in literature mainly in characters. The seducer (subject) projects into the seducee (object) in contradictory ways; for instance, when the seducee exercises power and seduces the seducer. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the painting disturbs Dorian. He even has the feeling that the portrait looks at him. He is the model of the image, which is an inanimate object without any power over him.

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[32] The "illusory" can be compared to the Lacanian term of "semblance" or "appearance" and its relation with reality as "truth." The term is used to refer to "the general features of the symbolic order and its relation to the imaginary and the real". Therefore, through the semblance or *simulacre* of reality, the subject faces the real as appearances are deceptive. For Lacan, "love is addressed to a semblance, and *jouissance* is only evoked and elaborated on the basis of a semblance". See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 174-5.

However, through the illusory characteritic of the novel, the canvas can seduce and scare Dorian.

Regarding the setting in literary works, the *trompe-l'œil* occurs in a different scenario, in a "strange world." Real life (or what readers call "reality") occurs in a flat plane where the illusion needs the scene (the "other scene" in psychoanalysis),[33] and both coexist. According to Baudrillard, the "other scene" produces a sensation of "strangeness" in the subject. This is what makes the subject suffer and get immersed in a sadomasochistic relationship between the seducer and the seducee: "Whence independent of the aesthetic pleasure, comes the uncanniness of the *trompe-l'œil*" (64). Thus, "strange/uncanny" worlds can be seductive.

The seventh aspect is the "law" of the game, which addresses the individuality of the participants rather than the wider social collectivity. By playing, subjects distance themselves from the "real world" and enter their own private one. Therefore, the game cancels the real and excites the players' imaginations. The game does not allow "cheating" among the participants because it would go against the implied laws of the game and make full participation impossible. There is no prohibition but respect, and the fascinating aspect of playing is, simply, playing, not winning or losing. With the action of staying in a never-ending game, the competitors transgress the limits of "reality" and provoke an ongoing ecstasy. As stated before, Baudrillard's theory is that the

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[33] "Another scene," according to Freud, refers to the scene where dreams take place. Freud defines the psychical locality using the "other scene" context. For Lacan, the "other scene" is "the Other" and the "scene" of a fantasy that is "framed," as the frame of theaters. The scene has an important role in perversion, where the pervert sets his pleasure in a highly stylized scene. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 168.

reversibility principle causes participants to fall into an ecstatic anxiety regardless of who wins or loses the game.

Baudrillard cites economy and sexuality as examples of such anxiety-provoking games, but he could have just as easily mentioned politics, health care, family, or any other aspect of life. In all such cases, the subject is affected emotionally and trapped into a game of binary-oppositions: being and not being, woman and man, human and inhuman, day and night, pleasure and pain, driving the subject into a state of anxious uncertainty. Therefore, the reader is presented to a world of "binary oppositions" that can switch their characteristics and roles that generate anxiety. As these opposed qualities switch, the seducer can become a seducee and viceversa:

> It is seductive to be seduced, and consequently, it is being seduced that is seductive. In other words, the one being seduced finds himself in the person seducing. What the person seduced sees in the one who seduces him, the unique object of his fascination, is his own seductive, charming self, his lovable self-image. (73)

Although the previous quote refers to the narcissistic part of subjects, it is also relevant to the act of seducing. What makes something "seductive" is its quality to charm and fascinate us, and the charm of being "somebody's object" is erotic.

b. The Erotic Charm

As presented by Jean Baudrillard in his theory on seduction, both subject and object are capable of seducing; thus, the emphasis of his theory is on the two parties of the game (subject and object). However, Georges Bataille emphasizes the product of that seductive relationship: the erotic effect, and, as discussed above, demonstrates that eroticism is not limited to sexuality.

Bataille discusses several important aspects of eroticism in *Erotism, Death and Sensuality*. First, an erotic outcome requires the interaction of two elements, which will communicate among each other (subject and object). One of them will take the actions of the other as his/her own; the first element shares his/her feelings with the other, and so the other accepts what has been given and personalizes it, making these feelings his/her own. The second element is the internalization in the subject who makes the message his/her own. Bataille presents laughter as an example. When someone laughs, those around him/her start laughing, replicating the message. The result of laughter is so fascinating that it is very hard not to laugh when someone else is laughing; it functions like a "mirror," projecting the image of one on the other. The "charm" of how this relationship captivates the subject and object is what interests the literary critic.

The discussion of the previous section reviewed Baudrillard's theory of seduction in reference to specific characteristics. Eroticism for Bataille shares some of these characteristics, such as the game and the anxiety it produces, but it has a different focus. For instance, for Baudrillard, the seductive game is regulated by the commitment of the participants in the game to maintain a shared secret, while, for Bataille, the game feeds

from two additional aspects that Baudrillard does not directly mention in his theory—although they are implicitly present in seduction: transgression and prohibition.

Any kind of social construction establishes regulations, which are respected in all groups as a tradition, to then create moral standards (what is "correct" and "incorrect" according to the rules of the group). The establishment of those "regulations" sets also the standards to what will be considered as "warnings" for inappropriate actions and their respective punishments: "This is clear to us in the anguish we feel when we are violating the taboo, especially at the moment when our feelings hang in the balance, when the taboo still holds good and yet we are yielding to the impulsion it forbids" (Bataille 42-3). In prohibition, "if taboos and transgressions are described at all, they are described objectively, by the historian, the psychiatrist, or the psychoanalyst" (Bataille 41). Bataille provides the "logical" trait to the emotional game that Baudrillard has explained. Bataille gives a rational sense to the "effects" of seduction.

When the subject gives him/herself away and transgresses the prohibition, the subject starts suffering, which in turn leads to anxiety. However, for the subject, transgressing the social boundaries is satisfactory at the same time, as he/she "frees" his/herself from the standard codes of conduct. In simple words, the subject allows his/herself a moment to "do whatever he/she wants" in spite of the law. The subject now experiences a kind of "bitter-sweet" sensation. Whatever he/she is doing is "bad," but it feels "good." The freedom the subject experiences can reach such level of intensity that the transgressed boundary's negative consequence might be weakened compared to the high level of satisfaction it produces. In this sense, the subject lets his/herself be driven

by his/her most primitive impulses, giving space to the repetition of such violation as it becomes necessary for the subject. Therefore, transgressing creates a desirable object for the subject as it becomes "erotic." The erotic object is in the prohibition and the subject might discover it when transgressing: "The final aim of eroticism is fusion, all barriers gone, but its first stirrings are characterized by the presence of a desirable object" (Bataille 138).

The erotic object manifests itself as if it were a common object, and is thus an image. Its presence is shown through symbols exemplified in the sensorial experience of the subject (in sight, hearing, and the rest of the senses), which exemplifies what the subject considers erotic. In this sense, the erotic object does exist, and that is why it can be characterized, reverse its role, and embody a certain idea in the subject's psyche.

Bataille gives an example to make his point clear: "A pretty girl stripped naked is sometimes an erotic symbol. The object of desire is different from eroticism itself; it is not eroticism in its completeness, but eroticism working through it" (139). The image of the naked girl signifies an "erotic object" for the subject, which arouses his/her senses (in this case, the visual sense). The nude woman does not represent the entire erotic content inside the subject's psyche, but she embodies part of what the subject considers "erotic" according to his or her own view. Since the image is a meaningful sign of what the subject considers "provoking," the power of attraction in eroticism lies in the ability of the "image" to stimulate the subject's imagination when he/she gives a specific meaning to the naked woman "acting" like an object. Consequently, eroticism is the result of a subjective interpretation of images. In Bataille's example, the "stripped naked

girl" has a psychological and sexual implication, which is, wrongly and traditionally, seen as "erotic." However, what happens if the erotic object does not belong to a physical or sexual context? Is it still erotic? It can be since an object can reverse its main function. Bataille explores the principle of reversibility in the image and presents it as an erotic object, a fascinating object.

The image of the naked girl is prohibited/taboo as women are traditionally forbidden to expose their naked bodies due to chauvinistic social conventions; the masculine subject (or the lesbian subject) finds the image of a naked woman "erotic" since "her nudity" transgresses the established limits of morality in the social group. Women cannot expose their bodies in some societies since their bodies are "temples of purity." Hence women's nudity is often considered "offensive" and "subversive" according to pre-established social principles. Thus, the image of a naked woman represents a break of social boundaries inside the subject's psyche, making the woman appear more "attractive" in the seeing subject's eyes. Bataille comments that: "We are faced with the paradox of an object which implies the abolition of the limits of all objects, of an *erotic object*" (139). In this way, the subject begins to desire the idea of "transgression," made manifest in the transgressive object; so, in the example above, the image of the naked woman is the "meaningfully erotic" object of desire for the subject. For Bataille, any element that transgresses the moral social constructions has the potential to be erotic.

According to Bataille, the erotic object undergoes a series of phases. The scholar does not name them, but the literary critic can describe them as "escape," "revelation," and "denial." In a first phase, the object escapes from the scene; then the object will

offer itself to the subject (revelation), and finally the object itself negates the offer (denial). As mentioned by Baudrillard in his theory of seduction, this action of the object appearing and disappearing from the scene seems to be a game, which is also an idea that Bataille shares, affirming that eroticism creates a "game." Thus, Bataille and Baudrillard agree that the game is "seductive" and thus erotic.

Nevertheless, Bataille explains that there is a certain condition without which the subject will be unable to experience the embracing feeling of the "bitter-sweet" sensation when the object appears: the subject has to develop a sensibility for the lost object, a sensibility for the prohibited in the outside world, "man is everlastingly in search of an object *outside* himself this object answers the *innerness* of the desire" (Bataille 30). Baudrillard does not point this element out.

The subject wishes to find the object and looks for it in the wrong places when the object is right in front of him/her. In fact, as Bataille states, the "lost" object is typically inside the subject. The "innerness" that Bataille mentions drives the subject to soften the negative results of the object. From being horrified by the object, the subject moves to feeling fascinated by the now "erotic" object:

> But in the act of violating it we feel the anguish of mind without which the taboo could not exist: that is the experience of sin. That experience leads it to the completed transgression, the successful transgression, which in maintaining the prohibition, maintains it in order to benefit by it. The inner experience of eroticism demands from the subject a sensitiveness to the anguish at the heart of the taboo no less great than the desire which leads him to infringe it. This is

> religious sensibility, and it always links desires closely with terror, intense pleasure and anguish. (Bataille 39)

How does the subject become sensible for the lost object? Bataille finds the answer in the subject's voluntary "inner identification" with the object:

> I said that I regarded eroticism as the disequilibrium in which the being consciously calls his own existence in question. In one sense, the being loses himself deliberately, but then the subject is identified with the object losing his identity. If necessary, I can say in eroticism *I* am loosing myself. (Bataille 35)

Through the subject's inner identification with the object, the subject transgresses the boundaries that he/she faces to start a seductive game with an erotic effect. However, as all social groups and cultures are different, the definition and settlement of limits vary among them. Therefore, the concept of "transgression" and its essence in the erotic game have to be explained.

For Bataille "*the transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it*" (64). The action of transgression goes beyond the subject's limits and trespasses them. The ambivalence in the object to social prohibition makes its outcome "erotic, tempting, and fascinating," and invites the subject to explore it, get to know what the object is about, and break the boundaries that surround the object in order to reach it. All boundaries can be transgressed since the concept of "prohibition" is unreasonable, unjustifiable, and variable depending on the group's perception:

> It is not only the great variety of their subjects but also a certain illogicality that makes it difficult to discuss taboos. Two diametrically opposed views are

> always possible on any subject. There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted, often it is even prescribed. (Bataille 67)

Excitement through arts can offer a "way out" for cultures and for subjects, and transgression has become an escape route materialized in literature. Through stories and characters that transgress their own limits, readers allow themselves be immersed in "unreal and fantastic worlds" dissimilar to their oppressive and boring lives or routines. Transgression thus signifies a kind of "literary excitement" in the reader.

Ambivalence is another aspect that helps transgression take place. For instance, during a car crash, some drivers tend to slow their cars to see the accident, and the more horrendous it is, the more drivers stop to see the crash. Instead of having a repulsive effect in the subject who drives, the crash is more "tempting" for the driver to see, so he/she slows down. Apart from the "appealing" but terrible scene, there are certain sections of the roads in which it is prohibited to slow down when you drive. For that reason, it is against the law to lower the speed just to see the accident since it can provoke a traffic jam or even worse, another accident. However, people disobey these road rules in order to watch the results of the crash, driven by the fascination to see. They do not care about the law, and the justification for their actions lies in the need to see.

Bataille explains that readers violate rules because of the reverse fascinating consequence transgressing the limits has: "such a violation will not deny or suppress the contrary emotion, but justify it and arouse it" (68). Therefore, the erotic is in the

transgression of the law, which drives the subject to a state of ecstasy: "Founded as it is on reaffirmation of the primary taboos, this spiritual life yet implies a celebration, that is, the transgression, not the observation, of the law. In Christianity and Buddhism, ecstasy begins where horror is sloughed off" (69). The subject transgresses the rules as it is in his/her own human nature: "Eroticism taken as a whole is an infraction of the laws of the taboos: it is a human activity." (94). Thus, if transgression is a human activity, transgression is hidden in any human "product" like art, and in consequence, transgression is in the human perceptions of beauty and ugliness.

Bataille explicitly associates "transgression" with "ugliness" and its comparative function to beauty: "Beauty has a cardinal importance, for ugliness cannot be spoiled, and to despoil is the essence of eroticism" (153). Thus, it is in ugliness that most of the social norms are reversed and transgressed: "When the sacred and the Good were held to be identical, when religious eroticism was set outside the pale, the rational denial of Evil was the rejoinder" (144). For Bataille, the devotion to eroticism has been rejected using the idea of goodness to hide ugliness, and Bataille explains it using sexual reproduction as an example.

According to Bataille, sexual intercourse, strictly speaking of how the reproductive organs look and work, does not show any kind of beauty within the sexual act *per se*. It is the concept of love associated with sex that has given a twist to a mere animal, primitive, and instinctive act without feeling or beauty; it is "love" that makes sex beautiful. Before the alliance between sex and love, there was sex, but no love. In the

beginning, the sexual impulse was a mere reproductive act, and the instant satisfaction of a physical need, no more than that.

In fact, the devotion to sex of some cultures around the world was a simple devotion to a natural act without ornaments, simplified, but pleasant. The subject lets him/herself go in the act and satisfies his/her sexual urges. In contrast, in modern times, sex is a more love-related concept and, therefore, closer to beauty and somewhat distanced from prohibition/evil. It is not a merely physical, primitive act. In fact, when sex is related to a simple act of reproduction and even worse, to physical gratification, it is prohibited, as seen in many examples of erotic art.

If the essence of eroticism is ugliness and the charm of eroticism in the ugly dominates the subject and embraces him/her in ecstasy, the subject has two options to prolong the effect of the erotic: one is staying in the erotic until the body resists, then going back to a state of quietness; or the subject can be completely driven by the erotic, and then die. In both options, the subject experiences levels of fascination as Bataille explains:

> As we are about to take the final step, we are beside ourselves with desire, impotent, in the clutch of a force that demands our disintegration. But the object of our urgent desires is there in front of us and it binds us to the very life that our desire will not be contained by. How sweet it is to remain in the grip of the desire to burst out without going the whole way, without taking the final step! How sweet it is to gaze long upon the object of our desire, to live on in our desire, instead of dying by going the whole way, by yielding to

> the excessive violence of desire! We know that possession of the object we are afire for is out of the question. It is one thing or another: either desire will consume us entirely, or its object will cease to fire us with lodging. (143)

It is the subject's decision to transgress the limit completely and die, or transgress the limit only to be satisfied and to continue the erotic and seductive game by other means. As Bataille states, the erotic is "sweet" enough to consume the subject in the game, but is actually "bittersweet," since the feeling of anguish is neither fully pleasant nor unpleasant; the erotic is a "bitter" fire that can trap the subject and burn him/her up. The "bitter-sweetness" encourages the subject to continue in "fascination" and feel anguish. The subject says to him/herself: "This scares me, but I like it somehow." The subject's reaction is contradictory for the common readers who might expect the subject to reject the feeling of anguish instead of embracing it. However, the subject encounters the "uncanny" of the erotic and he/she is trapped by it. The uncanny is thus erotic.

In the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the painting and the monster hidden within the canvas are "erotic" in so far uncanny objects. Both Bataille and Baudrillard' theories can be exemplified in how *The Picture of Dorian Gray* raises a "politics of seduction and eroticism" for the reader who enjoys grotesque texts from the Victorian decadent era. Seduction and eroticism interact in the plot the narrator creates in a text of intensity, intrigue, and ecstasy which covers a complexity of social and individual themes masqueraded in language and character representation, mostly emphasized in the secret among the "doubles" of the novel. Therefore, the role, creation, and characteristics of the figure of the "double" kept in the mirror have to be analyzed.

c. The Monster in the Painting: The Double, the Seductive Game, and the Erotic Object. Creation of the Double as an Uncanny Object

The game of seduction requires two parties who will voluntarily engage in the game, looking for the fascination of the erotic object hidden within. As stated earlier, the feeling of anxiety for the "odd" can produce an erotic sensation in the subject-reader. As a result, there are literary aspects that can create such a consequence in the subject and in the reader. One of them is the figure of the "double," which originates in the field of the "uncanny." The double appears in the uncanny scene, or better called the *Unheimlich,* as Freud originally named it.

Bruno Estañol, in his essay "El doble," explains that the first who studied and talked about the double was Freud, as he researched the effect that the feeling of strangeness had over his patients. According to Freud, "el sentimiento de extrañeza es lo siniestro" (Qtd. in Estañol: 89). Therefore, when strangeness irrupts, the uncanny takes place in the setting of the story, and can "enter" into the subject. The uncanny occurs in the "familiar" scene, the usual life, the normality of life. Therefore, the daily activities can have an "uncanny" outcome on the subject if they revive childhood traumas, which are hidden in the subject's unconscious and bring them to the present. This is when the subject undergoes an inner battle against his/her own self as Otto Rank—cited by Edith Fernández de Baggiani in her essay "El doble de Otto Rank al objeto *a*" states: "El doble [...] es el problema de la relación del Yo con el Yo" (Qtd. in Fernández: 3).

Due to the fragmentation of the subject when the child is first introduced to his/her own "image" in the mirror by the mother, a conflict of self-identification is raised in the

subject. The mother of the child says to the subject: "That's you in the mirror," when it is not. The subject is not trapped in the mirror. He/she is outside the mirror, not "in" the mirror. Hence, the image in the mirror cannot be "him" or "her." However, the reflection of the subject in the other scene (the mirror world) is not the same as the subject's own self-projected image in the looking glass. The image might have differences with the "original" object that produces it. The image in the mirror symbolizes an "incomplete" and "opposite" self of the subject, whose nature can oppose the subject's. Consequently, if the subject is "good," his/her image can be "evil." The image in the mirror is thus the double of the subject. Bruno Estañol explains that the double usually opposes the subject: "El doble puede ser el que encarne todo lo malo que tenemos dentro de nosotros y que no podemos soportar. El doble puede ser el que encarne todo lo bueno que tenemos dentro de nosotros y no lo podemos soportar" (91). Thus, the double will take the counterpart that is hidden to the world and "show" it.

In literature, the first time that the double appears is in Greek mythology, especially in the Myth of Narcissus (Estañol 90). The double–as Narcissus—is fascinated by his/her own image in the water, believing that the one reflected is the "real subject" when the image that is revealed in the water is no other than the same subject's image. Hence the double is an example of "self-fascination" and "obsession" with him/herself. The image in the water can become so powerful that it can perturb the subject's own peace and become a rival for the subject. The "rival's" image can drive the subject to a state of "anguish," and even up to desperation. During this state, the subject's obsession can become so powerful that he/she might "want" to recover his/her old peace. As a

result, the subject might want to destroy his/her own image to release him/her from desperation and anguish or the subject can decide to "remain" in adoration of that "other" image and even confuse his/her own self with the image projected.

Although the first time that the double appears in literature is in myths, the double is more associated with the terror tale as it produces that feeling of strangeness, deriving from anxiety (Estañol 90). In fact, Freud—cited by Estañol—states that the double intensifies the feeling of anxiety in the subject-reader; and the critic (commenting on Harold Bloom's ideas) explains clearly why this feeling is intensified in the tales of the double:

> Los cuentos del doble tocan una fibra sensible de todos los seres humanos; en estos cuentos uno siempre estructura algo de uno mismo [...]. Los cuentos del doble no se perciben como inverosímiles, no apelan a la suspensión temporal de la incredulidad, que es la principal característica de los cuentos fantásticos. Creo, de hecho, que son un género propio aunque muy cercanos a los cuentos de terror. (Estañol 91)

The uncanny-double tale has also expanded to novels such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* among others, but the literary genre of the horror tale develops the "uncanny" more frequently and includes "the double" as one of the sinister elements in stories.

As the double signifies an encounter of two parts of the subject, this meeting can take place differently. Edith Fernández de Baggiani comments that the double can either appear in the text when the subject's own image separates from the mirror or when the subject's image gets lost in the shadow or disappears from the mirror. According to the

literary critic, the double also emerges when one of the characters negotiates his/her soul (makes a satanic bargain as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray)*. Finally, the double is seen in the story when the character chases his/her image or counterpart as if this were a separate object. Fernández de Baggiani also mentions that the double can appear in manifestations of the subject as in the presence of twins[34]—as a manifestation of a "double soul," and mirrors that make characters age/become younger to finally destroy the mirror in order to kill the "second subject" (3). The critic comments that the subject usually does not accept the double. Thus, although the double is a demonstration of the fear to die, the double has to die since he/she represents the erotic object. Let us remember that the object is lost and must remain hidden for the subject's fascination. If the object appears, there is no lack of the object, and so the fascination of the game vanishes:

> El doble es una defensa ante una fijación a cierta fase del desarrollo del yo, de la que no es posible deshacerse [...]. El doble adopta una conciencia de culpa. Esta conciencia mide la distancia entre el ideal del yo y la realidad. La conciencia de culpa obliga al protagonista a no aceptar la responsabilidad de ciertos actos de su yo y las descarga sobre otro yo, frecuentemente con un ataque suicida. (3)

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[34] Freud makes special emphasis on a kind of tale that emphasizes the manifestation of the double soul in children, which is called the "family gothic," also found as "family romance." Usually, this tale refers to devilish children—siblings and sometimes twins—whose demoniac power derives from their entire family sexual history as a punishment for their family's sins. See notes of the course *Literatura Comparada,* 2003.

The double must die, since at the end of the story there is the subject which will remain in this scene so that the subject's soul can be released and make it free of sin. Therefore, the double appears in the uncanny scene through actions and decisions of the subject, and also in manifestations of characters and objects that authors create.

Consequently, the double can be divided in two main categories according to Fernández de Baggiani: First, there is "the similar double" in which two characters share similar physical traits and tend to be alike. As stated by the literary critic a subject "que se ha separado del Yo y se ha convertido en sombra, reflejo o retrato" (3), and second, is the representation of two people by the same subject separated through amnesia or double consciousness.

As part of the uncanny tale, the double shares a series of features with the rest of uncanny topics. Bruno Estañol mentions that some of the elements that deal with the uncanny are blindness, omnipotence of thought, separated body parts (e.g. decapitated heads, broken arms, lost fingers), epilepsy, madness, solitude, darkness, silence, and child anguish (90). Among the characteristics that all these uncanny topics share are repetition of situations and early demonstrations of strangeness in the human psyche—dreams, rejection, and fear of dying. Bruno Estañol states that when the subject meets his/her double, this encounter produces a series of reactions that will make the subject unmask his/her double and delimit "him/herself" from the "fragmented" one. In fact, it is in this encounter when the feeling of strangeness and anxiety begins:

> Tenemos un doble [...] lo contemplamos la mayoría de las veces con odio, otras con perplejidad y pocas veces con felicidad y ternura. El otro puede ser

> una alimaña persecutoria a quien tratamos de enterrar o puede ser aquel que fuimos y odiamos, o el que nos gustaría haber sido con aquellas virtudes que nadie tiene [...]. A veces el otro es un retrato externo que se descompone por la vida crapulosa [...]. Casi siempre el doble es malo aunque puede ser uno mismo más joven, guapo o inteligente con las oportunidades que uno no tuvo [...]. La mayoría hacen cosas que no puede hacer el escritor en la vida cotidiana dedicada a trabajar, copular, hacer política y amistades. (90)

Therefore, according to Estañol, the subject's double represents the opposite of what the subject is and what the subject hardly accepts of him/herself. In fact, the double can also signify an "unfinished" desire of the subject. Therefore, the image in the mirror can become a "rival" for the subject.

d. The Mirror-Painting: The Lacanian Scopic Theory and the Mirror Stage

Lacanian psychoanalysis is an arid territory for many literary critics and thus it is worth exploring, as it denotes a challenging literary area of analysis. Through the development of this thesis—mainly in this section of the theoretical framework, I will provide my understanding of the Lacanian concepts of "gaze," "the scopic drive," and "the Mirror Stage." The main reference text for this section is *Seminar XI The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* by Jacques Lacan, where the main concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis are defined, "The Mirror Stage" by Benvenuto and Kennedy, and Dylan Evans' *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Pyschoanalysis.*

The scopic drive theory was developed by Jacques Lacan from the theory on drives (life and death, mainly) presented by Freud. The scopic drive is referred as the hidden object: "the mysterious object, the most concealed object, that of the scopic drive" (Lacan 17), and from the theory on drives, the scopic drive is the youngest drive explored. The scopic drive begins with the gaze—as its name refers it to the eyes: "The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field" (73). Benvenuto and Kennedy in "The Mirror Stage" explain that "the conscious is closely related to the organs of perception" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 48), so the identification and the definition of the self starts with the gaze, to then continue with the action of seeing, and the exchange between the observer and the observed; using the gaze as the channel in which both parties interlink: "In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always" (Lacan 81).

The key aspect of the scopic drive is thus the gaze, and so the most common referents to the scopic drive will be related to the sense of sight or the action of seeing. Authors usually portray the gaze in literary texts employing adjectives related to light and dark. Writers also use actions such as writing, watching something or someone, being observed by something or someone, hiding from something or someone, or showing. In addition, authors give importance to objects related to the action of communication such as "letters," "inscriptions" or "prints," and finally to the exemplification of eyes. However, as mentioned before, the subject and the object are

trapped into the gaze, so there are three elements that intertwine in the scopic drive: the gaze, the subject, and the object of desire.

In regards to the gaze, Lacan does not provide a definition of it. Lacan states that the gaze is"[…] the function of the stain" and "the spectacle of the world" (74). On the other hand, Lacan relates it with images that "show" (75) something or someone, so images do more than allowing subjects to "look at." Images "express" something to subjects involving a deducing process in their perception.

In general theories of communication, images can characterize elements and actions. They can interact among themselves and thus create functions within the same gaze. Someone can make an image while someone else perceives what the image replicates. Hence, the subject (as an observer) and the object (as the observed) appear in the scene. At the same time, whoever perceives the image, synchronically, receives and "decodes" it reacting to the image. This reaction produces a second message, which is perceived by the sender and his/her response towards this second message finishes to close the "chain" of communication. Therefore, images can have roles such as: creation, observation, representation, or feedback, created by the action of "seeing." Consequently, the elements in the gaze can be seen either separately or unified as part of the "seeing" process, since they are symbiotic (in a cause-effect relationship). According to Lacan, "[…] think on what is pictured in the law of action and reaction. There is here, one might say, a single principle. One does not go without the other" (29). The relationship between action and reaction (better said, subject and object) can be easily explained by making a graphic image of it.

Let us imagine a rectangle whose extremes refer to two human beings. "The subject" will be in the left extreme, and "the object" in the right extreme. If one of the extremes is eliminated, the rectangle will be infinite, and there will be only one image—that of the subject's. However, the other extreme delimits the rectangle, and thus it is necessary to determine its beginning and end (defining the whole framework). When the other extreme joins the subject's extreme, the subject is not alone anymore and has a referent image to compare him/herself, so the other extreme defines the image of the subject and delimits the rectangle.

The rectangle is the "picture" that Lacan mentions to which both—action/reaction or subject and object—belong. One defines the other because if one of them is not there, the other will not be delimited. The channel in which both elements are defined is the gaze, so the gaze allows subject and object to coexist. Both of them are trapped inside the "gaze." Lacan comments on how the subject is trapped in the scopic framework: "For us the geometric dimension enables us to glimpse how the subject who concerns us is caught, manipulated, captured, in the field of vision" (92). If the subject is trapped in the gaze, so is the object, as one does not exist without the other. Therefore, the main function of the gaze is keeping the subject and object "trapped" in the same gaze through "seeing" or "not seeing." Lacan states that:

> It is further still that we must seek the function of vision. We shall then see emerging on the basis of vision, not the phallic symbol, the anamorphic ghost, but the gaze as such, in its pulsatile, dazzling, and spread out function, as it is in this picture [...].

> This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear. (96)

Lacan also refers to the gaze as a trap in which the participants are enclosed, reaffirming the idea that both (subject and object) cannot survive out of the gaze. Therefore, the gaze is multifunctional and, apart from defining the subject and object, it also traps them. Why has Lacan chosen to categorize the gaze as a trap? The answer lies in the unconscious main function from which the gaze develops: "*The unconscious* [...] *is not the dream.* [...] the unconscious may operate in the direction of deception [...]" (45). If the unconscious can trick the subject, so does the gaze. A trap is always a game of tricks. Hence, let us define how a trap (as presented in the gaze) works.

First, the gaze irrupts. Then, the gaze tricks the subject who thinks he/she can perceive it: "no doubt, in the depths of my eye, the picture is painted. The picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am not in the picture" (95). Later, Lacan mentions that the subject can see his/her own image like a "spot" in the painting: "And If I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot" (96). The word "stain" refers to the subject's own delimitation. A "stain" is an unclear element sometimes not well defined, so if the subject sees him/herself as a spot, this means that his/her own revealed image is undefined and unclear. Therefore, the subject is not delimited when it is a spot, which is another trick that the gaze employs to "confuse" the subject because the gaze commands and defines the subject: "It is rather it [the gaze] that traps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape.

Something other than a landscape, something other than what I have called the picture" (96); the subject sees only what the gaze allows him/her to see and does what the gaze commands.

A second element in the "trap" is light and darkness, which work more like "tools" of the gaze. When light and darkness are either present or absent, they affect the subject's perception and might also trick the subject with a similar effect like the "mirage" in a desert:

> That which is light looks at me, and by means of that light in the depths of my eye, something is painted—something that it is not simply a constructed relation, the object on which the philosopher lingers—but something that is an impression, the shimmering of a surface that is not, in advance, situated for me in its distance. (96)

The light represents the object that "looks at me." The word "me" refers to the subject who is seen by the light. In the imagination of the subject as presented in the "depths of the eye," the subject creates a simulacrum, an illusory image, that is "painted" as if an artist had done it, and the subject "believes" the image is true when in reality it is not. The comparative effect of a mirage in the desert is the employment of words "situated for me in the distance." The image is not in the distance and it is not a replication of the subject. What the subject sees in the image is an "optical" illusion. Light allows the subject to see and perceive the image, but the image he/she perceives might not be what he/she sees, or what it is presented in the image. In fact, Lacan mentions that distance has a role in the gaze:

> In what is presented to me as a *space* of light, that which is gaze is always a play of light and opacity. It is always that gleam of light—it lay at the heart of my little story—it is always this which prevents me, at each point, from being a screen, form making the light appear as in iridescence that overflows it. In short, the point of gaze always participates in the ambiguity of jewel (Lacan 96 emphasis mine).

There is also interference in the gaze as if it were "a screen" or a "spot" that is part of the same trap. The picture described previously allows the subject to go through the painting and meet his/her image at the opposite extreme. However, the screen that darkens the image—the fantasy,[35] does not allow the subject to see the "real" image projected. The *fantasy* is the sheltering shield of the subject as Lacan comments: "that which is between the two, is something of another nature than geometrical, optical space, something that plays an exactly reverse role, which operates, not because it can be traversed, but on the contrary because it is opaque—I mean the screen" (103). The subject perceives his/her image through the extremes in the frame acknowledging this image as his/her own and there is a screen that unveils the image the subject identifies with.

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[35] Dylan Evans defines the concept of *fantasy* or *fantasme*, which is also spelled *phantasy* in the *Standard Edition*. Originally in 1897 Freud introduced the concept of *fantasy* which produces the memories of seduction and blocks the perception of the subject's correct image as the *fantasy* opposes reality and creates an illusory product of imagination. Later, Freud attained *fantasy* to the scene that presents in the imagination and performs an unbearable desire in the subject. Finally, Lacan accepts the importance of the *fantasy* and comments that it is the desire's representation. Lacan also explains that the *fantasy* presents itself as a scene of a movie that can be stopped right before the traumatic event irrupts, so the *fantasy* veils the real and protects the subject from acknowledging reality. Therefore, if "reality" is not "unveiled," it is due to *fantasy*. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 59-60.

The subject's projection through and in the picture, the screen, the identification between subject and object, the focus of the gaze in the frame are all elements of the gaze, which are represented in the "picture." Roger Caillois, cited and wrongly called "René" by Lacan, states that art and paintings have a mimetic role (what Caillois calls mimetry originally) making reference to the famous concept of *mimesis* Plato establishes in the "Myth of the Cavern." Lacan insists that pictorial arts (and arts in general) go beyond a mimetic effect and then asks:

> What is painting? It is obviously not for nothing that we have referred to as picture the function in which the subject has to map himself as such. But when a human subject is engaged in making a picture of himself, in putting into operation that something that has as its centre the gaze, what is taking place? In the picture, the artist, we are told by some, wishes to be a subject, and the art of painting is to be distinguished from all others in that, in the work, it is a subject, as gaze, that the artist intends to impose himself on us. (Qtd. in Lacan: 99-100)

According to Lacan, the artist projects his/herself in the canvas and becomes a subject of the spectator's gaze. Lacan comments that: "certainly, in the picture, something of the gaze is always manifested" (100). The artist (exemplified in the gaze) does project a series of ideas in the picture, such as the artistic movements presented through different techniques, the ideologies of an era, and the artist's own experiences. Consequently, the painter gives the subject an object to observe, as Lacan comments:

> The painter knows this very well—his morality, his search, his quest, his practice is that he should sustain and vary the selection of a certain kind of gaze. Looking at pictures those most lacking in what is usually called the gaze, and what is constituted by a pair of eyes, pictures in which any representation of the human figure is absent, like a landscape by a Dutch or a Flemish painter, you will see it in the end, as in filigree, something so specific to each of the painters that you will feel the presence of the gaze. (Lacan 101)

However, the canvas observe the subject as well: "in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture" (101). The reverted roles of the subject/object in the painting make the subject move between the picture and insert his/herself in the canvas as the "observed object." Like a mirror replicating the image, the subject is thus fragmented. The action of observing his/her own image can be either pleasant or unpleasant since "this relation is not, as it might at first be seen, that of being a trap for the gaze. It might be, like the actor, the painter wishes to be looked at" (110). Therefore, the painting presents what the object does not want to see and it is through *fantasy* (fantasme) that the subject "can bear" what is echoed in the picture/mirror; it is a mirage as Lacan comments nurtured by the "calming" result of the canvas:

> The painter gives something to the person who must stand in front of his painting which, in part, at least of the painting, might be summed up thus—*You want to see? Well, take a look at this!* He gives something for the eye to feed on, but he invites the person to whom this picture is presented to lay down his

> gaze there as one lays down one's weapons. This is the pacifying, Apollonian effect of painting. Something is given not so much to the gaze as to the eye, something that involves the abandonment, the *laying down*, of the gaze.
>
> [...] When, in love, I solicit a look, what is profoundly unsatisfying and always missing is that—*You never look at me from the place from which I see you.*
>
> Conversely, *what I look at is never what I wish to see.* And the relation that I mentioned earlier between the painter and the spectator, is a play, a play of *trompe-l'œil;*[36] whatever one says. (102-3)

The peaceful consequence that Lacan mentions is the "seduction" that the gaze implies and this is the reason why the *dompte-regard*[37] can be confused with "love," but it is "seduction." It is a trick that the gaze plays on subjects and it is an illusion that covers the unbearable for the subject. If what it is being presented pleases the eyes, it becomes more seductive and thus "charms" the subject who observes the picture making him/her be unable to act against the trick which Lacan calls "*dompte-regard*": "that he who looks is always led by the painting to lay down his gaze," (101) which is part the result of *trompe-l'œil*.

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[36] The concept of *trompe-l'œil* is used by different theoreticians mentioned in this project such as Jean Baudrillard, De Listowel, and finally Jacques Lacan citing Roger Caillois' remarks on arts and painting. All of them agree that the *trompe-l'oeil* is a "trick" that mocks the subject.

[37] *Dompte-regard* or "tamed gaze" is a concept that Lacan "made up" in *Seminar XI,* which deals with the analysis of several painters' work and with Roger Caillois' remarks. Lacan affirms that when the observer looks at the painting, he or she will satisfy his/her desire to see, "taming" his/her gaze by the object, laying down his/her weapons as the picture has a "pacifying" effect similar to a mirage. Lacan emphasizes the meaning of the verb "dompter" as to "tame" or "subdue," and the *dompte-regard* is the "counterpart" to the reult of *trompe-l'oeil* that "tricks" the subject. See Lacan, *Book IX* 100-09.

However, the *trompe-l'œil* has a darker side and its effect can be the opposite of the peaceful sensation of the *dompte-regard.* The *dompte-regard* appears if the subject is "charmed" with the image presented in the *trompe-l'œil.* On the contrary, if *trompe-l'œil* raises anger in the subject, there will be an aggressive reaction since the image projected in the picture might become a "rival" for the subject, an undesired object, an "evil" double; which moves from a "exemplification" of the subject to "become" the subject him/herself showing his/her real self. Lacan comments:

> What is it that attracts us and satisfies us in *trompe-l'œil*? When is it that it captures our attention and delights us? At the moment when, by a mere shift of our gaze, we are able to realize that the representation does not move with the gaze and that it is merely a *trompe-l'œil.* For it appears at the moment as something other than it seemed, or rather it now seems to be that something else. The picture does not compete with appearance as being the idea. It is because the picture is the appearance that says it is that which gives the appearance [...] (119)

It is important to remark the way Lacan portrays the concept of "rivalry" between the subject and the "object-painting." The subject does not consider his/her picture a rival; however, the ideas exemplified through the image (with the canvas and colors) are the unbearable truth the subject hides, which signify the ideas the subject cannot bear. Lacan states that:

> [...] a gesture and an act [...] It is by means of the gesture that the brushstroke is applied to the canvas. And so true is it that the gesture is

> always present there that there can be no doubt that the picture is first felt by us, as the terms *impression* or *impressionism* imply, as having more affinity with the gesture than with any other type of movement. All action represented is a picture [which] appears to us as a battle scene, that is to say, as something theatrical, necessarily created for the gesture. (115)

The exemplification of gestures and actions creates a *fascinating* effect on the subject that Lacan calls *fascinum*[38] and compares with the "evil eye" (118): "The eye may be prophylactic, but it cannot be beneficent—it is maleficent" (118-9).

Some authors like Jean Baudrillard or Immanuel Kant have studied the same "evil" result of art on subjects and have named it "seductive" or "sublime." For example, for Baudrillard, the reverted roles create *fascinum*, whereas for Kant, the sublime raises whenever ugliness and magnificence appear and "fascinate" the subject; and for Lacan, the *fascinum* is the "evil eye" as presented in one of the three moments in which the gaze appears: the insight, the time to understand, and the time to conclude. The insight refers to a mysterious moment in which the object of the gaze irrupts in the scene and the subject first meets the object. For example, in mythology, this moment is denoted when Narcissus sees his image mirrored in the water for the first time. Lacan calls this moment the "knocking." Then, there comes the time the subject analyses the image. The

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[38] *Fascinum:* it is called evil eye of the gaze. "It is that which has the effect of arresting movement and, literally, of killing life. Now, the subject stops, suspending his gesture as, he is mortified. The anti-life, anti-movement function of this terminal point is the *fascinum*, and it is precisely one of the dimensions in which the power of the gaze is exercised directly." See Lacan, *Seminar XI* 118.

subject realizes what he/she sees to later accept or reject what the gaze presents through the "Pleasure and Unpleasure Principle"[39] in the sublimated[40] drive (Lacan 170-5).

Different from the "photograph," the painting is created by the painter. This is the mirror that shares the same results developed in the picture or frame: the *fascinum,* the *trompe-l'œil,* the *fantasy,* the three logical times, and the dark and light images. Lacan formulates *The Mirror Stage* basing his theory on his previous studies on the scopic drive and the gaze, the Freudian formation of the ego, and the myth of Narcissus. The Mirror Stage places the development of the ego during childhood: "the mirror stage was viewed by Lacan as a formative event in the development of the subject, occurs roughly between the age of six and eighteen months when the infant begins to recognize his image in the mirror" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 52).

Later, the child is placed by the mother in front of the mirror and he/she sees his/her reflection in it. It is in this moment that the child first meets "his/her own image" and starts moving in front of the mirror celebrating the identification; which is a gratifying sensation for the child: "The recognition may be accompanied by pleasure. The child is fascinated by the image and seems to be trying to control and play with it, so that one may observe that" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 52). The "one" Benvenuto and Kennedy refer to is "the M-Other" who will assure the child sees his/her image in the mirror, and

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[39] Unconscious processes are subject to the seeking of pleasure and avoidance of pain, to the so-called "Pleasure principle." See Kennedy and Benvenuto, *The Works of Jacques Lacan* 17.

[40] *Sublimation.* For Freud, sublimation is a process in which the libido is channeled into apparently non-sexual activities such as artistic creation and intellectual work. For Lacan, he respects and follows Freud's link of sublimation with creativity and art, but Lacan links it with the death drive as well, meaning that sublimation is not only a "destructive drive" but also "a will to create from zero." The sublime subject is captivated by a power of fascination whose ultimate lead is death and destruction. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 198-9.

of course, as the infant is still in need of his/her mother for approval, the child will ask the adult to assure if that is his or her image in the mirror as the child is now confused by the image he/she sees. The child is not able to disassociate his/her own self from the image projected in the mirror.

Benvenuto and Kennedy exemplify the three times described by Lacan in his theory on the gaze (the insight, the time to understand, and the time to conclude) during the child's self-identification. The child first sees the image and relates it to his/her own self (insight). Then, he starts moving and looking for the approval of his mother, who says: "Yes, that is you in the mirror!" This is the "initial stage of confusion" in the child with a secondary moment of clarification and self-discovery: "Then comes the discovery of the existence of an image with its own properties [...] to finally realize that the image is his/her own" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 53). It is in this moment that the child is aware of the separated self. The child now understands that he/she is "one self" and the image in the mirror is a "echo."

The formation of the ego is directly linked to the formation of the "ideal image" in the child. Before this first encounter with the mirror, the ideal image is part of the child's autoeroticism.[41] According to Freud, cited by Benvenuto and Kennedy, the child is "motor hopeless" (54) and thus fragmented. The infant sees his/her echo in the mirror and literally "falls in love with his image" (54). The echo becomes the child's "love-object" (55). The ideal image of the child is thus a product of the *fascinum.* Lacan

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[41] Autoeroticism is the link the child develops with his/her body as part of the erotogenic zones (oral, anal, and sexual stages) mainly what he/she has taken as the erotic parts that produce satisfaction, *e.g.* the thumb. See Benvenuto and Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan* 52-4.

describes it in a positive way. Nevertheless, the mirror will also reveal the "rival" image as explained previously during the development of the rival in the painting and, as a result of the identification with the rival image, the child might experience an aggressive behavior later:

> The infant experiences this discord between the fragmented self and his unitary image as an aggressive disintegration of his own body. This identification with his own body as 'other' than himself structures the subject as a rival with himself. So although the infant identifies with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body, the body is invested with all the distress and fragmentation from earlier months. Thus in Lacan's view, aggressiveness is first of all linked to the images of the fragmented body. (Benvenuto and Kennedy 57)

Therefore, it is through the gaze that the subject defines his/her own self during the early stages of childhood. From a literary point of view, it is in the Mirror Stage when Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection in the water and when the "evil double" manifests in aggressive ways, such as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that shows the product of the evil "rival subject" hidden in the mirror.

Chapter III: Mirroring Words and Horror in the Painting

A. *Manifesto* in the Mirror without Interpretation: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s Preface

Oscar Wilde is influenced by artistic movements from late 1800s, as previously explained in Chapter I, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an example of this intertext on British literature. In the preface, the narrator shows that the novel mainly concentrates on the artist and his/her artistic creation: "THE ARTIST is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim" (Preface i). The speaker immediately compares the action of creating art with sight—the main sense that the *ekphrastic novel*[42] emphasizes—in the use of the word "reveal," meaning "something to be perceived by someone." The action of revealing provides a quality of "significance" to whatever is communicated to the audience who perceives it. In other words, the word "reveal" signifies "to be seen."

The narrator also mentions that the artist is "the creator of beautiful things," echoing the intertext of Aestheticism in art, and finally comments that art defines the artist, and that the artist lives for "art's sake." In the opening words of his novel, the speaker, apart from creating an *ekphrastic*[43] novel, simply characterizes three main important ideas in vogue during the Victorian Age: the use of the gaze, aestheticism, and *Art for Art's sake.* Therefore, from the beginning of the novel, the subject-reader can expect a novel dedicated to art that will "reveal" something to the reader who still does not know what

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[42] See Chapter II "Seduction in the Ekphrastic Novel: Words that Excite the Reader's Psyche," 72-7.
[43] The adjective "ekphrastic" comes from the noun *Ekphrasis*, which is the representation of a painting through words.

the novel is about. In fact, the storyteller mentions that the "critic" will interpret his/her work in different ways: "The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things" (Preface i).

The storyteller also exposes in the preface a philosophical fight between the classical dichotomy of good/evil and/or beauty/ugliness:

> Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.
>
> Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty. (Preface i)

The narrator explains the fight between good and evil as portrayed in beauty and ugliness according to the social-aesthetic canons of nineteenth-century British society. The author emphasizes the fact that readers can find "flaws" in what others see as "beautiful," and those readers who do so are "corrupted" in the eyes of society being enchanted by art. The storyteller asserts that "this is unfortunate" and closes the idea by saying that only those readers who find "beauty in beauty" are socially "elected" and thus respected and accepted.

Nevertheless, the speaker states that the novel's main purpose is not to expose the eternal fight between good and evil as "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book" (Preface i). Rather, the purpose of the novel is language: "Books are only well written, or badly written" (Preface i). Therefore, the narrator uses different literary and artistic strategies that deal with language in the novel. Consider, for example, the way in

which the storyteller "reveals" to the subject one of the themes in the novel-the gaze: "The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass" (Preface i). What better way to expose the lie in which the British society of 1800s lived in—full of appearances—than showing "their dislike for realism" by throwing their hypocrisy directly in their eyes, screening the "rage" of the 1800s Victorian subject encountering his/her real image replicated "in a glass," like a mirror? Thus, the social criticism of the novel is hidden in the narrator's use of language, which seduces readers through its ornamented narrative discourse.

B. Painting a Story through Words: The Ekphrastic Novel in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate how *The Picture of Dorian Gray* functions as a seductive novel for some readers, in spite of its devoted portrayal of the ugly and the cruel, by showing the aspects that make the novel "appealing." One of the most attractive aspects in the novel is its powerful pictorial scenes as seen in the narrative descriptions of situations, settings, people, and of course, the portrait itself, following one of the literary currents during the 1800s in Europe, the *ekphrastic novel.* Apart from the *ekphrastic novel,* the use of the Lacanian concept of the "picture" in the subject's early psychic development and the insertion of the subject-reader as a spectator-witness is also emphasized. The idea of the picture is also addressed as "magic-picture" in the late 1800s.

The *ekphrastic* technique of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (as mentioned in the paragraph above) emphasizes the images of situations, people, places and finally, the

painting. With the opening words of the novel, which describe the setting, the narrator exemplifies the use of imagery in the plot as a veneration of the senses: "The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn" (Wilde 4). In the initial scene, the sense that is emphasized is "smell" by the use of words such as "odour," "wind," "scent" and "perfume." However, the subject's imagination can relate the words that describe the image with pictorial traits. Hence, the imaginative quality "transforms" the literary work into a pictorial one. For example, the action of imagining a "studio" and its dimensions delimits the space of the setting or the "frame" of the picture. Visualizing examples of nature such as "the trees," "the roses," "the garden," "the door," "the lilac," and "the flowering-thorn" provides the elements of the painting (the body). Finally, adding some color to the description like "pink" puts the finishing visual touches on the scene. In this way, the narrator has portrayed a vivid image on the outset of the story, captivating the reader by a tale saturated with sensuality, and allowing the reader to recreate the image in his/her mind, thus becoming a voyeur, that is, a spectator of the action and the setting, perceiving the smells in the wind as well. The power of such sensual stimulation can be seductive.

The Picture of Dorian Gray uses a great series of extensive narrative and descriptive sections throughout the novel. In the previous paragraph, the narration exposed is more descriptive and more tangible, so to speak, for the reader, as it mainly refers to spatial coordinates and smells. On the other hand, the following description, also given in the

opening scene of the novel, stimulates Lord Henry's imagination and memories into "the illusion" of the *ekphrastic* novel or the feeling of *trompe-l'œil* that Baudrillard and Lacan referred to, also called by some other authors as *transposition of art*, like Conde de Listowel:

> Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. (4)

Lord Henry—and of course the subject-reader—is able to imagine "the sense of swiftness and motion" in the scene described above. Lord Henry "sees" the movement of the birds flying in front of the window partially covered by the curtains, with a tapestry of flowers in the background. The reader "sees" the birds flying through Lord Henry's eyes as if watching a movie. The reader now perceives movement. Through the reference to the immobile Japanese paintings, Lord Henry reinforces the "mirage result" exposed in the theory of *transposition of art* that artists create. Words do not move. They are immobile. However, their meaning activates the pre-determined ideas of "movement" the reader has in his/her mindset, so the meaning of words provide an

additional outcome that is distinct from the pictorial arts and creates a "mirage" for the reader, an illusion, a "semblant" scene despite its seeming reality.

A twist in the *ekphrastic* novel's tendencies—description and illusion—lies in the use of imagery the storyteller exercises, following the tradition of Romantic novels whose ideas and principles are reborn in the style of Decadent writing, as portrayed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* In the first chapter of the novel, right at the beginning, Lord Henry and Basil Hallward are chatting while Basil is waiting for his model, Dorian Gray. Lord Henry has never seen "the lad" before, and Basil does not want Lord Henry to meet Dorian. The narrator does not directly say anything about Basil's fears regarding Lord Henry and Dorian Gray's first encounter (Basil is afraid of Lord Henry's capacity of attracting Dorian, making "the lad" paying more attention to Lord Henry instead of him). In simple words, Basil is afraid of Lord Henry stealing Dorian from him.) However, the imagery that narrates the moment Dorian Gray approaches reveals Basil's fear:

> The wind shook some blossoms from the trees, and the heavy lilac-blooms, with their clustering stars, moved to and fro in the languid air. A grasshopper began to chirrup by the wall, and like a blue thread a long thin dragon-fly floated past on its brown gauze wings. Lord Henry felt as if he could hear Basil Hallward's heart beating, and wondered what was coming. (8)

The scene portrayed in the natural surroundings simply causes anxiety in Lord Henry whose senses are so keen at that moment that he is able to hear what it is impossible to

be heard by the human hearing without scientific instruments—Basil's heartbeat. In fact, most of the actions and elements in the text describe "disturbing effects" preparing Lord Henry for the arrival of the lad, such as: the wind shaking the blossoms from the trees, the lilacs moving to and fro, the grasshopper chirring by the wall, and the dragonfly flying in front of them. The text here is a representation of an "alarm," saying: "Hey! Someone important is coming! Look!" Curiously, the narrator compares the dragon fly with a "thread" reinforcing the feeling and consequence of anxiety in the text. The "thread" may be Lord Henry and Dorian's first encounter. Again, it is important to note that "the saturation" of emotion produced in the sensorial elements of the text places the novel in the Romantic and Decadent tradition, which is characterized by such passion that stimulates the reader's imagination.

Emotions are seductive because they are intense. According to Kant, the sublime effect generates intense sensations on the reader who ends up experiencing emotion such as melancholy, fear, horror, or terror. Lord Henry also recognizes the appeal of such seductive emotions: "How pleasant it was in the garden! And how delightful other people's emotions were!—much more delightful than their ideas, it seemed to him. One's own soul, and the passions of one's friends—those were the fascinating things in life" (14). Therefore, if emotions generated by the senses are seductive, the "described emotion" is as well seductive. Consequently, the *ekphrastic* novel presents two clear tendencies. First, the narrator creates an "illusion" to "trick" the reader and "trap" him/her in the text. The storyteller makes the reader "believe the text as true" when it is not, since the text is fiction. The text "tempts" the reader. Then, the speaker intensifies

emotion in descriptions, making the text "seduce" the reader as it becomes sublime. In the case of Decadent writing in *ekphrastic* novels, the use of imagery from beginning to end is developed with the purpose of producing emotion:

> 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. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. (197)

Let us remember that the *ekphrastic* novel emphasizes the effect of emotion in the subject more than the setting described. Indeed, the closing scene of the novel in which Dorian Gray's death is revealed (partially described above) exemplifies the "unbearable" and "horrifying" outcome of the *ekphrastic* novel. The horror that is portrayed in the character of Dorian transgresses the limit of human life, and thus he ends up killing himself trying to get rid of his shameful painting. The reader is able to "feel" Dorian's suffering and exasperation through the description of his feelings and actions, so the reader "sympathizes" and "identifies" with Dorian. The description of the setting and the narrative quality of the text are used as tools to make the reader sympathize with the text and become "another character" in the story through its sympathetic sublime result.

Regarding the representation of characters, the *ekphrastic* novel emphasizes emotion as well. For instance, the first character that the text describes in detail is Dorian Gray, and it is through Lord Henry's eyes that the subject first meets the Lad:

> 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. (17)

The narrator (through Lord Henry's eyes) describes Dorian exactly in the same way that the text presents the setting, using adjectival phrases[44] for qualifying the object of description such as "wonderfully handsome" and "finely curved"; making reference to the action of observing Dorian's face as in "lips," "eyes," and "hair"; detailing the shape of his hair as "crisp"; depicting the colors of "scarlet," "blue," and "gold"; and finally describing Dorian's soul and youth with words like "candour," "passionate," and "unspotted." The mirage effect of a powerful description of the character in the text activates the reader's mindset of sensorial experiences, attracting the reader to the "semblant" Dorian, the beautiful one. For Lord Henry, Dorian is not simply "handsome." Dorian is "wonderfully handsome." Such ornamentation of language creates a more intense reaction in the reader. Consequently, Dorian is more "appealing" for the reader who believes that Dorian is "wonderfully handsome." If Dorian had been simply "handsome" the novel might have centered on a different character since Dorian could not have "tricked" the reader.

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[44] An adjectival phrase consists of a word phrase whose function is not classified as adjective, but that through the use of language, it can act like an adjective.

Another character whose appearance is very detailed in the narrative is Sybil Vane. In fact, the narrator describes her in a very similar way to Dorian—like an ideal object. The best example of the idealization of a character—which is another trait inherited from the Romantics—is Dorian's love for Sybil Vane, which he describes to Lord Henry in the following passage:

> But Juliet! Harry, imagine a girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little, flowerlike face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose. She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life [...]. And her voice—I never heard such a voice. It was very low at first, with deep mellow notes that seemed to fall singly upon one's ear. Then it became a little louder, and sounded like a flute or a distant hautboy. In the garden-scene it had all the tremulous ecstasy that one hears just before dawn when nightingales are singing. There were moments, later on, when it had the wild passion of violins. You know how a voice can stir one. (47)

In order to make Dorian's love for Sybil believable and justifiable, the narrator "proves" that Sybil is worth loving because she is beautiful and talented. The storyteller intensifies the emotion of his description of Sybil. Dorian's obsession with her is proven in the way he describes her "charm," and exemplifies the emotional consequence "intensity" produces in a character. Dorian's love for Sybil Vane is so intense that he believes in it and thus the reader understands his love for her. In fact, the narrator depicts the most important characters in the novel in a very detailed way in order to immerse the

subject in the reading process through his/her imagination. The two characters whose appearances are most emphasized are Dorian Gray and Sybil Vane since their roles in the story deal with the idealized image in the constitution of the subject, which leads the reader to the last aspect the text presents through the *ekphrastic* narration: the portrait.

Dorian and his image become two separated characters at certain points in the novel, but they are also unified as the picture is a "mirror" of the protagonist's soul that observes Dorian constantly (as a witness of his acts) and dominates him. To be more precise, the text mixes three elements from different literary traditions in the painting. First, the picture is a tribute to the Romantic tradition of the "devil's will" by giving an inanimate object (the picture) supernatural and excessive qualities of emotion and horror (also called magic-painting tradition for Abraham Jacob Nellickal); second, the *ekphrastic* intertext of the decadent novel lets the supernatural phenomena manifest itself in the portrait through its horrifying disfigurement caused by Dorian's cruelty; and third, the "evil" domination of the picture over Dorian's soul is demonstrated through the Lacanian gaze, which permits the "double" roles of "character" and "painting-mirror." In Baudrillard's terms, the picture becomes the seducer and Dorian its seducee. The evil double appears in scene.

The constitution of the portrait as a "double" is exposed in the *ekphrastic* techniques of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, firstly with Basil and then with Dorian. Lord Henry functions as the character who witnesses how the doubles are set in the novel through the distribution of space. Lord Henry comments on two moments where the "places" of the characters in the setting (Basil as the painter and the portrait) resemble someone

looking at a mirror standing right in front of it: "In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, and in front of it, some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward [...]" (5). The subject can see that the picture is strategically placed in the center of the room where it is easily seen by everyone. Right in front of it, there is the artist, the creator of the painting, Basil. Taking into account the Lacanian theory on the gaze, the frame and the action of "seeing" are embodied in this scene. By observing the position in which both Basil and the painting are placed—one in front of the other—the representation of someone gazing at the image in the mirror, and also being gazed at, is portrayed in the narration. Let us notice that both, the subject (Basil) and the object (the portrait) are both observers and objects being observed. In this case, as Basil is placed in front of the picture, the painting observes Basil as he is redirected in the canvas. Basil is absorbed by his creation, and he does not really notice his reflection in the portrait until he realizes of his image after his contemplation finishes:

> As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skillfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake. (5)

The key word in the previous quotation that can help the reader understand the function of the gaze is the use of "mirror" as a verb. The action of mirroring is attained to the faithful exemplification of a self. Basil mirrors "a shape" in his art, but the "shape"

symbolized is his own. The image is a product of his creation and Basil is fascinated with this idea and he is only driven by his "delight" of his work. There are three figures represented in this scene. Basil, as the creator, the double of Basil in the portrait (Basil and the picture), and the painting itself as a mirror. In the Mirror Stage, explained by Lacan, there are also three figures: mother (the M-Other), child (object), and the portrait (mirror). Therefore, the scene presented in the opening chapter of the novel links directly the *ekphrastic* narration with the psychoanalytic theory of the subject's (I or Je's) formation.

In the moment that Basil starts "daydreaming," he gets into the magic charm Baudrillard refers to in his theory of seduction, being "afraid to be awaken." The charm is so gratifying that the subject prefers to stay charmed. Basil is like a proud mother holding a child, looking at his image in the mirror. Like the figure of a mother, Basil gives "life" to his creation, and projects part of his own self into it, as he mentions to Lord Henry: "'I know you will laugh at me,' he replied, 'but I really can't exhibit it. I have put too much of myself into it'" (6). In addition, the gaze plays into the game of implied contrasts present in the theme of "hiding and revealing." Basil does not want to exhibit the picture because it has traits of his own self within, and he prefers to keep the painting as a secret, thereby "hiding" his own self from the world's eyes. Lord Henry does not see the resemblance between Dorian Gray and Basil, and mocks the painter:

> Too much of yourself in it! Upon my word, Basil, I didn't know you were so vain; and I really can't see any resemblance between you, with your rugged strong face and your coal black hair, and this young Adonis, who looks as if

> he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves. Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus, and you—well, of course you have an intellectual expression and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. (6)

Lord Henry does not understand why not exhibiting the picture is so important for Basil. The answer to Lord Henry's question does not lie in the physical aspect but in the internal one. In fact, Basil's secret (the fact that he has projected in his painting) will be revealed later in the novel. Lacan explains that the main reason why an artist projects him/herself in a picture is to become the object of the spectator's gaze, meaning that the artist becomes an artist by creating a reaction from his/her audience. Therefore, the need to hide the painting can be understood as a desperate cry of (mis)recognition for Basil, who shows the subject-reader that the painting defines him. The portrait also gives Basil social recognition, which is an aspect that during the 1800s had great importance among Victorians as the narrator explains in the novel's preface: "for there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (5); to be seen or not to be seen, that is the question.

In addition, if Basil's words are interpreted literally the picture might work as a mirror duplicating the artist's real soul:

> Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas,

> reveals himself. 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. (8)

Basil's own projection in the painting symbolizes the significance Dorian has in Basil's life; Dorian is Basil's sublimated object.[45] The gaze plays an important role in the representation of the sublimated image Basil has created of Dorian Gray, which can be seen when he first meets Dorian at a party, and it is through the descriptive narration that the scene takes place: "Well, after I had been in the room about ten minutes, talking to huge overdressed dowagers and tedious academicians, I suddenly became conscious that someone was looking at me. I turned half-way round and saw Dorian Gray for the first time" (9).

Basil is caught in Dorian's gaze, and as part of the gaze's command, he looks for the subject that is observing him. Then, the scene (seen by the reader) is complete. The subject and object are contemplating each other. The seductive power of the encounter is described in the terror generated by the *fascinum*: "When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (9). The intensity in the description of the encounter captivates the reader and the characters in the text because of the power involved in the scene. The moment's passion captures Basil and drives him to an ecstatic flash where seduction irrupts. Dorian provokes a sensation of "delightful terror" in Basil, enacting a sublime effect on him. Basil is

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[45] For a further explanation of sublimation refer to footnote #40 on page 147.

seduced by the terror he feels, which inundates and overcomes him as he "grows pale." Basil acknowledges the controlling power of Dorian's good looks, which absorb the whole nature of the painter, and demonstrate the role that Dorian will play in Basil's life: a master who commands, a seducer.

In addition, the gaze between Basil and Dorian exemplifies the Lacanian *instant of seeing.*[46] Both subject and object are fragmented and one exercises power upon the other, charming him. The *fascinum* starts its influence, dominating Basil by making him become part of the *trompe-l'oeil's* calming sensation. Dorian is so "handsome" that Basil hides his terror and enters the mirage of Dorian's beauty. Basil is now charmed in Dorian's trap. He tries to escape, but Basil simply cannot resist Dorian's "prince charming" good looks. Then, the *time for understanding* takes place, in which Basil comprehends that something will change in his life, leading eventually to the *moment of concluding* of his life full of sorrow. Basil tries to escape, but his efforts are useless:

> I have always been my own master; had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray. Then—but I don't know how to explain it to you. Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. I grew afraid and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that made me do so: it was a sort of cowardice. I take no credit to myself for trying to escape. (9)

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[46] Lacan develops a theory relating time and logic and how actions develop. "Logical time has a tripartite structure, the three moments of which are: (i) the instant of seeing; (ii) the time for understanding; (iii) the moment of concluding." See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 206.

The painter reacts as his gaze met his counterpart in the "mirror" that defines him: "It was simply inevitable. We would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterwards. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other" (9-10). Dorian and Basil's first meeting, and the look they exchange, defines their roles as part of the mirroring effect that the scene hides.

It is precisely in the canvas that Dorian Gray will constitute his subjectivity, although what he might find now is not what Dorian wants to see since the gaze is also a trap that tricks the subject because the subject thinks that the gaze is his/hers, but it is not. The gaze is on the side of the Other and thus "tricks" the subject who believes he/she is *seeing* when in reality he/she is already *being seen* by the object. In this case, Dorian thinks that he sees the canvas, but the portrait looks at him and knows what he does and will do. The picture has a similar consequence upon Basil since he has understood that the canvas will become his disgrace; reflecting like a mirror, the image "looks back at" Basil, insinuating his own death. However, for Dorian, the painting signifies the starting point of his transformation and decline exhibited in the double trapped in the painting.

C. Horror in the Mirror of the Ekphrastic Novel: The Double Hidden in the Painting

The Picture of Dorian Gray is an example of the "game"[47] of doubles in literature, which makes use of different kinds and classes of "mirrors" to explore diverse themes and relationships. In many cases, the double is a seductive character since it develops attractive characteristics such as ambivalence, the reversion of roles, and anxiety.[48] Thus

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[47] Jean Baudrillard establishes that when seduction appears the participants start a "game" among them.
[48] See Chapter II. Section of "The Monster in the Painting: the Double, the Seductive Game, and the Erotic Object. Creation of the Double as an Uncanny Object," 130-35.

the double is appealing and the erotic object is represented in him/her. According to Estañol and Fernández Di Baggiani and their theories on the creation of the double, there can be different kinds of doubles and their formation differs in line with "when" and "how" they are created.[49] In *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* there are at least three examples of doubles: Basil and Dorian, Lord Henry and Dorian, and finally—the most obvious of all—Dorian Gray and his painting.

The encounter between Basil and Dorian is a crucial moment in the novel as it exemplifies the subject's formation in the Mirror Stage. In this case, Basil's subject formation is better exposed than Dorian's, which will take place later in the novel when the picture is created. The encounter between Basil and Dorian, characterized by Basil's mixed reaction between terror and fascination, marks the insertion of the double that Estañol and Fernández describe in their theories, which predicts that a sensation of "displeasure" will be generated on the subject, as he/she will be disgusted, horrified, and yet fascinated by the double. For Basil, Dorian embodies that idealized image he has been looking for. Dorian embodies more than a simple sitter who poses for his paintings. At first, Basil is terrified by the way Dorian is looking at him, but then he simply becomes fascinated by his image and surrenders to Dorian's seduction. All of Basil's reactions match what Estañol and Fernández expect subjects might feel when they meet their "doubles." In addition, the subject has a revelation when his/her double first

[49] For instance, a double can be formed when the subject's own image is separated in/from the mirror, when the image is lost in different ways, or when the subject's soul is negotiated. See Chapter II. Section of "The Monster in the Painting: the Double, the Seductive Game, and the Erotic Object. Creation of the Double as an Uncanny Object," 130-35.

appears. As mentioned earlier, Basil himself acknowledges that this first encounter with Dorian gave him an understanding of how his life would be from now on: "Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows" (9). Basil describes his response when he sees Dorian as "strange," and it is clear that he is simultaneously disturbed and delighted.

Apart from the revelation of Basil's future, his own self is unmasked. Basil constantly reinforces his intention not to exhibit the portrait he has created because he has put too much of his own self in it. If Dorian's double is the painting, and Basil painted it, Basil shows his own self through a "mirror" in the canvas with "two sides." The double is able to make the subject reveal his own self as Basil himself confesses when he accepts that the picture can bring to light his "hidden" nature, which is why Basil does not want anyone to see the picture: his own soul has been "exposed" for the reader who witnesses the events of the story. Finally, the double portrays the characteristics of the subject that should not be shown to the world—this topic will be retaken in the following paragraphs with Dorian's double—the painting.

After having discussed how the double appears in the literary text and how the subject recognizes the double, the literary critic must consider how the elements and formation of the double are portrayed in the novel when the portrait of Dorian Gray is created. Let us remember that the double's constitution is directly linked to the Mirror Stage and the subject's generation. The first element to analyze is why Basil has chosen Dorian Gray to be his sitter. The main reason deals with the idealization of the subject in

the sublimated object that Dorian represents for Basil. Basil himself acknowledges that Dorian is what he had always been looking for and that his guidance has a remarkable power upon his creative mind. Basil comments to Lord Henry how important Dorian is for him:

> You remember that landscape of mine, for which Agnew offered me such a huge price but which I would not part with? It is one of the best things I have ever done. And why is it so? Because, while I was painting it, Dorian Gray sat beside me. Some subtle influence passed from him to me, and for the first time in my life I saw in the plain woodland the wonder I had always looked for and always missed. (12-3)

There is no need for Basil to look for his lost object as he has already found him in Dorian Gray, the "wonder" Basil needed is now with him, and it is Dorian's charm that has fascinated Basil. After some time, he talks to Lord Henry and confesses that: "Dorian Gray is to me simply a motive in art. You might see nothing in him. I see everything in him. He is never more present in my work than when no image of him is there. He is a suggestion, as I have said, of a new manner. I find him in the curves of certain lines, in the loveliness and subtleties of certain colours. That is all" (13). The importance of the painting as a central theme in the novel with a "mirroring" function in the plot is one of the pillars of the *ekphrastic* novel since the emphasis is made on the use of images in texts. The capacity of words to recreate images in literary texts successfully creates an effect of "idealization" on the readers through descriptive narrative. In addition, for the artist, his/her art is all, and if the artist has a fixation,

he/she will manifest and emphasize it through his/her creation. Therefore, the idealization is intensified when an image is well presented in texts. Otherwise, the reader might not be able to mentally visualize the image and would thus be unable to react appropriately to the text. If the painting is not magnificently represented in the text, its role is minimized and has no transcendence in the events.

The omnipresent image of Dorian exemplifies Basil's own life since he has become essential to stimulate Basil's creative capacity. In fact, when Lord Henry wants to meet Dorian, Basil is afraid of their encounter since Basil knows that Lord Henry can impact Dorian in his wrongdoing: "'Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses: my life as an artist depends on him. Mind, Harry, I trust you.' He spoke very slowly, and the words seemed wrung out of him almost against his will" (15-6). Basil's desperate need to preserve Dorian only for him shows the object Dorian has become for him, his object to live: "I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me" (12). It is through the painting that the relationship between Dorian and Basil is born, preserved, and intensified. Hence the portrait has a "double" function of objectification for Basil (as a creator) and also for Dorian (as the model of the canvas). Therefore, the double between Dorian Gray and Basil gives birth to the double of Dorian and his picture. The object of desire for Basil is Dorian, whereas his painting is the exemplification of Basil's idealized object.

The *ekphrastic* aspect of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* emphasizes the gaze in the novel simply by the fact of basing the whole text on a painting. According to Lacan, the action of creating a picture represents the immersion of the subject in the spectator's

gaze (the reader), as it has been previously discussed in this project. A subject is thus trapped in the canvas and subjected to the spectator's gaze. Consequently, the subject becomes one with the image, and so, is fragmented in two equal parts, giving birth to the double.

Right after the picture has been finished, Lord Henry explains the formation of the subject when he is talking to Dorian and Basil about the role of "intertexts" on artists—and of course, on readers. This is a key aspect to examine since the subject's constitution is presented right in front of the reader's eyes, however; it is almost imperceptible and thus it is difficult to decode by unsuspecting readers:

> Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. The aim of life is self-development. (18)

In the above passage, Lord Henry exemplifies how subjects are predisposed by knowledge, language, and the Other as what they learn and live is not their own knowledge but a "borrowed" one. Lacan calls this "alienation to the Other." In other words, the subject develops and defines his/herself as an object according to the rules of the Other. Almost immediately, Basil starts a rite of passage by calling Dorian to see his creation. Basil talks to Dorian in the same way a mother (M-Other) would invite her child to see his image in the mirror: "'It is the finest portrait of modern times. Mr. Gray,

come over and look at yourself.' The lad stared, as if awakened from some dream" (24-5).

Basil strategically chose these particular words, telling Dorian to "look at yourself," thus facilitating the encounter of the "doubles." Now there are "two" Dorians in the novel, the sitter (fragmented subject) and his painted image (as an ideal and sublimated object). The text indicates that Dorian looks at it right after he has "awaken from the dream," from a "different" world. Again both, subject and object, are placed one in front of the other, facing each other. Basil is talking to Dorian like the mother does to her child, but he does not listen to what Basil says. Dorian's reaction of amazement follows the contemplation of his own image in the painting like a revelation—like Narcissus seeing his reflection in the water—which is another reaction of meeting the double for first time:

> Dorian made no answer, but passed listlessly in front of his picture and turned towards it. When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time. He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly conscious that Hallward was speaking to him, but not catching the meaning of his words. The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. (25)

One of the origins of the double Estañol and Fernández Di Baggiani present in their theories[50] is the satanic bargain, a kind of negotiation for the soul between the character and the devil. Estañol and Fernández state that another possible manifestation of the double in literature is the representation of the subject's image in a mirror that will make the subject whether age or become younger, to finally be destroyed by him/her to end with the bargain. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the story mixed two of the three origins of the double according to Estañol and Fernández: the satanic bargain and the mirror.

The Mirror is symbolized in the portrait of Dorian Gray since it reflects how Dorian really is in appearance:

> The painter bit his lip and walked over, cup in hand, to the picture. "I shall stay with the real Dorian," he said, sadly. "Is it the real Dorian?" cried the original of the portrait, strolling across to him. "Am I really like that?" "Yes; you are just like that." "How wonderful, Basil!" "At least you are like it in appearance. But it will never alter," sighed Hallward. "That is something". (29)

The previous quote exemplifies the painting's reproduction of Dorian's good looks and remarks the debate between the "original" Dorian and his "semblant". The narrator also gives an idea of "hope" to Dorian through Basil's "promise" of an unchangeable picture.

After Basil has confirmed that his own self is included in the portrait, Dorian himself makes a wish that interlinks him to the painting, activating the diabolic effect of "aging"

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[50] Refer to Chapter II. Section of "The Monster in the Painting: the Double, the Seductive Game, and the Erotic Object. Creation of the Double as an Uncanny Object," 130-35.

in the canvas and "youth" on Dorian, exemplifying another characteristic of doubles in literature "aging":

> How sad it is! Murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June [...]. If it were only the other way! 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!" (26)

The satanic bargain is made and the "mirroring" aspect of the painting will start its charming and devilish result on Dorian immediately.

Right after Dorian makes his wish, the discussion among the three on whether or not the picture should be exhibited starts, and when it is finally decided that the portrait will not be exhibited, Basil points out the argument the painting has raised among the three of them, and how this affects their relationship. Therefore, he proposes to destroy the canvas: "Harry, I can't quarrel with my two best friends at once, but between you both you have made me hate the finest piece of work I have ever done, and I will destroy it. What is it but canvas and colour? I will not let it come across our three lives and mar them" (27).

Like a big Other, Basil can foresee that the painting will ruin their lives. He has already seen it during his *time to understand* (revelation) at meeting Dorian. However, the bargain is already made and Dorian stops him from destroying the picture stating

that this would be a "murder": "With a stifled sob the lad leaped from the couch, and, rushing over to Hallward, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung it to the end of the studio. "Don't, Basil, don't!" he cried. "It would be murder!" (27) The portrait now has become another character in the novel since Dorian is subjugated to the Other's commands, and so, the painting dominates him. Therefore, Dorian must protect it in order to maintain his fragmentation and his existence. For Dorian, the picture is now "his double" and thus, if the double is destroyed, he will be as well.

Paradoxically, Dorian refers to the action of destroying the picture as a "murder" when only a living being can be killed. A painting is destroyed, but never murdered. Therefore, the subjectification act between Dorian and the portrait is evident. The bargain worked: Basil immediately reacts to Dorian and asks him if he identifies with the picture to what Dorian replies: "Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself. I feel that" (27). As a result of Dorian's infatuation for his double, Basil and Lord Henry start to mock Dorian intending that the image is now Dorian's "substitute." When Dorian assures the others that he will keep the picture, Basil tells Dorian: "Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself" (27). The fact that Basil addresses the picture as Dorian Gray, like a subject by using the subject/object pronoun "you," is simply remarkable in the game of words, since the word "you" plays both subject and object roles depending on its position in the sentence. In this case, it refers to the second personal pronoun as it is placed before the verb, in the subject position. Therefore, the identification between Dorian and the painting as a double subject is clearly demonstrated through language,

and ironically, the use of characteristics given only to pictures "be varnished and framed" gives the sentence a clear tone of *transposition of art,* reinforcing the double figure and the *ekphrasis* of the "magic-picture."

In addition, Lord Henry does not stay out of the "joke" Basil makes and reinforces the subject/object position of the double when Basil sermons him after his speech about sin, advising Lord Henry that he should not talk about that topic in front of Dorian, to which Lord Henry replies: "Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?" (28). While these may seem to be simple jokes among the characters, their importance in the novel is high. The first anecdote reaffirms that Dorian and the picture are one, while the second one states that there are "two" Dorians. Basil confirms it when he replies to Lord Henry's question: "Before either" (28). With the two Dorians clearly framed, there starts a game and a competition among them (Dorian and his painting). Dorian envies the portrait since he—as a human being—is destined to age while the portrait will remain intact and beautiful forever:

> I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose? Every moment that passes takes something from me and gives something to it. Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now! Why did you paint it? It will mock me some day—mock me horribly! (26)

Dorian's assertion that the painting will mock him one day gives human traits to something inanimate, suggesting that the portrait itself has the capacity to live and

become a participant in the action instead of remaining passively in a secondary role. The painting is therefore, personified.

In reality, the subject might see in the mirror what he/she does not want to see in his/herself, as the double can develop traits of the subject that he or she does not want to explore or reveal to the world. For example, right before Basil decides to destroy the portrait, Dorian laments the presence of his double. As he is so miserable, Basil blames Lord Henry for Dorian's affliction to which Lord Henry replies by excusing himself and saying, in reference to the painting, that: "It is the real Dorian Gray—that is all" (26). Hence, Lord Henry clarifies that Dorian's melancholy comes from his own inner self—the canvas. Ironically, Dorian finds pleasure in his suffering and he confesses his "joy" (or *jouissance* for Lacan) for the portrait to Basil sometime later, while his envy remains: "Dear Basil! I have not laid eyes on him for a week. It is rather horrid of me, as he has sent me my portrait in the most wonderful picture, especially designed by himself, and, though I am a little jealous of the picture for being a whole month younger than I am, I must admit that I delight in it" (51).

Let us remember that the *fascinum* works between two sentiments, one of them, a sad feeling able to develop a great level of gratification in the subject, which will be the second sentiment on the reader, and a sensation of pleasure. The *fascinum* is a positive response to negative stimuli. Dorian is fascinated with his double's charm until the object exercises power upon him. For instance, when Dorian notices that the picture has been altered; he does not believe it and makes sure that what his eyes are seeing is really happening. Dorian even unveils the portrait to see the real: "Then he drew the screen

aside and saw himself face to face. It was perfectly true. The portrait had altered" (86). He feels disgusted, shocked, and terrified when he understands that the painting happened to be altered because he was cruel with Sybil Vane. His evil side irrupts in the scene and now it will stay with him:

> That such a change should have taken place was incredible to him. And yet it was a fact. Was there some subtle affinity between the chemical atoms that shaped themselves into form and colour on the canvas and the soul that was within him? Could it be that what that soul thought, they realized?—that what it dreamed, they made true? Or was there some other, more terrible reason? He shuddered, and felt afraid, and, going back to the couch, lay there, gazing at the picture in sickened horror. (86)

When the object is infested with evil and when the evil eye's negative effect[51] appears in the scene—as stated by Lacan—the subject becomes horrified instead of feeling gratified by the object; that is why Dorian remains on the couch looking at the picture with a kind of shock, as if expecting something horrible to happen next in the canvas with his "evil double." Contradictorily, despite the horror Dorian experiences when he knows that his crime has been discovered, he tries to amend what he has done to Sybil: "One thing, however, he felt that it had done for him. It had made him conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sibyl Vane. It was not too late to make reparation for that. She could still be his wife" (86). Unfortunately, it is too late and Sybil is now dead.

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[51] Refer to Chapter II. Section of "The Mirror-Painting: The Lacanian Scopic Theory and the Mirror Stage," 136-39.

Dorian has bargained his soul to the devil and the devil has taken him. As time passes by, the painting takes over Dorian. His evil double commands him while the portrait feeds from Dorian's fears, making him inseparable from it, being afraid of someone finding his secret—in this way, Dorian has become one with his evil side again. The *fascinum* or evil eye comes back to the scene and captures him: "He hated to be separated from the picture that was such a part of his life, and was also afraid that during his absence someone might gain access to the room, in spite of the elaborate bars that he had caused to be placed upon the door" (125). Dorian is completely overtaken by his picture. This overwhelming terror starts changing Dorian's extreme fascination into horror and suffering without gratification.

Dorian begins to feel the need for "liberation" from his double, as the picture has become more powerful and exercises an intense control over Dorian through fear of its discovery. In fact, Dorian rejects Basil's requests that he models again months after Sybil has died because of his intense fear that someone might find "his secret double" while he is away. Dorian even acknowledges that his double represents something "fatal" for him: "I can't explain it to you, Basil, but I must never sit to you again. There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of its own" (104).

Dorian does not need the portrait anymore, as its seduction and the mirroring effect in the painting have weakened. He wants to be separated from it in order to stop his suffering. That is why Dorian decides to destroy the canvas at the end of the novel. Unfortunately, as the picture is a mirror and mirrors "show" the reflections of those who look at them, the knife "bounces back" like a boomerang killing the "source" of evil and

Dorian's disgrace. This is because seduction nurtures from the subject's "needs," so if the subject does not need his object anymore, seduction disappears. By killing (or even trying to kill) the double, the subject attempts against his/her own life since the subject is fragmented in two and both parts are complementary. They coexist. Thus, destroying one of them means killing the other at the same time.

Even as the reader approaches the end of the novel, the portrait remains functioning like a mirror, maintaining the intensity that has captivated readers throughout the text. Finally, the bargain is destroyed and both the "mirror" and the character echoed in it reveal themselves as they are. The intensity of the description now focuses on the graphical representation of both differentiated characters: Dorian and his portrait. The climax of the novel is reached at the end, revealing Dorian's full ugliness in the way that the narrator describes him: "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" (178). The mirror now shows what had been hidden for years to the world and thus unveils the secret Dorian kept so passionately. His ugliness is the symbol of his sins and how they "poisoned" him.

The picture, on the other hand, has reclaimed his model and now exhibits the magnificent Dorian before he had bargained his soul and was still "good": "when they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty" (178). The secret is now revealed to the reader who has witnessed Dorian and his portrait's devilish

transformation and had been kept seduced until the last pages of the novel. Consequently, one of the most important aspects of seduction remains in the secret and how it was born, kept, and developed during the novel.

Chapter IV: The Disturbing Secret in the Painting-Mirror

From the first chapter in the analysis, the reader can clearly see now how *The Picture of Dorian Gray* develops a "seductive" text using different literary strategies. The *ekphrastic* descriptions work as the first strategy the novel uses to seduce readers. The second strategy is the use of "doubles," in the role they develop in the stories and how they interact among each other. As stated before, there are three sets of doubles: Lord Henry and Dorian, Basil Hallward and Dorian, and finally Dorian and his portrait. The seductive effect of each pair of doubles is a product of the "anxiety"[52] doubles can develop in the reader.

However, the seduction of the secret is inherited in doubles from their Romantic predecessors. This characteristic of seduction in doubles is similar to the one seen in Edgar Allan Poe's prose, for example his detective stories[53] (also called police novel), which is a branch of the mystery tale, and this is the first time that the importance of the

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[52] The concept of "anxiety" comes from the Lacanian psychoanalysis referring to one of the causes that produces an effect of "strange pleasure" in the subject when facing traumas, alter egos, fragmented subjects, or even the real, which Lacan will develop later in an extremely gratifying sensation called "jouissance," but the word "strangeness" can also be associated with "curiosity" from a literary viewpoint. In this case, the use of doubles in the text can cause a reaction of curiosity in the reader and as a side effect make the actions of the doubles and the double-characters be "erotic." The reader is fascinated in the interaction the double characters develop in the novel and the occurrence of issues based on this interaction. In addition, the word "anxiety" is related to the concept developed in Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory on Poetry* from 1973. For further reference see footnote #13 on page 28 of this project.

[53] The detective story is a subdivision of the mystery tale created and popularized by Edgar Allan Poe in *The Murders of the Rue Morgue* that bases the plot of a story around a mystery and how to solve it using deductive skills. The detective story uses different elements that some critics like Baudrillard and Bataille delimit as "seductive" and "erotic," and thus make detective stories "seductive" such as the use of elements related to the gaze. "It is not in the mystery itself that the author seeks to interest the reader, but rather in the successive steps whereby his analytic observer is enable to solve a problem that might well be dismissed as beyond human elucidation." See Carlson, *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe* 5.

secret is studied in literature. As a result, the secret is mandatory for analysis in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when referring to the novel's seduction.

In the analysis of Baudrillard's theory on seduction, it was determined that seduction requires two elements in the game to make seduction take place in the story. The doubles can be either represented by two different characters or a character and an object (like a painting). In addition, the objects become "erotic" according to Bataille if they are prohibited and thus "disgusting." In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the secret and doubles are both seductive and erotic as they signify the prohibited aspects of the novel.

For Baudrillard, seduction is a game in which parties agree to be part of. The game nurtures from artifice to make the reader believe in a "trick," which is what catches the readers into an illusory scene (like a mirage in the desert) and makes them obey and be captured by the illusion. Narratives symbolize "illusion" in different ways such as the use of decoration, the reversion of roles, and the use of incredible elements. In the case of the doubles, the reversion of roles reinforces the scopic effect of illusion in the story. When the subject is fragmented and thus divided in two parts, the "hidden" and generally "forbidden" behaviors the subject omits to show to the world irrupt in the "evil double." As a consequence, the double can be "judged" as an example of the "taboo," and so become "erotic" by expressing something "prohibited." Accordingly, the doubles in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are erotic and so is their secret. In fact, Baudrillard states that the secret is seductive *per se* as it is linked to language—saying or not saying something. Therefore, the novel always emphasizes the existence of "the secret" in its characters.

For instance, when Lord Henry asks Basil Hallward for Dorian's name and after Basil has affirmed that the lad is called "Dorian," he tells Lord Henry that he "did not intend to tell him his name" (7). The fact Basil hides this information from Lord Henry exemplifies the intention of keeping something hidden for a reason. Basil unconsciously fears Lord Henry can steal Dorian's friendship from him and decides to keep Dorian for himself and let Dorian's name "in secret." Indeed, when Lord Henry asks why Basil pretended to hide Dorian's name from him, Basil replies:

> [...] When I like people immensely, I never tell their names to anyone. It is like surrendering a part of them. I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvelous to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it. When I leave town now I never tell my people where I am going. If I did, I would lose all my pleasure. It is a silly habit, I dare say, but somehow it seems to bring a great deal of romance into one's life. I suppose you think me awfully foolish about it? (7)

Basil's comment reveals his deepest needs and fears to keep Dorian's name secret since he likes Dorian immensely, and it also explains why Basil pretends to hide Dorian's name from other people. Basil has the need for privacy and protects what he cares the most—in this case it is Dorian—his idealized model. Basil does not want to sacrifice Dorian exposing him to others since it might "damage" Dorian. As Basil comments, secrecy makes life marvelous and thus if Dorian's name is revealed, it can lose its

charm. Otherwise, Dorian's name can become "common" and "simple," without any relevance for others.

In addition, Basil is afraid of intimacy as well thus he is selfish as he does not want to "share" Dorian with the rest of the world, mainly with Lord Henry, and he wants to keep Dorian for him, like an egocentric infant. Basil even accepts that he "has grown to love secrecy" (7), and admits that keeping a secret pleases him. Baudrillard calls the love for secrecy "enigmatic pleasure." The enigma is simply charming for those who try to solve it or those who keep it unresolved to continue deciphering it. The action of reading the enigma represents the game of seduction. The most curious detail in Basil's words is that he compares the pleasure of secrecy with "romance" reaffirming the origin of secrecy in romance and mystery.

Basil's previous quote also shows that the secret is a "lack" of communication making reference to language (what has not been said remains "hidden" and hence "secret"). Hiding something becomes essential for the game of secrecy. Let us remember that the "lack" causes anxiety in the reader, thus keeping a secret can produce anxiety in those who know it. Actually, detective stories center the tension of the story in the "action" of hiding the secret and its content to be decoded[54], and it is in the "action" of the story—the plot—that anxiety appears. For instance, Lord Henry requires a clearer explanation from Basil of why the picture cannot be exhibited as Basil gives him two reasons, which make no sense to him. Basil's anxiety manifests when Lord Henry questions him:

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[54] For a further reference on the decoding process, see Carlson, *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe* 86-7.

> "Well, I will tell you what it is. I want you to explain to me why you won't exhibit Dorian Gray's picture. I want the real reason."
>
> "I told you the real reason."
>
> "No, you did not. You said it was because there was too much of yourself in it. Now, that is childish."
>
> "Harry," said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face, "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. 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." (8)

As Basil confesses the reason why he keeps the portrait secret, he also commits to the game of secrecy following another characteristic of seduction: rules. Baudrillard explains that participants in the game of seduction play because they desire to. They are not forced by anything. They are simply charmed by the game. It is a subjective decision to participate or not. Basil commits not to show the picture, so he accepts to be in the game as a participant and has accepted such rules. In the first chapter of analysis, it is demonstrated that Basil has put a lot of himself in the picture. Therefore, Basil is objectified in and through the portrait. Hence, if Basil shows it, he will be betraying himself and getting out of the game simultaneously.

Certainly, Basil develops the second anxiety pattern that Baudrillard describes as he is tied to the painting through his word of honor—not to show the portrait as it can show

Basil's secret to the world. His anguish dominates his own self and makes him keep the secret. However, the character that best develops suffering for keeping the secret up to a limit of being unbearable is Dorian. Furthermore, he is the character that tries to respect the rules of seduction within the game up to the highest and riskiest limit.

Dorian Gray is who best portrays the characterization of the detective story's secrecy. It is in Dorian where psychoanalytical elements related to the unconscious and the scopic drive combine. Dorian is, undoubtedly, the subject, object, and character at the same time with the maximum levels of enigmatic pleasure and anxiety in the novel, either caused by the obligation to stay in the game or the exercise of power of one character upon the other. Usually, the kind of anxiety that is experienced in this second reaction leads to sorrow that also brings gratification, which torments but delights, synchronically.

When Dorian finds out that the painting has changed after he has been cruel to Sybil Vane, he gets scared that someone can find the picture as it shows part of himself: "But the picture? What was he to say of that? It held the secret of his life, and told his story?" (83) The picture has started to frighten Dorian, and keeps scaring him throughout the novel exercising control upon himself. For instance, Dorian accepts that the picture dominates him. When the subject is fragmented, one of the parts governs upon the other and so the exercise of power creates relationships of codependence: master and slave, subject and object, seducer and seducee. Their relationship becomes a "secret" and the power of the secret lies in keeping it a mystery. If the world gets to know the relationship, the secret reveals and it is destroyed, so there is nothing else to hide.

However, Dorian's codependent relationship with his portrait is intensified by the "improbability" from the Romantic, illogical, and fantastic viewpoint since an inanimate object cannot manipulate a human being but it does in fantastic stories. Therefore, Dorian's secret is even more powerful and horrendous. He is governed by something that "naturally" cannot exercise control upon anything as it does not have the quality of commanding by itself. Still, the fantastic element of the plot makes the portrait become "magical," "seductive," "prohibited," and finally "erotic," all at once.

In fact, the tradition of the magic picture is the source of Dorian's fears. Magic paintings are humanized and capable of extraordinarily powerful effects in the characters and the spectator (reader), for instance, magic pictures can change what is projected in the canvas. Naturally, paintings remain unchanged, so any kind of alteration can provoke a reaction of fascination and/or repulsion in the spectator who can develop a high level of codependence from the fantastic image. Actually, Dorian obeys the portrait despite he does not believe its change is true and questions its metamorphoses:

> It [the painting] had taught him to love his own beauty. Would it teach him to loathe his own soul? Would he ever look at it again?
>
> No; it was merely an illusion wrought on the troubled senses. The horrible night that he had passed had left phantoms behind it. Suddenly there had fallen upon his brain that tiny scarlet speck that makes men mad. The picture had not changed. It was folly to think so. (83)

It is in the power that the portrait exercises over Dorian when he starts to be immersed in the game of seduction and accepts to play it, following the rules that the portrait imposes

on him, so he promises to hide the picture and becomes anxious by the mere thought of someone finding it.

> Should he move it aside, after all? Why not let it stay there? What was the use of knowing? If the thing was true, it was terrible. If it was not true, why trouble about it? But what if, by some fate or deadlier chance, eyes other than his spied behind and saw the horrible change? What should he do if Basil Hallward came and asked to look at his own picture? Basil would be sure to do that. (83)

The fear of being discovered and people being able to get to know his secret drives Dorian to experience a certain level of paranoia since he believes people are afraid of him wherever he goes. "Women who had wildly adored him, and for his sake had braved all social censure and set convention at defiance, were seen to grow pallid with shame or horror if Dorian Gray entered the room" (126). The illusory and frightening effect of the portrait demonstrates Dorian's disturbed mind in his relation with the "real" world. In fact, later on in the novel, the story transforms Dorian's mental sickness into levels of "fear," terror first—since he resists the picture—and finally horror, when he kills himself trying to destroy the source of his suffering.

Dorian's troubled mind also manifests when he is not close to the picture and attends social gatherings. For example, Dorian talks to someone who questions his unusual youth and affirms that his "eternal youth" must have an extraordinary source, a secret. "Not aging" is abnormal:

> [...] Dorian, and, as you play, tell me, in a low voice, how you have kept your youth. You must have some secret. I am only ten years older than you are, and I am wrinkled, and worn, and yellow. You are really wonderful, Dorian. You have never looked more charming than you do to-night. You remind me of the day I saw you first. You were rather cheeky, very shy, and absolutely extraordinary. You have changed, of course, but not in appearance. I wish you would tell me your secret. To get back my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or be respectable. Youth! There is nothing like it. It's absurd to talk of the ignorance of youth. (190)

Dorian always reacts repelling anyone who questions him in this way. He even imagines people finding the secret and revealing it to others—as he does with his servants, for intance. Dorian refuses any kind of commentary like the one previously cited above as he has to "protect" the secret. The portrait dominates him and keeping it secret becomes a test for Dorian.

In this sense, Baudrillard explains that challenge is seductive. As part of the trial, Dorian has refused anyone who gets close to the picture. Firstly, to do so, he needs to keep the picture away from his creator: Basil. Dorian knows that Basil would like to see the picture at any point in time, and he is afraid of Basil seeing it as he might discover (easily) what has happened to the picture since Basil painted it. Unfortunately, his fear came true. Basil requests to see the picture and Dorian tries to avoid it at all odds:

> If you try to look at it, Basil, on my word of honour I will never speak to you again as long as I live. I am quite serious. I don't offer any explanation, and you are not to ask for any. But, remember, if you touch this screen, everything is over between us.
>
> Hallward was thunderstruck. He looked at Dorian Gray in absolute amazement. He had never seen him like this before. The lad was actually pallid with rage. His hands were clenched, and the pupils of his eyes were like disks of blue fire. He was trembling all over. (100-101)

The physical reactions that Dorian has are responses of extreme fear and anger. Dorian even threats Basil when the painter tells the lad that he wants to exhibit the picture. Basil might not be aware that by exhibiting the picture, the painter fails to reveal his secret, the rules of the game are not respected anymore, and thus Basil is not worth staying in the game. The seductive power and erotic effect of the portrait might disappear if the secret is revealed. It is thus necessary to transgress the limits. "To exhibit it! You want to exhibit it?" exclaimed Dorian Gray, a strange sense of terror creeping over him. Was the world going to be shown his secret? Were people to gape at the mystery of his life? That was impossible. Something—he did not know what—had to be done at once" (101). The Other (inside the picture) demands Dorian to hide the picture at all costs and go beyond his own limits if necessary. Dorian now decides to play an evil card. He dares to challenge the painter making Basil come closer to "the real" and phase his deepest fears by revealing Basil's life secret: the painting is also his double as he put too much

of himself in it. Dorian thinks that by threatening Basil, he will make him desist, but Dorian fails:

> He stopped suddenly, and a gleam of light came into his eyes. He remembered that Lord Henry had said to him once, half seriously and half in jest, -If you want to have a strange quarter of an hour, get Basil to tell you why he won't exhibit your picture. He told me why he wouldn't, and it was a revelation to me. - Yes, perhaps Basil, too, had his secret. He would ask him and try. (101)

Dorian blackmails Basil exercising power over him, becoming the subject that dominates the object in this scene. Thus their roles are reversed (again). Dorian knows that fear can be fought with fear. His tone changes from a quiet boy to (an example of) a threatening and strong man:

> Basil, he said, coming over quite close and looking him straight in the face, - we have each of us a secret. Let me know yours, and I shall tell you mine. What was your reason for refusing to exhibit my picture?
>
> The painter shuddered in spite of himself. Dorian, if I told you, you might like me less than you do, and you would certainly laugh at me. I could not bear you doing either of those two things. If you wish me never to look at your picture again, I am content. I have always you to look at. If you wish the best work I have ever done to be hidden from the world, I am satisfied. Your friendship is dearer to me than any fame or reputation. (102)

Basil is terrified as he is close to see the "the unbearable real"[55] of his true nature and finds the monster Dorian has become. He even tries to convince Dorian that he does not want to see the picture, but Dorian is now completely possessed by the picture and he transforms into "the evil other" that has irrupted in the scene. The game of seduction the novel creates is at its highest peak of tension. The secret is about to be revealed and Dorian is captured in a moment of weakness when the enigmatic pleasure increases in him and the need to know Basil's secret is even more important than his friendship. "No, Basil, you must tell me," (102) insisted Dorian Gray. "I think I have a right to know." His feeling of terror had passed away, and curiosity had taken its place. He was determined to find out Basil Hallward's mystery" (102). Dorian becomes stronger as power makes characters feel tougher and secure.

Basil tells Dorian that his worship for him is easily seen in the picture and that is why he refused to exhibit it. As Basil has exposed his secret, he does not participate in the game anymore. He is released from his suffering and anxiety. Nevertheless, Dorian commits a mistake by saying to him that he noticed something changed in the picture. Curiosity finally seduces Basil and he accepts Dorian's invitation to see the picture. Again, "curiosity kills the cat" because Dorian and Basil have fallen upon its seduction. In fact, it is ironic that curiosity is the climax of the scene since what has been keeping the plot captivating for the reader is secrecy (the need to hide), opposite to curiosity (the

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[55] In this case, the "real" refers to the Lacanian meaning of this word as the "unbearable" caged in the "real order" that produces anxiety and trauma in the subject. In this regard, Evans explains that there are different "connotations" for the word "real," and explains Lacan relates it with the trauma in the first category of the word: "it is the missed encounter with this real object which present itself in the form of trauma (Evans, 160).

need to know and reveal). This reversal in the story tells the reader that something unfathomable is about to happen. Dorian denies Basil to see the picture, and this surprises the painter. In both characters the enigmatic pleasure is so strong that they tend to reveal their secrets without protecting themselves from each other, which make them vulnerable.

The toughest character in this fight for secrets is Dorian who delights having tricked Basil who has lost his leading role in the game and thus reversed his role as well. The leading aspect is now in Dorian. Therefore, despite Basil created the picture and represented a "M-Other" figure for the lad, Dorian can exercise power upon Basil as he has the competence of knowledge that secrecy and wit have given him. Basil has shown previously how he "loves secrecy," but Dorian enjoys it as well and transgresses for it:

> As he left the room, Dorian Gray smiled to himself. Poor Basil! How little he knew of the true reason! And how strange it was that, instead of having been forced to reveal his own secret, he had succeeded, almost by chance, in wresting a secret from his friend! How much that strange confession explained to him! The painter's absurd fits of jealousy, his wild devotion, his extravagant panegyrics, his curious reticence—he understood them all now, and he felt sorry. (105)

Dorian's erotic game has been completed. He has acquired knowledge to manipulate Basil which is the most difficult part of the game, and now Dorian has to go for the second part of his plan: keeping the portrait away from everyone's sight and hide it from others.

The place he has chosen to hide the painting is quite symbolic as it is his old schoolroom which belongs to his "childhood" memories and thus archetypically refers to the unconscious where infancy phantoms are hidden. When the housekeeper knows that Dorian Gray wants to check this place, she is surprised and wonders why. She even tells Dorian that the place is dirty and dusty as if preventing him to go inside and remember his traumas from childhood masqueraded in cobwebs and dust:

> The old schoolroom, Mr. Dorian? she exclaimed. Why, it is full of dust. I must get it arranged and put straight before you go into it. It is not fit for you to see, sir. It is not, indeed.
>
> I don't want it put straight, Leaf. I only want the key.
>
> Well, sir, you'll be covered with cobwebs if you go into it. Why, it hasn't been opened for nearly five years—not since his lordship died. (106)

Dorian does not care about the ugliness of the place, but he acknowledges what it represents for him as it can be seen in his reaction towards the memory of his grandfather when the housekeeper mentions him: "He winced at the mention of his grandfather. He had hateful memories of him. 'That does not matter,' he answered. "I simply want to see the place—that is all. Give me the key" (106). His wince is a spontaneous nervous symptom of his juvenile fantasies, so it is quite important than the picture that resembles his nature is put in the place where most of his disagreeable childhood memories are blocked and thus "hidden." It is also remarkable that those infantile reminiscences are related to his "grandfather" as in the psychoanalytic theory

the role of the father—in this case grand Father or big Other—delimits the immersion of the subject in language and thus his/her subject's formation.

If Dorian does not like the memory of his grand-Father and his childhood traumas are related to him, the schoolroom is thus his unconscious where his most terrifying fears are hidden, and even going back to this room might be comparable to going back to the "womb" or Id, for the child that Dorian represents since placing the painting in Dorian's old schoolroom resembles opening a door so that the "real" irrupts in the scene. The schoolroom can also be interpreted as the "attic," where most of the secrets and traumas are "buried". Whatever is secluded in Dorian's unconscious can be revealed and uses the story to irrupt and show itself to the readers. The "real" is looking for a place to manifest and stay. In fact, the *trompe-l'œil* or illusory effect of the picture has to occur in a different scenario, so it is remarkable that Dorian chooses a room related to childhood memories as the new privileged "scenario" for the picture to be kept and manifested.

In that room, Dorian finds a cloth to cover the painting reinforcing the psychoanalytical optical elements of "not seeing," and thus strengthening the "lack" in the scene. In Lacanian terms, the action of veiling/unveiling the picture is simply comparable to the action of revealing/hiding the secret Dorian protects. The fact that the secret is secured with a cloth his grandfather found and that it could have been used to cover "the dead" is even more uncanny as it gives the action of veiling/unveiling a

macabre germ like a fantasmatic scenario[56] relating the setting to the grotesque—an example of the ugly. The narrator comments that the cloth will now serve to cover a different type of corrosion reinforcing the grotesque, instead of a putrid body in a coffin, it will cover a demonic tool that will never die:

> As the door closed, Dorian put the key in his pocket and looked round the room. His eye fell on a large, purple satin coverlet heavily embroidered with gold, a splendid piece of late seventeenth-century Venetian work that his grandfather had found in a convent near Bologna. Yes, that would serve to wrap the dreadful thing in. It had perhaps served often as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself—something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. (106)

Actually, the action of covering the picture reminds the reader of the psychoanalytical term of the "fantasy scene"[57] that works as the subject's defense mechanism and "hides" the secret. There is thus a sheltering "veil" that "protects" the trauma in the screen and thus in the fantasy. For Dorian, the "cloth" is simply what veils his secret, disguises his traumas, reinforces his enigmatic pleasure, buries the ugliness of his soul, sustains his unconscious desires keeping him tied to the game of seduction, and keeps him alive in the fantasmatic scenario. Otherwise, Dorian will perish.

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[56]The word "fantasmatic" comes from the word *fantasme* or *fantasy*. For a better reference see footnote #35 on page 141 of this project.

[57]"Fantasy scene is a "frozen image on a cinema screen; just as the film may be stopped at a certain time in order to avoid showing a traumatic scene which follows, so also the fantasy scene is a defense which veils castration." See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 60.

Having prepared the scenario and shown the reader the tension as well as pleasure the novel hides, the story demonstrates the "erotic" journey Dorian goes through since as he becomes a corrupted character, his journey cannot be considered "heroic." Dorian does not sacrifice for humanity putting his life at risk. On the contrary, he feeds from humanity to satisfy a selfish need. Quite the opposite from a hero, Dorian follows something similar to the inferno's path that characters from the Romantic stories and novels go through, like Dracula, Heathcliff, Hyde, even Dr. Victor Frankestein. The transgression all these characters go through is "erotic" as it nurtures from the prohibited and is rooted in evil—that is moral ugliness.

In this sense, Bataille explains in his theory that if both elements—prohibition and transgression—are present in the game of seduction, they produce an erotic effect in the participants, which (in turn) leads to anxiety, but also delight. From a literary point of view, the glee Bataille mentions corresponds to Louise Rosenblatt's reader-response theory, which explains the "eroticism" of texts. Previously, in the first chapter of analysis, the reaction of the reader is caused merely by the text itself and its structural elements: format, images, narrative-descriptive qualities, and plot. Now, the reader also responds to the complex web of secrets in the doubles the story presents. Finally, the text makes the reader surrender towards the eroticism hidden in the representation of concepts and actions—in this case—the evil transgression of human behaviors.

The first sign of eroticism as shown in transgression and prohibition lies in the exemplification of the object of desire, which for Bataille is an "erotic image" that can be symbolized by anything the subject finds erotic similarly to the concept of signifier-

signified that nurtures language. For instance, for Dorian and for Basil (separately) the object of desire is the portrait as both are objectified in it. The painting symbolizes Basil's worship for Dorian as well as Dorian's corrupted soul. Both are prohibited behaviors since a man's worship for another man without any other reason that his physical appearance might have been considered indecent in Victorian time as it might have been confused with homosexual love—a prohibited sexual preference at that time.

In the Victorian era, a strong and very close relationship of "friendship" between same-sex people could have been interpreted erroneously and given a connotation of "immorality" based on the rigid behavioral codes of Victorian society. Nowadays, solid same-sex friendships are categorized as "homosocial" bonds and seen as "normal friendliness," but at Oscar Wilde's time the social view of "friendship and affection" was different, and it is at a certain point of the novel where readers might misinterpret the text and confuse the admiration of Basil for Dorian with the intensity of love: during Basil's confession to Dorian of why the painting could not be exhibited. Basil gives the impression of not simply worshipping Dorian but taking his "admiration" for him to the highest extreme of adoration based on "the charm" Dorian provokes on him, which could be seen as close to "romantic love,"[58] when it is not:

> [...] Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose

[58] The charm of love is a concept studied in the theoretical framework of this project referring to Aldo Carotenuto and Roland Chemama's definitions of "love." As part of love, the subject experiences admiration for the beloved one. Refer to Chapter II, part A. The Erotic in the Evil and the Seduction of the Sublime 109-19.

> memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me, you were still present in my art [...]. Of course, I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it. I hardly understood it myself. I only knew that I had seen perfection face to face, and that the world had become wonderful to my eyes—too wonderful, perhaps, for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them, no less than the peril of keeping them [...]. Weeks and weeks went on, and I grew more and more absorbed in you. Then came a new development. I had drawn you as Paris in dainty armour, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms you had sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, gazing across the green turbid Nile. (102)

Taking into account the anti-homosexual love policy during Queen Victoria's reign, the text could have been misinterpreted by followers of decency considering it grotesque and sinful. Thus, Basil's adoration for Dorian and his painting might be "prohibited," from the Victorian Age point of view. Nevertheless, its "forbidden" charm made it "appealing" for a certain rebellious audience who enjoyed falling into temptation and breaking social rules.

Additionally and unintentionally, the novel appeals to a simpler but strong argument to attract the reader who enjoys banned texts. The story links social and sexual insurgence—expressed in a wrongly called homosexual writing—with deep criticism of

moral behavior represented in Dorian's cruelty. Therefore, from a metaphysical point of view, the novel is an ode to "immorality" and "eroticism." The story nurtures from "human nature" and uses social flaws to make the reader be trapped into "ugliness" allowing the reader the opportunity to freely decide either to evolve into "a better being and change" or "die in hostility." Like Dorian at the end of the novel, the reader either is freed in the body of the redeemed, ugly, dead man or is trapped in the canvas of the erotic picture.

In fact, the "seductive charm" of the portrait is in its "erotic transgressive quality." The picture transgresses from being an "inanimate object" to a "magical evil painting" because Dorian's immoral alter ego is hidden in the canvas. The portrait now becomes a monstrous shadow that commands and follows Dorian. The monster is inside the picture and manifests in every alteration the portrait shows. Basil himself confesses that the canvas contain too much of him "but I know that as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret" (103). Let us remember that the novel exhibits not just a secret but a web of secrets and part of the magic of secrets is the ludic plot: "reveal or not to reveal, that is the game."

The erotic object appears and disappears from the scene as if it were playing "hide-and seek" in an "absent-present" relationship, which is a manifestation of what is called in psychoanalysis as "*fort-da.*"[59] Since the novel centers in the picture, the portrait is the

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[59] *Fort-da* is a concept Sigmund Freud developed to name the pleasure subjects can reach in the absence of objects. Freud created the term after observing his own grandson playing with his toys throwing them forth and back. The child exercised a certain level of control in the action of throwing the toys away. Freud observed the lack of the object gave pleasure to his grandson and initially associated the game with the absence of his grandson's mother during the day. Freud thought the child could show some detachment from his mother and interpreted the child was trying to take revenge from his mother by

focal point of the story. Thus "seeing and not seeing" will be essential for the development of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the characters meet the painting and doubles are created with the subject's fragmentation. The characters "see" themselves in the picture. In the first chapter of analysis it was demonstrated that the picture is a "mirror" as all characters reflect in it and even the position of the characters is always in front of the portrait as it if someone were looking at his/her own image in the mirror. The scopic charm starts working among them (Basil, Dorian, and Lord Henry). Then, the painting "shows" itself to Dorian. The canvas let Dorian "see" them and the double irrupts. Basil reaffirms it when he asks Dorian if he has seen something in the picture:

> Let us sit down, Dorian, said the painter, looking troubled. Let us sit down. And just answer me one question. Have you noticed in the picture something curious?—something that probably at first did not strike you, *but that revealed itself to you suddenly?*

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showing her absence was not relevant for him and the child himself threw her away, when her absence was essential for the child. In summary, the negative feeling the child had was "substituted" by a pleasant sensation of control. However, the sensation is not really pleasant as it is based on the absence of the object and the separation of the son from the mother. The concept of *fort-da* is associated with the death drives as it involves separation from the object in Freudian psychoanalysis. While Freud's grandson played, the child made a sound similar to "o-o-o-o" as if saying "forth" and "a-a-a-a," meaning "da" when recovering the toy. Freud named this action *fort-da* because of the onomatopoeic interpretation of what his grandson tried to say and the pleasure of the game is named after this action.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of *fort-da* is associated with the absence of the object and the immersion of the child in language. When the child starts talking in his/her early stages of life, he/she is separated from the Other at accepting language as the child gives meaning to objects through words. The child has now the power to make objects "appear and disappear," and the concepts of presence and absence become coexistent and codependent. The mother is still a relevant figure in the child's life, but not as relevant as before. It is also associated with the creation of the "other," which appears and disappears from the scene. Notes from the course on *Psychoanalytic Reading of Literary Texts I and II* (University of Costa Rica, 2004-2005).

> Basil! cried the lad, clutching the arms of his chair with trembling hands and gazing at him with wild startled eyes.
>
> I see you did. Don't speak. (emphasis mine 102)

It is not coincidence that the narrator uses the verb "reveal" in this passage as "the monster" lets himself be seen in the story as the "real" irrupts in the scene.

Dorian "hides" the painting. It cannot be "seen" as the picture disappears from the scene and thus becomes the "lost object" for Dorian as he interiorizes it. "The portrait must be hidden away at all costs. He could not run such a risk of discovery again. It had been mad of him to have allowed the thing to remain, even for an hour, in a room to which any of his friends had access" (105). When Basil confesses what has happened to the picture, Dorian seems to be disenchanted at a certain point and Basil simply does not understand why:

> My dear Basil. said Dorian, what have you told me? Simply that you felt that you admired me too much. That is not even a compliment.
>
> -It was not intended as a compliment. It was a confession.
>
> Now that I have made it, something seems to have gone out of me. Perhaps one should never put one's worship into words.
>
> -It was a very disappointing confession.
>
> -Why, what did you expect, Dorian? You didn't see anything else in the picture, did you? There was nothing else to see?
>
> -No; there was nothing else to see. (104)

As Dorian noticed what happened to the picture, and knows that the painting mirrors his soul, he is disillusioned by knowing the picture also doubles Basil. Dorian needs the portrait to be his "echo" so that he can evolve and transgress. Without the picture showing his soul, Dorian does not have any reason to enjoy being controlled by the picture and thus hides it from the rest of the world. He does not even have a motive to get lost into the mundane pleasures and let himself be driven by his own primitive inner impulses. Let us remember that Dorian is a selfish child who does not like "sharing" anything with anyone else. Therefore, if the picture also resembles Basil's true nature, it is not that charming for Dorian as the portrait is also his rival.

However, Dorian keeps his devotion to the painting and transforms it into "fear," which (in turn) drives him into a state of anxiety making him decide to hide the picture despite it also represents Basil's soul:

> No; that was impossible. Hour by hour, and week by week, the thing upon the canvas was growing old. It might escape the hideousness of sin, but the hideousness of age was in store for it. The cheeks would become hollow or flaccid. Yellow crow's feet would creep round the fading eyes and make them horrible. The hair would lose its brightness, the mouth would gape or droop, would be foolish or gross, as the mouths of old men are. There would be the wrinkled throat, the cold, blue-veined hands, the twisted body, that he remembered in the grandfather who had been so stern to him in his boyhood. The picture had to be concealed. There was no help for it. (109-10)

The reason why Dorian keeps the picture and does not destroy it has no logical explanation, not even for him. He constantly questions it as in an internal monologue. The secret he keeps is mainly between Dorian and his own un-consciousness, and the price he has paid for being eternally young starts to penetrate in his psyche as it is exposed in this passage:

> But there was no other place in the house so secure from prying eyes as this. He had the key, and no one else could enter it. Beneath its purple pall, the face painted on the canvas could grow bestial, sodden, and unclean. What did it matter? No one could see it. He himself would not see it. Why should he watch the hideous corruption of his soul? He kept his youth—that was enough. And, besides, might not his nature grow finer, after all? There was no reason that the future should be so full of shame. (109)

Apart from keeping his secret away from any others' sight, Dorian holds a deep wish by hiding the picture. He wants to destroy the picture to redeem himself from his sins and get rid of the only witness of his crimes: the portrait itself. At this point in the novel, Dorian's transgression is not finished yet and he is still "human": "Perhaps, some day, the cruel look would have passed away from the scarlet sensitive mouth, and he might show to the world Basil Hallward's masterpiece" (109). His dehumanization is not yet finished. Dorian keeps this wish alive as the worse is yet to come: murdering and committing suicide. He goes forth and back to his pure childhood memories as if he longed for them. "He recalled the stainless purity of his boyish life, and it seemed horrible to him that it was here the fatal portrait was to be hidden away. How little he

had thought, in those dead days, of all that was in store for him!" (109). Similarly to his childhood reminiscences that come back to him, his object of desire appears and disappears from the scene, to reappear at the end of the novel as if it were the way to redeem his soul.

> [...]Was he really to confess?
>
> Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him.
>
> The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it.
>
> Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. [...] It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it. (196)

Bataille explains that transgression takes place when the subject interiorizes the object of desire and develops a "sensibility" for it, which is a similar sensation to "religious sensibility" allowing the subject to be "charmed" by the object's pleasure. It is in the interiorization of the object that the subject transgresses the limits with the aim of overcoming the prohibition. Therefore, the interiorization process Dorian goes through is an example of "moralization" of the individual disabling evil. For Bataille, overcoming evil justifies the existence of the evilness itself as good and evil complement

each other and so "coexist," and that is erotic. Thus, when Dorian releases himself from his suffering and destroys the picture, he reaches the "ultimate" level of eroticism in his journey since his transgression finishes and he has returned to be a purified human being, unmasked by his ugliness. Like the gargoyles in the cathedrals, Dorian has fooled the demon and brings hope to Victorian society showing that God triumphs at the end and good is reestablished. Consequently, the ultimate aim of the portrait's evil and ugly representation hidden in the canvas demonstrate that human nature can always change even at the end of the main character's journey.

In this sense, the subject has to "accept" and embrace his/her inappropriate behaviors to change his/her attitudes. There must be an extreme punishable behavior that reveals through the subject. Dorian has committed one of the most despicable acts that corrupt human beings: murder. The fact that the story exhibits such a high level of corruption intensifies the power of Dorian's secret. The enigma that Dorian hides does not just reveal his cruelty but his flaws and inner state. When Dorian asks some men to help him put the painting upstairs in his schoolroom, Mr. Hubbard tries to see the picture and Dorian's reaction exceeds his limits as Dorian wants to jump over and knock him out:

> Might one look at the work of art, sir?
>
> Dorian stared. "It would not interest you, Mr. Hubbard," he said, keeping his eye on the man. He felt ready to leap upon him and fling him to the ground if he dared to lift the gorgeous hanging that concealed the secret of his life. "I shan't trouble you any more now. I am much obliged for your kindness in coming round." (110)

The evil Other in Dorian slightly shows in this passage. However, it is until Dorian faces Basil that the "authentic" evil double irrupts in the scene and kills the painter. By murdering Basil, Dorian satisfies his most primitive instinctual needs since killing is a human drive that the subject suppresses, and in the worst of the cases, sublimates and disguises in vices such as violent behaviors, drinking, and gambling, among others in order to live in society.

Nevertheless, Dorian creates a different fantasmatic scenario that starts another enigmatic tale and reinforces the seductive game he is immersed in. The questions to be answered now are: Has Basil Hallward disappeared? If so, where is he? And, why did he leave the town so strangely? The new mysterious plot Dorian creates leads his obsession to appear again in the scene. Now, Dorian cares about people finding the picture and getting to know the fact that he killed Basil. He does not worry about people finding his satanic bargain anymore, but worries that people find he is a murderer, so the switch goes from the unbelievable fantastic (the painting that alters itself with Dorian's cruel behaviors) to the actual crime (Dorian murdering Basil):

> [...] And yet, what evidence was there against him? Basil Hallward had left the house at eleven. No one had seen him come in again. Most of the servants were at Selby Royal. His valet had gone to bed [...] Paris! Yes. It was to Paris that Basil had gone, and by the midnight train, as he had intended. With his curious reserved habits, it would be months before any suspicions would be roused. Months! Everything could be destroyed long before then. (142)

Dorian's consciousness tortures him up to the point of not just hiding the picture, but hiding himself from surrounding neighbors and whoever comes close to his house's porch:

> A sudden thought struck him. He put on his fur coat and hat and went out into the hall. There he paused, hearing the slow heavy tread of the policeman on the pavement outside and seeing the flash of the bull's-eye reflected in the window. He waited and held his breath. After a few moments he drew back the latch and slipped out, shutting the door very gently behind him. (142)

The tension in the novel has increased. The mystery has now created a scenario of rumor, shame, and decay yet fascinating for some readers who love complex plots. An old lady comments when she sees Dorian: "Strike me dumb if ain't so. He is the worst one that comes here. They say he had sold his soul himself to the devil for a pretty face. It's night on eighteen years since I met him. He hasn't changed much since then. I have, though. She added with a sickly leer" (164). The abnormal beauty of Dorian unveils his secret. So far, "the mask of youth had saved him" (176), but it is by Dorian's own hand the mask will fall down revealing the unbearable truth and then redeeming his soul by telling the secret.

The end of the novel shows the chaotic antihero's finale together with the decline of the century. Dorian resembles "the innermost death drive" all subjects occult in their deepest mind and darkest corners of their unconscious as a mandate of society, which forces readers to inhibit such drives while ironically promotes an abominable "cult to cruelty". The narrator's final description of the old, ugly man lying dead on the floor and

the beautiful picture of the young Adonis reminds the reader that the prohibited can be overcome to reach the highest level of eroticism and sensuality in a text when revelation takes place; since, "No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything. Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art. Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art" (Preface i)

Conclusions

This research project has demonstrated that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* creates a powerful "seductive effect" on the reader as a response towards a series of elements that interact in the novel simultaneously and can become "erotic" for whoever reads, depending on the nature of art, the interpretation of artworks, and personal taste. The general objective of the analysis was to show that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has a prevailing seductive consequence on the reader through the novel's anti-aesthetics. As a result, the project only has focused on the seductive elements that nurture the anti-aesthetic frame of the story.

The role of the Decadent movement in Victorian literary art, the intertext of the Romantic and Gothic tradition, the *fin de siècle* literature, the powerful images of the *ekphrastic* novel, the scopic drive in the game of doubles, the fragmentation of the subject, the enigmatic plot, the struggle between good and evil from the perspective of the metaphysical novel, and the transference of evil in the painting, make the reader be charmed by a complex story that satisfies the darkest taste of readers who find delight in anti-aesthetic literature and obscure topics.

There is still extensive literature on the novel to be reviewed and approached. Therefore, the greatest difficulty of the project has relied on the selection of topics to research that can seduce and eroticize readers. Since *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has been widely analyzed before, to innovate in literary criticism has been challenging when the literary critic chooses such a well-known and explored text. Nevertheless, the original aspect of the project is its exploration of why and how the novel charms readers

in an anti-aesthetic way since the text is able to "seduce" despite its dark plot. Its descriptive and narrative quality, its mysterious and enigmatic story constructed in a web of secrets, the active role of the reader as a witness capable of unveiling "dark" secrets, and the representation of human nature's tendency towards wrong-doing are the main elements of seduction in the novel.

The analysis also provides a conceptual and theoretical framework for future literary reference applied to either studies on the novel, the late 1800s British literature in general, or research projects on anti-aesthetic theory. It is an intricate framework because it becomes mandatory for the literary critic to define certain complex terms, which usually can be confusing and vast. Therefore, the framework turns out to be conceptual when theories are combined, compared, or contrasted in order to offer the reader unbiased definitions of words such as seduction, eroticism, ugliness, beauty, enigma, *ekphrastic* novel, aesthetics and anti-aesthetics, transposition of art, transgression, transference, game, gaze, charm, among others.

In addition, the thesis project has confirmed the variety of historic and artistic movements that nurture the work of Oscar Wilde by showing the importance of art tradition in literary creation. Readers of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the Wildean literature in general, can now think of the novel as an instance of anti-aestheticism, metaphysics, *fin de siècle* literature, enigmatic pleasure, decadence, or the *ekphrastic* novel. Traditionally, the text has been categorized as fantastic, gothic, romantic, and Victorian. In summary, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be considered an artistic treaty, based on the struggle between beauty and ugliness as well as good and evil. However,

this stands as the root of a multidimensional work of art with several lines of inquiry to be discovered.

As stated previously, there is broad literature written on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. One of them refers to gender studies. Firstly, many critics have examined the roles of gender in the novel defining "masculinity and femininity" from diverse anthropological, psychological, sociological, and historical approaches. I was not inclined in researching on gender studies and its relationship with seduction since most of the available literature has been extensively studied on this subtext of the novel and can be considered biased. Even so, most critics tend to judge and compare the text with Oscar Wilde's sexual orientation and his visible homosexual preference (which was exposed during his trials and read in *De Profundis*). However, a literary critic should not "guess and state" if the text has a homosexual connotation basing his/her analysis on value judgements. The literary critic has to be as objective as possible and has to rely on the text as its main source of study. Consequently, the literary critic cannot and should not judge a book by its inexplicit content. In the novel, despite Dorian Gray believes Basil "loves" him after "his confession," Basil does not confirm it and leaves the reader with the enigma.

Thus, the research line of the project centers on the dark seductive aspect of the novel and in order to concentrate on this theme, several subtexts were discarded such as homoeroticism, the aristocratic power against the social revolution during the Victorian age, or the historical impact of Irish tradition in Oscar Wilde's work, but there is a possible subtext yet to be evaluated, which belongs to an area of gender studies and might be a fertile source to consider in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which is the

seduction of "homosocial desire" or "passionate friendship" between same-sex characters (briefly mentioned in Chapter IV). In fact, I would dare to say that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the reader is exposed to *bromance*[60] among the three main characters.

The novel never gives any explicit reference of Basil, Dorian, and Lord Henry engaging in a homosexual *ménage a trois* (as many critics wrongly believe in and support). Nevertheless, the novel provides examples of the "intense friendship" the three characters develop, which is part of the processes of "male bonding" to define "masculinity" in the novel. The approach and investigations of "homo-sociality" in gender studies is well-known and some projects have been carried out based on the relevance of same-sex friendships during colonialism and post-colonialism, mainly in the early, mid, and late 1800s, which corresponds to the period when *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written.

Interestingly, several of those investigations come from Latin American and Spanish contexts and texts. In American literature, the homo-sociality is attained mainly to men's relationships, despite its origin starts in feminist theory. Some works have been done in the fields of sociology, psychology, and mass media like Diana Sargent M.A. thesis on *American Masculinity and Homosocial Behavior in the Bromance*, from 2013. In British literature in general, Eve Kosofsky Sedwick provides extensive studies on "queer

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[60] Bromance is a relatively new concept, which is "a blend of the words bro/brother and romance [...] and has reported origins in the skater-culture of the 1990s, used by writer David Carnie of the skater magazine *Big Brother* to describe the relationship of skater buddies who spend a lot of time together" (qtd. In Sargent 10). However, the concept in literary analysis is attained to Eve Kosofsky Sedwick and her studies on queer theory starting in 1985.

theory" and its relationship with texts apart from pointing out the concept of "homosocial desire" from Shakesperean sonnets to 1900s literature. She is considered to be the "pioneer" of this concept in literary analysis. Therefore, this could be an interesting line of research for the seduction of "bromance" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which is left here for further study.

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