

METAPHORS IN OSCAR WILDE’S “THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY”

Nowadays the range of interests towards metaphors is becoming wider and wider. Any piece of writing without metaphors seems very poor and “pale”. Today readers expect not only aesthetic impact but also an opportunity of thinking, because everything said directly is a bit boring and uninteresting. A reader like me will always look for some mystery. And in this case, metaphors can somehow satisfy the desired mystery.

For writers and critics, metaphor is simply a trope: a literary device deriving from the rhetoric of schools and intending to put an argument clearly and persuasively. Boundaries are not sharp, but devices are commonly grouped as schemes and tropes. Schemes, which include alliteration, chiasmus, etc., have more to do with expression. Tropes, which include metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, are more powerful and deal with content.

Metaphor commonly means saying one thing while intending another, making implicit comparison between things linked by a common feature, perhaps even violating semantic rules /Dickey, 1968/.

Metaphors are not simply literary devices, but something active in understanding, perhaps even the very basis of language. Metaphors organize our experience, uniquely express it, and create convincing realities. Usually metaphors are created for the purpose of better internal visualization and comparison to another concept from which one can draw his or her own conclusion. They serve the purpose of insightful close reading /Wellek, Warren, 2008/.

The aim of the following paper is to study the metaphors and metaphoric expressions used by Oscar Wilde in “The Picture of Dorian Gray”.

In the passage illustrated below O. Wilde makes the passage an exemplary portrayal of the terrible hold Lord Henry has on Dorian by

using metaphors as well as hyperboles, appropriate diction, rhythmic syntax, etc.

"One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. The heavy odor of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain. The mere cadence of the sentences, the subtle monotony of their music, so full as it was of complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated, produced in the mind of the lad, as he passed from chapter to chapter, a form of reverie, a malady of dreaming, that made him unconscious of the falling day and the creeping shadows.

Cloudless, and pierced by one solitary star, a copper-green sky gleamed through the windows. He read on by its wan light till he could read no more." (Wilde, 1958 : 210)

Oscar Wilde writes "*it was a poisonous book*" in order to highlight the influence of the book. Wilde also writes, "*the heavy odor of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain.*" In this passage the *book* is regarded to be a *drug* to Dorian.

O. Wilde compares *the lines of the book to a piece of music*, and complements the metaphors with appropriate musical diction. He gives the text rhythm, melody, and structure, but chooses the words *cadence*, *subtle monotony of their music*, and *complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated*. The purpose of using these words instead of the former, is to connote a mesmerizing effect on the protagonist Gray.

Oscar Wilde also uses connotative words like *reverie*, *dreaming*, and *unconscious*. From our point of view these words have some kind of hypnotic effect on the reader. On top of the metaphors and the diction, Wilde also chooses a rhythmic syntax in order to make the passage more fascinating.

In the passage illustrated below we see that Oscar Wilde employed such connotative words as *hollow*, *flaccid*, *fading*, *droop*, *wrinkled*, *blue-veined*, and *twisted* which make the atmosphere more dramatic and emphasized.

“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.” (Wilde, 1958: 206)

These words are all related to the idea that beauty dies with age. Something once youthful, full, firm, lively, and nimble becomes old, flaccid, faded, droopy, wrinkled, blue-veined, and twisted. This vivid description can remind us of the flower motif because flowers have lively youths, but age comes quickly and the influence is powerful and unforgiving. Petals shrivel up, stems wilt, and colors fade. These things are always mentioned by O. Wilde because they are so greatly affected by age. Time is an obstacle.

It also seems that Dorian is disgusted by not only the idea of age but also by old people. He attacks them directly in the line, *"the mouth would gape or droop, would be foolish or gross, as the mouths of old men are,"* and the passage reveals that Dorian was not so fond of his own grandfather. By associating a character with such a horrid description, the reader wonders about the significance of such a character.

In the following example Wilde uses elements of stream of consciousness which is rich in tropes and figures of speech and particularly metaphors.

“Kiss me again, my love. Don't go away from me. I couldn't bear it. Oh! Don't go away from me. My brother... No; never mind. He didn't mean it. He was in jest....But you, oh! can't you forgive me for to-night? I will work so hard, and try to improve. Don't be cruel to me, because I love you better than anything in the world. After all, it is only once that I have not pleased you. But you are

quite right, Dorian. I should have shown myself more of an artist. It was foolish of me; and yet I couldn't help it. Oh, don't leave me, don't leave me!" A fit of passionate sobbing choked her. She crouched on the floor like a wounded thing, and Dorian Gray, with his beautiful eyes, looked down on her, and his chiseled lips curled in exquisite disdain. There is always something ridiculous about the emotion of people whom one has ceased to love. Sibyl Vane seemed to him to be absurdly melodramatic. Her tears and sobs annoyed him." (Wilde, 1958: 77)

The passage, undoubtedly, is a nice piece of creative writing where one can come across the use of syntactic parallelism (...Don't do away.....Don't go away...), simile (She crouched on the floor like a wounded thing), metaphor (...his chiseled lips curled in exquisite disdain), etc..

"So that was the story of Dorian Gray's parentage. Crudely as it had been told to him, it had yet stirred him by its suggestion of a strange, almost modern romance. A beautiful woman risking everything for a mad passion. A few wild weeks of happiness cut short by a hideous, treacherous crime. Months of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man. Yes, it was an interesting background. It posed the lad, made him more perfect as it were. Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic. Worlds had to be in travail, that the meanest flower might blow..." (Wilde, 1958: 27)

Wilde has a specific word usage. The reader is always struck by the peculiar use of stylistic devices and expressive means. The epithets "voiceless agony", "mad passion", "hideous, treacherous crime", "the meanest flower" "make the novel more emphatic. "Wild weeks" is another fascinating metaphor in this passage. How the "weeks" can be "wild" speaks about O. Wilde's great ability of playing with words and this helps him keep readers' interest.

And the last vivid use of metaphoric word combinations are “*Dimly lit streets... gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses*”, “*monstrous apes*” and “*grotesque children*” which make a great esthetic impact on the readers which is one of the main intentions of the author.

Where he went to he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly lit streets, past gaunt, black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by, cursing and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes. He had seen grotesque children huddled upon door-steps, and heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts. (Wilde, 1958: 163)

People will never stop reading this book and, maybe, one of the reasons is the charming metaphors with the help of which O. Wilde decorated his literary work.

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Հ. ՄԿՐՏՉՅԱՆ – Փոխաբերությունները Օսկար Ուայլդի «Դորիան Գրեյի դիմանկարը» վեպում. – Փոխաբերությունների հանդեպ հետաքրքիրությունը մինչ այժմ էլ չի սպառվում շատ լեզվաբանների համար

անդադար հետազոտելու և վերլուծելու պատճառ հանդիսանալով: Փոխաբերությունն ամենատարածված ոճական հնարներից է, որի միջոցով հեղինակները փորձում են խորը ազդեցություն գործել ընթերցողների վրա, որն էլ հեղինակի հիմնական նպատակներից մեկն է:

Օ. Ուայլդի «Գորիան Գրեյի դիմանկարը» հարուստ է փոխաբերություններով, որոնց շնորհիվ ստեղծագործությունը դարձել է առավել գրավիչ, տպավորիչ և պատկերավոր: Վեպի առանցքային և ամենաակնառու փոխաբերությունը կարող է համարվել դիմանկարը, որը հանդես է գալիս «հոգու» փոխաբերն:

Ա. МКРТЧЯН – *Метафоры в “Портрете Дориана Грея”*

Օ. Уайльда. – Интерес к метафорам не иссякает до сих пор: многие лингвисты продолжают неустанно исследовать и анализировать их. Метафора – одна из самых распространенных стилистических приемов, посредством которых авторы стараются оказать глубокое воздействие на читателей.

“Портрет Дориана Грея” Оскара Уайльда богат метафорами, благодаря чему литературное произведение стало более захватывающим и образным. Центральной и самой очевидной метафорой О. Уайльда является именно портрет, который выражает душу, внутренний мир героя.