

Gothic Elements in The Picture of Dorian Gray Essay

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Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is written primarily out of the aesthetic movement of the Nineteenth Century. Therefore, the text contains a profuse amount of imagery which reflects the concepts of beauty and sensory experiences. By taking the aesthetic approach, Wilde was able to revive the gothic style through grotesque imagery of the portrait and the character whose soul it represents. Wilde is not using gothic elements to shock his audiences; rather he uses the gothic to capture the hideousness of Gray's corruptness which leaks out of the painting and into the tone of the entire text.

Wilde begins setting the mood of the text with excessive descriptions of nature, and natural beauty: "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 5). While this description hardly sounds like the language of the gothic, the use of nature sets up a contrast to the darker tones which appear later in the text. The nature theme is also present in the descriptions of Dorian Gray, whom at this point in the text has not been corrupted by the influences of Lord Henry Wotton or his search for pleasure and experience. Not only is Gray described as someone who encompasses flower like beauty, he is a representation of a flower himself. As Lord Henry describes, Gray is "some

brainless, beautiful creature, who should be always here in winter when [there are] no flowers to look at" (7). Wilde extends this flower allusion with the metaphor of the aging man, and the beauty which dies with age. Like a flower Dorian's beauty will fade, wither, a...

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... their last debut in twisted demise of Dorian Gray: "He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage" (213) only recognizable by the rings on his fingers.

Although the audience is invariably aware of the corruption Gray's soul suffers, Wilde's use of gothic language suggests the extent of his malice. The painting could have restrained Gray's soul but the extent of his hideous actions overwhelms Gray, and the true nature of his soul, represented through the 'living' portrait inevitably leaks out into Gray's pleasant reality and into the tone of the entire text. If it were not for the gothic elements, readers would not be fully aware of the depravity of Gray's soul. Wilde uses the dark to contrast the naive purity of Gray's facade, which although appears unmarked cannot hide the ugliness of his soul.

Works Cited

Wilde, Oscar. "[The Picture of Dorian Gray](#)"

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