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**THE INFLUENCE OF IMPRESSIONISM
AND JAPANESE ART UKIYO-E ON THE NOVEL
“THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY”**

The principal purpose of this article is to provide an overall characteristic of French Impressionism and the art of Japanese engravings ukiyo-e, specify the influence these art tendencies had on the Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Grey* and distinguish this by means of citation. My report is based on a synthesis of arts, which is not a coincidence, since it dives into the era of early modernism, which comprised different arts.

Impressionism is a movement in art that was founded by French painters, among them were E. Degas, E. Manet, C. Monet, O. Renoir etc., and had a particular impact on literature.

Impressionists were the co-founders and newsettlers in the field of a new artistic vision, which precipitated reflecting and mirroring not the image of the world itself, but the author's subjective impression retrieved by surrounding settings, nature, community or a person. This means, that the artists showed not the reality, but their vision, emotions, feelings about it.

The Impressionists contributed to the discovery of charming beauty of daily routine, this, in turn, has changed people's perception of nature and life drastically. Consequently, they were not eager to follow academic style in painting, that become outdated in meeting the requirements and challenges of a new concept and, thus, created the works, which embodied the spirit of freedom, flight of person's imagination free from artistic limits. The movement itself was named after the one of the most famous paintings by Claude Monet *Impression. Sunrise*.

It is worth mentioning that among the European writers, who acclaimed revolutionary in their nature tendencies and dared to follow them adjusting to the writing craft were E. Zola, G. de Maupassant, P. Verlaine, S. Mallarme, I. Bunin, B. Pasternak, M. Kotsubynsky and many others. Here one of the most significant roles was played by the poet, novelist and playwright Oscar Wilde, whose works resembled the bridges connecting earth-shattering tradition and modernism in the end of XIX – beginning of XX century (Nikolenko and Talovyria 2020).

Simultaneously, the great interest of the Europeans in Oriental culture resulted in the influence of it on forming the movement of Impressionism. This became possible owing to the French artist and collector, who was the first to discover the haunting beauty of Japanese engravings, that comprised a diversity of ostentatious elements. Indeed, he acquired the techniques of engraving whilst imitating the pictures by Japanese masters.

Notwithstanding the attentiveness to ukiyo-e, Europe's acquaintance with Japanese art was complicated by the fact that Japan's ports were closed to foreigners. The only port to connect Europe and Japan was Nagasaki. By the middle of 1870s, however, true "Japanese fever" had spread across France and other European countries. So, merchants brought from Japan numerous household goods and art.

What was another step towards the popularization of Oriental culture was the exhibition by Lois Gonz in 1883, which presented the works of Japanese artists. The visitors were especially inspired by Japanese engravings ukiyo-e.

It would be appropriate to dwell on the art itself answering the subsequent questions.

- What is the origin of ukiyo-e?

The tradition of engravings of such style was firstly developed in Japan in XVII century and stroke its peak of

fame in the XVIII – XIX centuries whilst such artists as Hishikawa Moronobu, Matebai Iwas, Katsushika Hokusai, Kitagawa Utamaro, Utagawa Hiroshige contributed to it.

- What are concepts of ukiyo-e?

When it comes to the laws of the movement it is necessary to bear in mind that they were based on the grounds of reflecting impermanent, fleeting moments. Thus, the aim of the masters was to depict the native space, asymmetrical beauty, and breathtaking imperfections of nature, people's character by means of completely unmovable paintings (Nikolenko & Talovyria 2020).

At that time, the young author got a scholarship at Oxford College of St. Magdalene where he listened to lectures by honorary professor of art John Ruskin who had a big influence on O. Wilde. The writer accepted his ideas about the priority of art and nature in the life. The reflection of these ideas may well be found in his works both in the development of the character of the protagonist and, what is even more transparent, in the artist's approaches to art, portrayal and the presence of soul in it.

The novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* opens the feelings of a young man, his appreciation of own beauty. The exposition of the novel pictures the artist Basil Hallward painting a beautiful portrait of Dorian Gray who having scrutinized it, is stuck in the mental rut since his beauty will disappear when he grows old. In the moment of deep despair, he wishes to stay young and beautiful forever. And he will! The portrait takes all the negative repercussions of completely unhealthy and immoral lifestyle and grows ugly, disgusting, and old, whilst Dorian remains beautifully charming. This magic changes the young man.

O. Wilde was not only a collector but also a popularizer of Japanese engravings and Japanese art in England. Therefore, in the novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" a diversity of Japanese motifs are highly likely to be found.

They represent a new type of beauty in Europe and the transition to Impressionism. Already in the first section there is a detailed poetic description of spring nature, “the shadows of birds form for a moment something similar to the Japanese pattern.” (Wilde 2018). Watching the landscape Henry Watton thinks of artists from Tokyo, whose engravings embody a sense of flight.

The influence of visual art is in the scrupulous description of the room, at the moment when the artist Basil and Lord Henry talk about writing a portrait: “From the corner of the divan of Persian saddlebags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flame-like 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” (Wilde 2018).

Basil Hallward and Henry Wotton talk about art sitting on a bamboo bench. The furniture of such kind came into usage and was popular in Europe in the end of XIX century owing to high demand for the items representing Oriental culture, including Japanese and Chinese. As a result, tea tables, grooved teapots, cups became household words.

This, in turn, incited Oscar Wilde to harmoniously integrate the bench made of natural material into the natural space in order to emphasize the new tendency in art worshiped by the artist Basil Hallward.

Later, in Basil Hallward’s apartment, the heroes gather at a Japanese tea table. A large teapot, porcelain dishes

and cups are part of the interior, which shows the host's taste for Japanese art and the aesthetic preferences of O. Wilde.

"...the two young men went out into the garden together and ensconced themselves on a long bamboo seat that stood in the shade of a tall laurel bush."

"There came a knock at the door, and the butler entered with a laden tea-tray and set it down upon a small Japanese table. There was a rattle of cups and saucers and the hissing of a fluted Georgian urn. Two globe-shaped china dishes were brought in by a page."

Coming closer to the art within the prosaic framework it is inevitable to mention the discussion between Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray, which reveals the development of the artist's idea. Indeed, from the very beginning Basil craves to portray a young man either in the role of Paris wearing luxurious armor or Adonis having on a hunting suit decorated with a lotus. But then he decides to depict Dorian Gray as he really is, in the costume he usually wears in a modern setting. Thus, the artist who supports 'traditional', 'ideal' art comes to the conclusion that artificial nature of the exploit of Antique gods to present the charm of contemporary man eliminates the essence of his personality, therefore he chooses Impressionism as a leading style to make the picture not dissimilar to real life.

"One day, a fatal day I sometimes think, I determined to paint a wonderful portrait of you as you actually are, not in the costume of dead ages, but in your own dress and in your own time" (Wilde 2018). This means that Basil Hallward follows those ways to show the reality, which were founded by impressionists. So that there is not a model in the picture, but the artist. "...every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter." (Wilde 2018).

Another point that is intrinsically connected to the movements in art expressed in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is mentioning a wide variety of exhibitions by the heroes. For instance, in Chapter I, Henry Watton suggests that Basil Hallward should exhibit his portraits in the Grosvenor Gallery: “but not to the academy,” as Lord Henry remarked.

“It is your best work, Basil, the best thing you have ever done... You must certainly send it next year to the Grosvenor. The Academy is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse. The Grosvenor is really the only place” (Wilde 2018).

As one of the best reputed London galleries, the Grosvenor opened up its gates for the visitors in 1877. Its founders Sir Cutts Lindsey and his wife Blanche were deemed to be distinguished figures in the field of art collecting. By the end of XIX century, they had started to provide the halls for all the masters regardless their style so that famous masters appeared to be exhibited in the close proximity to the representatives of non-academic painting – pre-Raphaelites and Impressionists (Krespel 2012). This particular gallery was visited every now and then by the professor J. Ruskin and his up-and-coming student O. Wilde.

Basil, however, objects to the proposal to exhibit the portrait in the Grosvenor and is reluctant to unfold his *secret* to the world. It is remarkable that Lord Henry at a glimpse identifies the canvas as typical of non-academic painting (“The Grosvenor is really the only place”).

Yet later, Basil Goldward came to Dorian Gray’s house to take his portrait for a show that is arranged for him by Georges Petit on Seize Street.

“Georges Petit is going to collect all my best pictures for a special exhibition in the Rue de Sze, which will open the first week in October. The portrait will only be away a month. I should think you could easily spare it for that time” (Wilde 2018).

At that time Georges Petit was a significant figure among businessmen and collectors of France who was famous for his large-scale exhibitions. His gallery was located in Paris on Rue de Sze, in a fashionable house № 8. Impressionists C. Monet, O. Renoir, P. Cizanne, A. Sisley and others were invited to exhibit their works in the gallery on Rue de Sze (Krespel 2012).

The mentioning of this gallery is a tangible proof that the portrait painted by the hero of Oscar Wilde corresponded to new movement rather than to the old, traditional style, therefore it is possible to conclude that allegedly it was in the Impressionism style. By the way, Basil Goldward later planned to go to Paris, that became a home for new art, for six months, but unfortunately the crime of Dorian Gray prevented the artist's intention to join the circle of Impressionist artists.

The highest aspiration of French Impressionists as well as the masters of Japanese engravings ukiyo-e was to catch and show a certain moment. In accordance to relate to this tendency, there are constant changes in shape, color, facial expression of a young man in a portrait painted by Basil Hallward.

O. Wilde often uses dynamic impressionist landscapes: the movement of air, natural phenomena, city view. For example: “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.” (Wilde 2018).

To sum it up, the novelist Oscar Wilde wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the time and day when the trends of Impressionism and Japanese engravings ukiye-e were extremely popular. So, he could not ignore them whilst writing the novel. As a result, the following tendencies can be found in his work: dynamic landscape, minor momentous movements, attention to feelings and emotions, changing colors and shapes, intellectual attentiveness to the upcoming trends in the society, perception of art as a supreme medium of life.

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