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by

Matthew Neil Anderson

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**Predatory Portraiture: Goethe's *Faust* and the Literary Vampire
in Gogol's *Ноппом* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Thomas J. Garza

Elizabeth Richmond-Garza

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Matthew Neil Anderson, B.A.

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to my wife, Lauren.

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Abstract

Predatory Portraiture: Goethe's *Faust* and the Literary Vampire in Gogol's *Портрет* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Matthew Neil Anderson, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisor: Thomas J. Garza

Despite the fact that there seems to be no direct link between the works of Nikolai Gogol and those of Oscar Wilde, Gogol's novella, *Портрет* (*The Portrait*) and Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, share many elements in common, most notably the device of the predatory portrait. This report explores the parallels that exist between these two texts and argues that they mutually derive from elements found in Goethe's *Faust* and the trope of the literary vampire.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Though Oscar Wilde was likely unaware of the works of Nikolai Gogol, Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-1891), shares many features in common with Gogol's novella, *Портрет (The Portrait)* (1835, reworked and reprinted in 1842). Wilde's book collection was dispersed 24 April 1895 to pay off his creditors while Wilde was in prison awaiting trial on charges of sodomy and gross indecency. Thomas Wright has reconstructed Wilde's library as thoroughly as possible using the incomplete auction catalog, booksellers' receipts, lists of titles requested by Wilde while in prison, and references in Wilde's correspondence and published works. Wright's findings are published in *Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde*, and contain no reference to Gogol at all. Even if Wilde had read Gogol, it is certainly reasonable to think that Wilde would not have composed *The Picture of Dorian Gray* under the direct influence of Gogol's work without leaving a direct reference to Gogol elsewhere. One is therefore left to wonder why Wilde's only novel shares so many features with Gogol's *The Portrait*. This study will explore these shared features and demonstrate that they may be derived in part from a mutual reprisal of Goethe's *Faust* (composed between 1792-1829). With regard to the influence of *Faust* on these later texts, the elements of the

Faustian bargain and the predatory portrait (linked here to the *Zauberspiegel*, or Magic Mirror, from *Faust*) in particular will be explored. However, the influence of Goethe does not fully explain the characteristics shared by the portraits in the two later texts, as they mutually differ from the mirror image in *Faust* in several ways. It will be demonstrated that these differences may be accounted for by Gogol's and Wilde's adaptation of the trope of the literary vampire to the diabolical predation in *Faust*. It is hoped that this comparison will help to establish some of Gogol's ever-elusive sources as well as to clarify why two authors with as little direct relationship as Gogol and Wilde should have written works that share so much in common with one another.

Regarding citations in this study, excerpts from *Faust* are cited by line number as they appear in Goethe's collected works, *Sämtliche Werke, vol. 7, Faust: Texte* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994). Excerpts taken from either edition of *The Portrait* are cited by page number, and are taken from Gogol's collected works, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol. 3* (Leningrad and Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1937-52).

Chapter 2: A Magic-Portrait Gallery

First of all, it is necessary to summarize the most relevant narrative elements of each story to set the foundation for further analysis. In Goethe's *Faust*, Faust has grown weary of earthly knowledge and makes a bargain with the devil, Mephistopheles, to procure the *schöne Augenblick*. This phrase literally means the "beautiful moment", though it may also be rendered as "perfect moment" because it refers to a moment of earthly experience so beautiful, and therefore so complete and perfect, that Faust agrees to exchange his life and his soul for it ("Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen: / Verweile doch! du bist so schön! / Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen, / Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!" (ll. 1699-1702)¹). In the *Hexenküche* (Witch's Kitchen), Mephistopheles takes Faust to receive a revitalizing potion from a witch. Before the witch's arrival, Faust sees the *Zauberspiegel* ("Magic Mirror") and in it an image of a beautiful woman. This image becomes the focus of his desires, and in order to complete his search for the "perfect moment", Mephistopheles helps him to pursue the beautiful and simple Margarete, in whom Faust sees a reflection of the image in the Magic Mirror. Faust then seduces and ruins Margarete and kills her brother in a duel. Margarete dies in

¹ "If I should ever say to any moment: / Tarry, remain!—you are so fair! / then you may lay your fetters on me, / then I will gladly be destroyed!" (trans. Atkins)

prison after having drowned the baby she conceived by Faust. At this point Faust feels remorse, but it is too late. Thus ends Part I, with which the works by Gogol and Wilde share so many parallels.

In Part I of Gogol's *The Portrait*, a painting of an evil usurer enters into the possession of a young artist named Chartkov. (The artist's name is "Chertkov"—derived from "чёрт", meaning a minor devil—in Gogol's first published edition, printed in his collection *Арабески (Arabesques)*). Chartkov sees the image come alive at night and count gold pieces at the foot of his bed. Chartkov later finds these coins hidden in the frame of the portrait and fatefully chooses to spend the money on luxuries instead of using it to buy himself time away from the world so that he may practice his art. He gradually grows more debased until he finally goes mad and dies. Part two tells the story of the painter who made the portrait. The reader discovers that, after realizing what a hideous thing he had created by painting the usurer, the painter took refuge in a monastery and dedicated his gifts to the service of God alone.

In Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a beautiful young man sees a portrait of himself created by his friend and admirer, Basil Hallward. Upon seeing the image, Dorian says that he would sell his soul if he could remain as ageless and beautiful as the portrait while the portrait aged and wasted away with the passing of time. In short, his wish is granted—he grows ever more corrupt but remains beautiful while the image grows ever more monstrous, reflecting not only his true age but the state of his soul.

It is notable that the portraits described in each of these texts share so many traits in common with one another. Some of these shared traits are superficial, though they

nevertheless suggest a relationship between the three texts. In particular, all three of the portraits captivate their viewers, are able to move or change, motivate or otherwise influence the hero's bargain with the devil, and bring about the hero's corruption by playing upon his pride. There are also more profound *thematic* connections between these portraits, such as that they simultaneously represent *self* and *other* to the hero, as well as that they occasion the exploration of tensions between various ideas of truth and beauty.

As for the more superficial shared traits there is first of all the fact that each of the three portraits is characterized as supernaturally captivating and as exercising a hold over the hero of its story. In *Faust*, upon seeing the image in the Magic Mirror, Faust cannot remove his eyes, and enters into overtures of praise: "Ist's möglich, ist das Weib so schön? / Muß ich an diesem hingestreckten Leibe / Den Inbegriff von allen Himmeln sehn? / So etwas findet sich auf Erden?" (ll. 2437-2440)², and later remarks upon the effect of the image upon him: "Weh mir! ich werde schier verrückt", and wishes to run away even as he cannot remove his gaze from the mirror: "Mein Busen fängt mir an zu brennen! / Entfernen wir uns nur geschwind!" (ll. 2456, 2461-2462)³ The portrait of the usurer in *The Portrait* likewise exercises a hold over anyone who looks upon it, a power located mostly in its startlingly lifelike eyes—a point to be explored in greater detail below. Finally, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the image is a stunningly beautiful portrait

² "Can any woman be so lovely? / Am I allowed to see, in this recumbent form, / the essence of all paradises? / Does earth contain its counterpart?" (trans. Atkins)

³ "Can this be driving me to madness! [...] A fire has been kindled in my heart! / Let's get away from here, and quickly!" (trans. Atkins)

of an already beautiful young man. Indeed the portrait is so captivating that it immediately pushes the good-natured Dorian to narcissism:

When [Dorian] 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. [...] The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. (Wilde 28)

Immediately after having this reaction Dorian says that he would sell his soul to have for himself the immortal youth and beauty of the Dorian in Basil's picture. From the first moments, even before the sale of his soul and the painting's subsequent disfigurements, Dorian feels the portrait's supernatural influence.

In all three texts the portrait is also able to magically change or move. In *Faust* this manifests in the fact that the image of the woman in the Magic Mirror blurs as Faust gets closer, and thereby conceals its identity. This ambiguity allows Faust to later see a fulfillment of this image in Margarete. In *The Portrait*, this agency manifests on the first night after Chartkov has brought the portrait home. The usurer climbs out of his frame and sits on Chartkov's bed, counting golden coins that he keeps in rolls of one thousand, and then returns to the portrait. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the portrait ages through the novel and exhibits signs (such as a cruel smile or a bloody hand) of Dorian's internal, moral corruption.

Each of these magical portraits is also either the direct motive for the bargain with the devil or at least a limiting agent that helps set the terms of that bargain. In Gogol, the money offered by the portrait begins Chartkov's journey towards fame and death; in

Wilde, the beauty of the portrait inspires a narcissistic longing in Dorian that leads him to sell his soul for eternal youth and beauty; and in Goethe, though the bargain is already made by the time Faust sees the image of the woman in the Magic Mirror, her appearance focuses Faust's desires, leading to his seduction of Margarete/Gretchen.

Between the three texts, the object of desire seems to differ greatly, from the "perfect moment" in *Faust* to wealth and fame in *The Portrait* and personal youth and beauty in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. However, in each of these cases, the root desire is connected to the sins of pride and greed. Each character wishes to possess some external personal ideal that they feel will complete them and make them happy, even if such possession comes at the expense of others. Faust, at least initially, cares nothing for Margarete except insofar as she stands to fill his personal sense of emptiness and provide him with the "perfect moment". Chartkov will not perfect his artistic talent and use it for the benefit of the entire world, but will rather satisfy his own desires for popularity and material wealth. Lastly, Dorian's narcissism leads him to mistreat all of those around him in the pursuit of his own satisfaction. He sells his soul for youth and beauty, a vain and prideful action that sets in motion an entire chain of vain and prideful actions that tear down and demean everyone with whom he has contact, including Sybil Vane and her brother, Valentine, Basil Hallward, and Alan Campbell. The first act that changes Dorian's portrait and makes him aware of its magical properties is his rejection of Sybil Vane, his fiancée. Sybil plays the role of Juliet badly, and she explains to Dorian that she failed because Dorian has made her feel true love, making her incapable of feigning love on the stage, and as a result she vows never to act again for love of Dorian. But Dorian is

disgusted rather than flattered, and he rejects her suddenly and violently.

“Yes,” he cried, “you have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don’t even stir my curiosity. [...] You are shallow and stupid. My God! how mad I was to love you! [...] You don’t know what you were to me, once. [...] Without your art you are nothing. [...] What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face.” (Wilde 88)

The next day Dorian discovers from Lord Henry that Sybil has killed herself with poison.

After a brief moment of horror, Dorian reflects with *wonder* upon the events of his life, and thereby gives fuller expression to his growing self-centeredness.

“So I have murdered Sybil Vane,” said Dorian Gray, half to himself—“murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden. And tonight I am to dine with you, and then go on to the Opera, and sup somewhere, I suppose, afterwards. How extraordinarily dramatic life is! If I had read all this in a book, Henry, I think I would have wept over it. Somehow, now that it has happened actually, and to me, it seems far too wonderful for tears.” (Wilde 99)

Beginning with Dorian’s rejection of Sybil and his callousness upon hearing of her suicide, it is made ever clearer that Dorian’s interest in other people is rooted in his own selfish pride, and Dorian, visibly in his picture and invisibly within himself, is ravaged by this.

Beyond these shared features between the portraits in each of these texts, there are also deep thematic unities between them. For example, all of the images simultaneously represent both *self* and *other*, as each is in its own way a projection of the hero’s internal desire. The portrait represents a truth about the hero’s innermost being and desires, and is

in that respect a mirror, while it also depicts something that the hero does not yet have—some external thing or person that he wishes to possess. In *Faust*, the image of the beautiful woman represents woman as the supreme creation and ideal of beauty. She is therefore an objectified *thing* that Faust must possess in order to procure the “perfect moment” for which he has sworn to exchange his life and soul. If Faust comes to possess the woman and the perfect moment he imagines her to signify, his diabolical contract will be fulfilled and his damnation accomplished. In *The Portrait*, the usurer represents an image of luxurious wealth and greed. And while Chartkov really wants fame and respect, these desires go hand-in-hand with the vice of greed since he is too dazzled by money, fine dress, and worldly concerns to think of shutting out patrons and focusing instead on the perfection of his art. Until it is too late, he would rather serve himself than art and beauty. In a very real sense then, however much it terrifies him, the portrait of the usurer is the portrait of an advanced state of worldly accomplishment that Chartkov envies. Finally, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, while the portrait is in fact an image of Dorian himself, it is also more than that. This young man, who has doubtless seen his own reflection in a mirror thousands of times in his life, has never been so enamored of his own beauty and grace until he has seen Basil Hallward’s portrait of him. The image is therefore of *Basil’s Dorian*, a portrait of Dorian through the eyes of one who loves him, and therefore to Dorian, a more distant, and therefore objectified, view of himself. This distance and objectification allows him to feel envy, narcissism, and even a sort of reflexive, onanistic lust. Such feelings immediately lead him to sell his soul in order to procure the object of his desire: the never-changing youth and beauty of the painting.

Each of these portraits also exemplifies a tension between the superficially attractive and the more deeply beautiful. This tension is most palpably felt in *The Portrait*. In his “Translator’s Introduction: The Stories of Arabesques” from the 1982 Ardis English language edition of *Arabesques*, Alexander R. Tulloch says the following:

Whereas Piskarev’s tragedy⁴ stemmed from an inability to manipulate reality, Chertkov’s stems from the realization that he could do precisely that, coupled with an eagerness to abandon his concern with the inner truths and accept a surface image as the complete picture. Throughout the narrative Gogol stresses that the demonic image, for all its semblance to reality is of only superficial depth. It can and does detach itself from the canvas, whereas the art of spiritual expiation, to which the painter of the picture turned in the monastery, is of a more substantial nature. (Tulloch 16)

This point of view is certainly upheld by the text of *The Portrait*. In describing Chertkov’s artistic practice before he has been corrupted, it is said: “Он приник весь к своему оригиналу и уже начал уловлять те неуловимые черты, которые самому бесцветному оригиналу придают в правдивой копии какой-то характер, составляющий высокое торжество истины.” (415)⁵ Whereas after his corruption, it is said: “Он бесстыдно воспользовался слабостью людей, которые за лишнюю черту

⁴ In Gogol’s *Невский Проспект*.

⁵ He delved right beneath the surface of his model and had already begun to capture those elusive features which, in a realistic reproduction, lend a certain character to the most unattractive model—this being the elevated triumph of truth. (trans. Tulloch 68)

красоты, прибавленную художником к их изображениям, готовы простить ему все недостатки, хотя бы эта красота была во вред самому сходству.” (419-420)⁶

Between these two descriptions, there is indicated a tension between truth and beauty, or, more correctly, between truth and *a sort of beauty* that is merely superficial. Because of this tension, there exists another between two sorts of beauty: the merely superficial kind (the “черта красоты”—“contour of beauty”, reducible to mere method) and the deeper kind, which is equated with truth (the “какой-то характер”—“certain character” which arises from talent and discipline). It is key here that the Russian term used for “truth” in this case might better be rendered as “Truth” (with a capital “T”). There are two variants of the word in Russian: *правда*, which is factual or objective truth, and *истина*, which suggests “truth” in a more elevated or metaphysical sense. Gogol employs the latter variant in the first excerpt noted above, indicating quite how much is at stake when Chartkov prostitutes his talents for gold. He is not merely sacrificing a greater potential *earthly* or *human* talent, but is rather sacrificing a relationship to ultimate Truth that Gogol tells us is open to the true artist as to few others. Chartkov is sacrificing an immense gift.

The tension between true and superficial beauty is illustrated even more apparently in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the superficially beautiful Dorian is revealed as truly hideous *in truth*. In the deeper realm of the mind, the conscience, and the spirit he has become twisted because of his actions. Likewise, in *Faust*, the “perfect

⁶ He shamelessly used the weakness of people who for an extra contour of beauty added by the artist to their pictures were ready to overlook any shortcomings, even though this beauty be detrimental to the likeness. (trans. Tulloch 73)

moment”, which is attached to the image of the woman in the Magic Mirror, is nevertheless an *earthly* moment that may perhaps be contrasted to the “Perfect Moment” (capitalization deliberate) of the Beatific Vision promised to all who attain to Heaven, and which exists in *eternity*. Eternity may be understood as a moment that lasts forever, a moment of which Faust’s earthly “perfect moment” will only be a shadow, a caricature, a prefiguration. Such an interpretation is borne up by the “Prolog im Himmel” (“Prologue in Heaven”) (ll. 243-353), which, as a prologue, frames the play and gives it context. Goethe gives us the vision of heaven to clarify what *really is* at stake in the story of Faust, and even alludes to the eternal “Perfect Moment” of the Beatific Vision where the archangels Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael say in unison: “Den Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke / Da keiner dich ergründen mag, / Und alle deine hohen Werke / Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag.” (ll. 267-270)⁷ “Den *Anblick*” (“the sight”) may be seen to equate this ecstatic vision of the Divine with the “schöne *Augenblick*” (“perfect moment”) desired by Faust, all the more since the notion of eternity is foregrounded in this chorus. The phrase “Da keiner dich ergründen mag,” points to the never-ending fountain of Divine Mystery, and that the works of God “Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag” points to God as the eternal sustainer of His creation. More explicit than the words of the archangels are the final lines of the drama, which play upon the differences between the incomplete/earthly and the complete/heavenly. There is an explicit contrast between Faust’s words when he sees the image in the Magic Mirror: “Ist’s möglich, ist das Weib so schön? [...] So etwas

⁷ “Angels gain comfort from the sight, / though none can fully grasp Your Being, / and all the grandeur You have wrought / still has the splendor of its primal day.” (trans. Atkins)

findet sich auf Erden?” (ll. 2437, 2440) and the words of the “Chorus Mysticus” at the end of the play: “Alles Vergängliche / Ist nur ein Gleichnis; / Das Unzulängliche / Hier wird’s Ereignis; / Das Unbeschreibliche / Hier ist es getan; / Das Ewig-Weibliche / Zieht uns hinan.” (ll. 12104-12111)⁸ The beauty that Faust could not believe existed on earth is revealed as a mere symbol of heavenly fulfillment, and woman, in whose beauty he previously saw only an inspiration to worldly love and lust, is now revealed in the *Ewig-Weibliche* (Eternal-Feminine) as a supernal force that leads one on to Heaven.

This theme of tensions between ideas of truth and beauty is developed still further in *The Portrait*, in which the “certain character”, which arises in art as a result of talent and discipline and that is equated to truth (истина), can create an abomination. This happens when Petromikhaili (the usurer as named in the *Arabesques* variant) is painted and thereby magically transferred into the painting where he can live on in a very real way. It is important that the artist *paints the portrait as the usurer dies*, which indicates that his soul or being is transferred into the portrait. Regarding the painting of the eyes, for example, the painter’s son relates: “Около часу трудился он возле них и наконец совершенно схватил тот огонь, который уже потухал в его оригинале.” (435)⁹ The use precisely of the verb “схватить” here, rendered in the English translation as “capturing”, is interesting because it plainly indicates that, as the life leaves the usurer’s body, it is captured and bonded magically to the portrait—it is no mere image of him, but

⁸ “All that is changeable / Is but reflected; / The unattainable / Here is effected; / Human discernment / Here is passed by; / The Eternal-Feminine / Draws us on high.” (trans. Arndt)

⁹ “He worked at them for about an hour and finally succeeded in capturing that fire which was already guttering in the original.” (trans. Tulloch 88)

really does contain his life and spirit. Earlier, in describing the portrait, it is said that “Они чувствовали, что это верх истины, что изобразить ее в такой степени может только гении, но что этот гении уже слишком дерзко перешагнул границы воли человека.” (428)¹⁰ In this case, the truth captured by the brush of this truly disciplined and genius artist is *an unholy truth*, because the person whose likeness has been captured is himself unholy. Such a revelation of the unholy by an artist, especially one of real talent, Gogol sees as a terrible transgression. What the painter has wrought on his canvas is something “greater than truth” (верх истины), because it has captured not only a “True” (deeply revealing) image, but the wicked spirit of the dead usurer itself—and such a feat goes far beyond what is permitted to human beings. In the version of the story printed in *Arabesques*, Gogol not only gives the usurer a name (Petromikhaili) but a definite and terrifying identity: “Таков-то был тот дивный ростовщик, которого дерзнул я, окаянный, изобразить преступною своею кистью. Это он, сын мой, это был сам антихрист.” (443)¹¹ It is not surprising, then, that in the presence of such an unholy image, Chartkov decides to hide it:

Схвативши простыню, он начал закрывать портрет; свернул ее втрое, чтобы он не мог сквозь нее просвечивать [...] Наконец, он решился погасить свечу и

¹⁰ People felt that there was something here which was greater than truth, that only a genius could have depicted it with such a degree of veracity, but that this genius had boldly transgressed the limit of man’s freedom. (trans. Tulloch 81)

¹¹ Such was that amazing usurer whom I, a sinner, was audacious enough to paint with my sinful brush. It was he, my son, it was the Antichrist himself. (trans. Tulloch 95)

лечь в постель, которая была заставлена ширмами, скрывавшими от него портрет. (408)¹²

Chartkov is here particularly thorough, covering the image with three wraps of a sheet, with darkness (the snuffed candle), and with a screen that separates the portrait from his bed. In the end, all of these precautions are not enough to keep the portrait away from Chartkov (or Chartkov away from the portrait), but Chartkov's initial reaction in any case reveals the terrible nature of the image.

Likewise, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Dorian's portrait is covered up and hidden away because *it reveals too much* and is too terrible to look upon.

But the picture? What was he to say of that? It held the secret of his life, and told his story. It had taught him to love his own beauty. Would it teach him to loathe his own soul? Would he ever look at it again? [...] He got up from his chair, and drew a large screen right in front of the portrait, shuddering as he glanced at it. "How horrible!" he murmured to himself, and he walked across to the window and opened it. (Wilde 92-93)

This passage occurs just after Dorian realizes for the first time that the painting is changing to take upon itself the effects of his true age and of his various sins. Later he becomes less disgusted with it and looks on it with awe and fascination, narcissistically reflecting upon his own beauty in contrast to the portrait's ugliness. But even at that point, he realizes what a danger it would be for anyone but himself to see the picture, to see the unholy truth that it represents, and so he goes a step further than covering it with a

¹² Snatching up a sheet he started to cover up the portrait; he triple-wrapped it so that it would not show through [...] Finally, he resolved to snuff out the candle and lie down on his bed, which was shut off from the portrait by a surrounding screen. (trans. Tulloch 62-63)

mere screen: he locks it away in an upstairs room to which only he has the key. Despite Dorian's fascination with the portrait (and such fascination, as opposed to *horror*, indicates a deadened conscience) he realizes how naked the real truth of the portrait leaves him, and as a result, the evil of the portrait is *self-reinforcing*—in protecting the portrait, Dorian grows increasingly more self-serving and violent. When Basil Hallward sees how horrible the painting has become Dorian stabs him to death, and as a result the painting becomes even more horrible. As in *The Portrait*, the evil in the portrait is real, present, personal, and active—the image in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is “greater than truth” because it seems to contain a truly evil presence.

In all of the above one can see in Goethe the seeds that one finds germinating in the works of Gogol and Wilde. In *Faust*, the image of the Magic Mirror is likewise horrible, though it is not intrinsically evil, as it is merely a vision of a most perfect *worldly beauty*. The quotation cited above (“Weh mir! ich werde schier verrückt [...] Mein busen fängt mir an zu brennen! Entfernen wir uns nur geschwind!” (ll. 2456, 2461-2462)) indicates Faust's distress at such an image because it inflames a passion in his breast that ought to be, in the orthodox Christian paradigm, reserved solely for God. To see a fulfillment of the desired “perfect moment” in an earthly creature is in the Christian moral law to reject God—in short, it is idolatry, and upon seeing the image in the Magic Mirror Faust finds himself passionately, damnably, lustfully idolatrous. Though he will pursue this perfect earthly creature in the very next scene, at the first moment of realization, his instinct is to flee in fear. Like Faust, Dorian is terrified of his portrait the first time he notices its transformation, and is only later morbidly fascinated, and

Chartkov is likewise terrified at the outset only to later be fascinated by the evil portrait of the usurer. Some form of barrier is placed over all three portraits, hinting at the dangerous or forbidden nature of each—from the self-concealing haze of the Magic Mirror to the sheet, darkness, and screen in *The Portrait* and the screen and locked room in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Chapter 3: Goethe and Gogol

Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine how much Gogol was influenced by Goethe, or, in fact, by anyone else. In *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, Donald Fanger writes:

[Gogol's] correspondence gives us little notion of his reading knowledge, tastes, or even specific awareness of literature in the forms he himself cultivated. As a result, these areas remain all but empty categories, among so many others in the Gogol phenomenon. (Fanger 13)

In a more hopeful, though sadly rather inconclusive, vein, there is some account of Gogol's relationship to the works of Goethe in *Н. В. Гоголь: Материалы и исследования*. Pages 37-41 provide a full list of Gogol's western European source materials, arranged according to nation, and Goethe is listed among the German authors of whom Gogol was aware:

Отношение Гоголя к немецкой культуре было сложно. Дебютировавший «Ганцем Кюхельгартенем» Гоголь несомненно и в период «Аравесок» был в сфере немецких эстетико-философских и литературных воздействий. [...] Симптоматичен контраст оценок Гете в первой и последней книге Гоголя. «Ганц» замыкается хвалой «великому Гетте» (и всей Германии); в «Выбранных местах» в Гете усмотрены черты «какой-то германской чинности и теоретически-немецкого притязания подладиться ко всем

временам и векам». (39-40)

In any case, there is nothing indicating a direct influence of Goethe upon Gogol, especially in reference to *The Portrait*, and so any evidence of such a connection must necessarily be textual.

In her study, *Frames of the Imagination: Gogol's Arabesques and the Romantic Question of Genre*, Melissa Frazier reads Gogol's *Arabesques* in the context of German Romanticism. She focuses on the idea of the arabesque as the "Romantic idealform"—the Romantic literary work as a heterogeneous genre, or an order containing chaos (Frazier 14) as proposed by Friedrich Schlegel in his *Gespräch über die Poesie (Dialogue on Poetry)* (1800) and in various fragments published in the journal the *Athenäum*. Frazier admits that the parallels between Schlegel's critical theory and Gogol's *Arabesques* cannot demonstrate that there was a direct influence of Schlegel upon Gogol, but only that such an influence is *possible*, or perhaps only that it is *productive* to consider Gogol's work using the critical theory of Schlegel.

...whether or how Gogol might have learned of Schlegelian aesthetics remains unclear. Still, something in Gogol's imagination has a decidedly Schlegelian cast of countenance, as in Schlegel's thought, and particularly in that thought as expressed in *Dialogue on Poetry*, the arabesque *is* a literary genre, one which in fact bears a strong resemblance to *Arabesques* [...] [There are] many similarities between Schlegel's theory and Gogol's practice... (Frazier 5)

Though Frazier's concern is with the structure of *Arabesques* as a whole and though she downplays any connection to other theories of the arabesque, she does mention the ideas

of Goethe, explaining even that Goethe's idea of the arabesque formed the foundation for Schlegel's theory: "Before Friedrich Schlegel re-invented it as a genre of literature, the arabesque was known as a type of ornamental border, one brought to the attention of Europe by Goethe's 1789 article 'On Arabesques'." (Frazier 147)

Frazier also outlines possible connections to Goethe in Gogol's collection. For example, Frazier frames her consideration of Gogol's views on architecture in *Arabesques* with a look at Goethe's writings on the Gothic cathedral in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. She compares Goethe's consideration of the Gothic as "pleasing" to Gogol's more emphatic view of the Gothic as "beautiful" (pp. 27-28). She also considers Gogol's concern with frames for the beautiful in the context of Goethe's own statements on this, and relates this interest in frames to Goethe's concept of the arabesque¹³, which is related more to the *borders surrounding paintings* found in the excavations at Pompeii than to the elaborate, abstract decorations in Islamic art. Frazier explains that Goethe understands arabesques as borders not as points of termination that close a painting in and thereby separate it from the world, but as elements that relate an image to the space around it: "This frame is turned both inwards and outwards, integrating the central painting in with itself and out with the wall." (Frazier 147) Put another way, the frame creates a sense of contiguity and even permeability between the work of art and the real world. This idea connects directly to Gogol's use of the idea of frames, of which Frazier says:

¹³ Goethe's interpretation of the arabesque may be found in his essay, "Von Arabesken" ("On Arabesques") (1789), in *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, vol. 13, pp. 62-66.

When Gogol turns to the portrayal in *Arabesques* of inner, aesthetic space in the form of buildings and pictures, he regularly shows a space which is all-encompassing because its frame is not a frame in one of two ways: it is either permeable or infinitely expanding. (Frazier 141)

Frazier also looks at *The Portrait* with this interpretation of the arabesque in mind, since the image of a painting with a permeable border is central to that story. There is of course the fact that in the first version of *The Portrait*, published in *Arabesques* (1835), the image of the usurer actually does cross through the frame and into Chertkov's room, as well as the fact that the painting finds its way to Chertkov's home without anyone knowing how it arrived (crossing through walls, through space). Both of these instances are made less supernatural in the later version of *The Portrait* (1842), in which the usurer's leaving the painting is described as a dream and Chertkov takes the portrait home himself. Even the change of the hero's name from Chertkov (from "chërt"—"devil") to Chartkov indicates that Gogol wanted the story to be less explicitly supernatural in the second version. Though Frazier doesn't explore this fact, it is also interesting that in neither version are the gold coins given to Chertkov directly when the usurer passes through the frame. Rather, they are only showed to him at that point and later *found inside of the frame itself*. That the frame is not only permeable but also really the point of interaction and exchange between the image of the usurer and Chertkov upholds an interpretation of the story according to Goethe's idea of the arabesque.

The theme of the crossed border is also present in several ways when the painter of the usurer's portrait tells his son that the usurer is the antichrist:

“Слушай, сын мой: уже давно хочет родиться антихрист, но не может, потому что должен родиться сверхъестественным образом [...] Но земля наша—прах пред создателем. Она по его законам должна разрушаться и с каждым днем законы природы будут становиться слабее и от того границы, удерживающие сверхъестественное, приступнее. Он уже и теперь нарождается [...] Таков-то был тот дивный ростовщик, которого дерзнул я, окаянный, изобразить преступною своею кистью. Это он, сын мой, это был сам антихрист. Если бы моя преступная рука не дерзнула его изобразить, он бы удалился и исчезнул, потому что не мог жить долее того тела, в котором заключил себя. В этих отвратительных живых глазах удержалось бесовское чувство. Дивись, сын мой, ужасному могуществу беса. Он во всё силится проникнуть: в наши дела, в наши мысли и даже в самое вдохновение художника.” (443-444)¹⁴

In this excerpt, the laws of nature are said to be weakening, which will allow the supernatural to enter more easily into the natural order; the antichrist, who was confined in a body, is transferred into a painting and from there can pass into the world; and it is said that the devil can penetrate into anything and cross every boundary, even into the innermost being of mankind, into man’s thoughts, deeds, and inspirations. In short, every boundary stands to be crossed in Gogol’s vision.

Such a reading of Gogol’s *Arabesques*, and particularly of *The Portrait*, in terms of Goethe’s theory of the arabesque suggests that Gogol drew from Goethe’s article, “On Arabesques” and allows one to reason that he might have likewise drawn from others of

¹⁴ “Listen, my son: the Antichrist has long wanted to be born, but he cannot be because the only way he can be born is by supernatural means [...] But our world is mere dust before the Creator. By his laws, it must be destroyed, and with every day that passes the laws of nature are becoming weaker and weaker and so the borderline holding back the supernatural is becoming easier to overcome. He is already being born now [...] Such was that amazing usurer whom I, a sinner, was audacious enough to paint with my sinful brush. It was he, my son, it was the Antichrist himself. If my sinful hand had not been so audacious as to paint him he would have departed and vanished because he could not outlive the body in which he was confined. In those repulsive, lifelike eyes there was a fiendish presence. You may well be surprised, my son, at the awful power of the Devil. He tries to penetrate into everything: into our deeds, our thoughts and even into the inspiration of an artist.” (trans. Tulloch 95)

Goethe's works, particularly those that were internationally well-known such as *Faust*. As stated above, it is particularly difficult to determine what sources Gogol used in connection with any of his writings, though one can say in imitation of Frazier in her comparative look at Schlegel and Gogol that there is enough correspondence in form and content between the ideas of Goethe and the practice of Gogol to suggest the possibility of an influence.

Chapter 4: Goethe and Wilde

That Wilde drew explicitly from Goethe's *Faust* for *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is apparent from the second chapter onward, beginning when Dorian sells his soul: "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!" (Wilde 29)

The parallels to Goethe are striking. Not only does he sell his soul but he does so in exchange for a "perfect moment" in a sense—he desires to be the beautiful image of himself just as Faust wishes to possess a "beautiful moment" with the woman in the Magic Mirror who herself appears as a portrait—frozen, of a moment. The difference here—a woman as ideal of beauty and therefore as the necessary element for the perfect moment on the one hand, and a young man as the same ideal on the other—is central to the subtexts of each story. In Goethe, the earthly feminine ideal encompasses such figures as the image in the mirror, Margarete, and Helen of Troy, and is ironically both the apparent draw to Faust's downfall as well as—in the "Eternal-Feminine" invoked in the final lines of the play—the ultimate path to his salvation. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the subject is a man rather than a woman to work within Wilde's own thematic tapestry, which includes male homosexuality. Interestingly, Wilde's homoerotic theme does not

separate his novel at a very great distance from *Faust*. Rather, it seems to modify the theme only slightly, as Dorian is in love with himself—not with a *feminine other* as Faust is, but with a *feminine self*.

Further elements within Wilde's novel cement the connections with Faust. For example, there is an obvious parallel between Sybil Vane and Goethe's Margarete/Gretchen, both of whom are innocent victims of the heroes' schemes, who are loved (or who feel loved), but are then abandoned and allowed to die heart-broken and alone. By extension, then, there is a parallel to Gretchen's brother Valentine, a soldier who dies at the hands of Faust in an attempt to avenge his sister, and Sybil's brother James, a sailor who dies in a hunting accident while he himself is hunting down Dorian to avenge his sister. There is a further parallel between the witty and influential Lord Henry whose ubiquitous shroud of cigarette smoke and pointed beard gives him a particularly devilish air, and the witty and influential Mephistopheles who is a devil in actual fact. Such parallels as these indicate a direct relationship between the texts.

It seems reasonable to believe that the parallels between the portraits across these three works, and the themes which they occasion and explore, are not merely coincidental. Rather, it would seem that Gogol and Wilde drew mutually from Goethe's text and reprised the *Magic Mirror* to suit their own artistic visions.

Chapter 5: Vampirism in Gogol and Wilde

Where Gogol and Wilde mutually depart from Goethe and enter the realm of the literary vampire remains to be explored, and when discussing vampires it is first of all important to establish one's terminology. In this paper, it will be most helpful to use Jan Perkowski's definition of the "general vampire", which includes all so-called "subspecies" of the creature. For Perkowski, a vampire is: "[...] *a being which derives sustenance from a victim, who is weakened by the experience*. Sustenance may be either physical or emotional." (Perkowski 54, emphasis in the original)

Within this general definition, Perkowski recognizes four broadly inclusive "subspecies": the folkloric, the psychotic, the psychic, and the literary (Perkowski 54-57). The first three are deemed to be "real" to some extent, the folkloric being an element of cultural belief, the psychotic being a real human who manifests behaviors associated with vampirism, and the psychic being a real human who truly drains others emotionally by their actions or attitudes or who believes he can do so by supernatural means. The literary is a separate category altogether and includes the other three. A literary vampire (a fictional character) may either exist as a blood-drinking folkloric being, a psychotic human who acts like a vampire, or a "real" vampire that can drain its victims emotionally, spiritually, or intellectually. In both *The Portrait* and *The Picture of Dorian*

Gray, the reader encounters a literary vampire of the psychic variety.

But why should the texts by Gogol and Wilde be interpreted in terms of *vampirism* specifically, as distinct from other types of predation, especially as distinct from diabolical predation? This is a particularly apposite question in light of the fact that a vampire is now commonly taken to be above all else a blood-drinker, and blood-drinking is not an element in any of the three texts explored here. It must therefore be understood that vampirism in a general sense is a type of predation that involves neither the harm of, nor hunger for, *flesh*, but the drawing off of *life-energy*, which vivifies flesh. This life-energy may be associated with something as physical as blood, but it may instead be associated with something even subtler, generally related to the higher human faculties such as mental or spiritual energy. Thus, the vampires of *The Portrait* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are placed within Perkowski's framework in the following subset: *Vampires: Literary: Psychic*, as outlined above. Given that the vampire may feed on spirit, and that the vampire usually takes its victim by seduction rather than by force, diabolical temptation is more akin to vampirism than to most other types of predation or victimization. That Gogol and Wilde might have mutually and yet independently extrapolated vampirism from Goethe's more strictly diabolical text is therefore not hard to imagine. Another connection to the diabolical is that vampirism often involves pollution—the prey is made a predator, the damned lure others into damnation.

Of course, outright themes of the diabolical exist in the works of Gogol and Wilde as well, though *in conjunction with* the vampire trope. The major difference is that Goethe's work does not contain vampirism. The *Magic Mirror*, for example, does not

itself exercise a continuing power over Faust, but only serves to augment the work of Mephistopheles by showing Faust his own internal desire and thereby narrowing the focus of the bargain. That Faust is not numb to his conscience by the end of Part I, and that he seems genuinely concerned for Gretchen, indicates that Mephistopheles (and the Magic Mirror) are unable to completely contaminate Faust. By contrast, in Gogol, Chartkov dies from abandoning his art in the service of his own personal greed, and therefore dies a corrupt and avaricious man just like the usurer. In Wilde, Dorian dies with the very countenance of the picture that torments him through the entire novel. In both of these later stories, then, the victim ends up with something of the nature of the victimizer, just as the victim of a vampire traditionally becomes a vampire himself.

Incidentally, it is not surprising that a portrait could be related to the idea of the vampire, since portraits in general suggest a sort of living death. As Dorian Gray says, “How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young” (Wilde 29)—a portrait preserves the image of the dead as though they were alive, and a portrait is cold and still as a corpse.

Of the portrait as vampire in Gogol it is best to begin with an early passage in his story. Describing the portrait of the usurer, Gogol writes:

[Чартков] опять подошел к портрету с тем, чтобы рассмотреть эти чудные глаза, и с ужасом заметил, что они точно глядят на него. Это уже не была копия с натуры, это была та странная живость, которую бы озарилось лицо мертвеца, вставшего из могилы. Свет ли месяца, несущий с собой бред мечты

и облакающий всё в иные образы, противоположные положительному дню... (88)¹⁵

Aside from the transparent references to risen corpses and moonlight, there is also the more subtle reference to the eyes, which stare and seem to hold a special power. Throughout the novella, much is made of the power of these eyes, which burn with life, and which everyone who sees them finds so unsettling. Of the eyes, Gogol's description at their first appearance may stand in illustration:

Необыкновеннее всего были глаза: казалось, в них употребил всю силу кисти и всё старательное тщание свое художник. Они просто глядели, глядели даже из самого портрета, как будто разрушая его гармонию своею странною живостью. (82)¹⁶

These eyes are related to the East Slavic (and particularly Russian) superstition of the evil eye, held to be a power of witches, wizards, heretics, and vampires. The profound relationship between eyes and supernatural evil in the Russian tradition is notably expressed in the verb “сглазить”, derived from “глаз” (“eye”), which means literally “to give the evil eye”, but is also used to translate English-language words such as “to hex” and “to jinx”. The noun used to express both “hex” and “jinx” in Russian is “дурной

¹⁵ [Chartkov] once again approached the portrait to examine those wonderful eyes, and again noticed with horror that they were once more staring at him. This was no imitation of nature. It was a strange kind of life that might have lit up the face of a corpse arisen from the grave. Was it the effect of moonlight which brought with it fantastic thoughts and dreams, transformed everything into strange shapes so different from what they appeared like in absolute daylight? (Trans. Garnett 261)

¹⁶ The eyes were the most singular of all the features; it was apparent that the artist had used the full power of his brush and that all his care had been lavished on them. They seemed to glare, glare out of the portrait, destroying its harmony with their unnatural liveliness. (Trans. Garnett 255)

глаз”—“the evil eye”. The connection of uncanny eyes to heretics and vampires is especially telling of the portrait’s identity, as is its vague foreignness, identified in the text as belonging to the South or the East. At the portrait’s first appearance, the usurer is identified ambiguously as “азиатский” (“Asiatic”) (255) and further on is described in the following terms: “... темная краска лица указывала на южное его происхождение, но какой именно был он нации: индеец, грек, персиянин, об этом никто не мог сказать наверно.” (121)¹⁷ While vampires are often foreigners, especially in nineteenth century literature, it is more to the point that this foreignness in Gogol’s story may be related to religious unorthodoxy, and so to the heretic, which is so closely related to vampirism in the Russian tradition. An adherent to Hinduism (India), a foreign tradition of Christianity (Greece), or Islam (Persia, and to some extent Greece and India), would be suspect of being a vampire, or of becoming one at death. That the subject of the portrait was a usurer, an anti-Semitic stereotype, is a further suggestion of the usurer’s heresy. An article by Felix Oinas entitled “East European Vampires” describes the connection between heretics and vampires:

Among the Russians, especially in the north, numerous vampiric traits have been transferred to heretics. The beliefs in heretics show them to be a conglomerate of sectarians, witches, *rusalkas*, and vampires (known by the names *eretik*, *eretnik*, *eretnitsa*, and *erestun*) [...] In this description, special attention should be given to the detail concerning the *eretitsa*’s eye. (Oinas 52-53)

¹⁷ His dark complexion bespoke his southern origin, but as to his nationality, whether he belonged to India, or Greece, or Persia, no one was certain. (Trans. Garnett 289)

For having such uncanny eyes, for being foreign (and particularly said to be from places associated with religious unorthodoxy), the usurer, even as a portrait, is at least nominally vampiric. That the portrait is actually so requires some analysis of its manner of predation. *That* it predated is clear enough, as in Part II of *The Portrait*, the effect of the usurer on his clients while he was alive is shown to be predatory: evil befell all of those to whom he lent money. The same is true in his life, or his living-death, as a portrait: Chartkov takes the usurer's gold, and soon becomes as avaricious as the usurer himself. Of the beast that Chartkov becomes after falling victim to the portrait's temptations and his own inner greed and pride, Gogol says the following:

Золото сделалось его страстью, идеалом, страхом, наслаждением, целью. Пуки ассигнаций росли в сундуках, и как всякой, кому достается в удел этот страшный дар, он начал становиться скучным, недоступным ко всему, кроме золота, беспричинным скрягой, беспутным собирателем, и уже готов был обратиться в одно из тех странных существ, которых много попадает в нашем бесчувственном свете, на которых с ужасом глядит исполненный жизни и сердца человек, которому кажутся они движущимися каменными гробами с мертвецом внутри на место сердца. (110)¹⁸

Again there is transparent imagery involving graves and the dead, but taken altogether, this passage proves the final two elements that would make the portrait definitively vampiric: it feeds on the life-energy of its victim, including the higher faculties such as spirit and intellect, and it makes its victim, finally, in its own image through

¹⁸ Gold became his passion, his ideal, his terror, his pleasure, his goal. Piles of notes grew in his boxes and, like everyone to whom this terrible privilege is vouchsafed, he began to grow tedious, inaccessible to everything, indifferent to everything. It seemed as though he were on the point of being transformed into one of those strange beings, sometimes to be found in the world, at whom a man of full energy and passion looks with horror, seeing in them living corpses. (Trans. Garnett 281)

transformation. In this case, Chartkov's moral sense and his emotional commitments to his art are both attacked and drained. His previous selfless love for art, truth, and beauty is perverted into a self-gratifying love for money and fame. He feels no remorse for this until the very end, at which point he becomes so weakened from fear and disgust at what he has become that he dies. In short, as a result of the portrait's debilitating attack on his moral sense, Chartkov himself becomes like the usurer in the portrait, just as the victim of a vampire becomes a vampire. In this case, he comes to have the same *worldly* success and profound greed as the usurer himself.

There is also the fact that, as Chartkov approaches his death, he is described in terms that mirror those used to describe Petromikhaili, the usurer, only a few pages later.

Of Petromikhaili it is said:

... был высокого роста, лицо его было темнооливкового цвета, нависнувшие черные с проседью брови и такие же усы придавали ему несколько страшный вид. Никакого выражения нельзя было заметить на его лице: оно всегда почти было неподвижно и представляло странный контраст своею южною резкою физиогномией с пепельными обитателями Коломны. (431)¹⁹

And of Chertkov:

Эта ужасная страсть набросила какой-то страшный колорит на его лицо; на нем всегда почти была разлита желчь; глаза сверкали почти безумно; нависнувшие брови и вечно перерезанный морщинами лоб придавали ему

¹⁹ ... he was tall of stature, with a dark, olive-complected face and beetling brows and a moustache streaked with gray—all of which gave him a rather sinister appearance. His face was completely expressionless: it was nearly always motionless and his distinctly southern physiognomy contrasted strangely with the ashen-skinned inhabitants of Kolomna. (Trans. Tulloch 84)

какое-то дикое выражение и отделяли его совершенно от спокойных обитателей земли. (425)²⁰

These two passages do not mirror one another exactly, though certain elements create a connection. Both have a yellowish complexion—Petromikhaili has a natural dark-olive complexion (темнооливковый цвет), while Chertkov has a sickly jaundice (на нем всегда почти была разлита желчь). Both have “beetling brows” (нависнувшие черные с проседью брови / нависнувшие брови), and Chertkov’s flashing eyes (глаза сверкали почти безумно) are immediately relatable to Petromikhaili’s uncanny eyes so often described in the story. Petromikhaili is said to have a “sinister appearance” (страшный вид) while Chertkov is described as having a “terrible hue” (страшный колорит) and “an air of ferocity” (дикое выражение). Both descriptions end with Petromikhaili and Chertkov being described as contrasting with the rest of humanity (обитатели Коломны / обитатели земли). In fact *all* of these elements serve to mark both Petromikhaili and Chertkov as *others* or outsiders. The yellow complexion and dark, heavy eyebrows mark both as “Asiatic” (here, in short, “outsiders” or “non-Russians”), and the eyes refer again to the jinxing power of wizards and heretics. Even their names isolate them—Чертков (Chertkov) is derived from “чёрт”, meaning “devil”, and Петромихаили (Petromikhaili), though it contains two Russian names—Пётр (Pyotr) and Михаил (Mikhail)—is certainly not Russian, and due to the –или (-ili) ending even sounds rather like the Georgian surnames ending in the patronymic marker “shvili”, as in Gelashvili,

²⁰ This terrible passion cast a terrible hue across his face; it had an almost permanently jaundiced look to it; his eyes flashed with semi-insanity; his beetling brows and permanently furrowed forehead gave him an air of ferocity and distinguished him entirely from the peaceful inhabitants of the earth. (trans. Tulloch 78)

Abkhazisevili, or Saakashvili. In the final description of Chartkov before his death, his transformation into the likeness of Petromikhaili is complete, and the portrait of the usurer is revealed as a true vampire.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the case is more simply made, because the identity of the vampire is demonstrated less in explicit descriptive terms (no evil eyes or foreign nature), but more by its dramatic role in the tragedy of Dorian Gray. Nevertheless, a certain amount of attention needs to be paid to the appearance of the painting (little described though it is since Dorian himself is described so richly). The fair hair and half-parted lips betray nothing of a vampiric nature, though the general seductiveness of the image is extremely telling—it is not the appearance itself, but the *effect of the appearance* that matters most in this analysis. That its beauty seduces even Dorian, of whom it is an image, is even more relevant, as such an ability demonstrates that it has a sort of hypnotic power. As stated above, vampires overpower their victims not by force, but by seduction. The inert painting, having no muscles, claws, fangs, nor any other material weapons with which to overcome its viewer, is clearly of this category. Dorian falls into its clutches immediately, selling his soul within moments of having first seen the completed image. From that point on, it predares on his moral sense, eating away at his conscience by showing him the effects of sin on his soul while allowing him to remain physically beautiful in himself. Because it acts in this way, Dorian becomes fascinated, as he is able to stand at a distance from his own corruption. Overcoming his initial fear, he thrills to see the evil sneer, the aging face, and the bloodstained hand, all because he sees no such effects on his own body. Because he remains so young and

beautiful, no one suspects he is anything other than perfectly pure, and superficially he suffers nothing from his excesses. And so he goes on to predate on others, such as Sybil Vane, Basil Hallward, and Alan Campbell, harming them in all sorts of ways, but in every case eroding their moral sensibilities as the portrait has eroded his own—he pushes Sybil to suicide and Basil nearly to madness, and he blackmails Alan into disposing of Basil’s murdered body. In short, he has become *a vampire in the image of his own image*. The effect of this is most viscerally felt in the final paragraph, in which the corruption of the image enters Dorian fully at his death, making him, finally, completely what *it* once was. (He even dies with a pierced heart, which is one of the few ways a vampire can be definitively destroyed.)

When [the coachman and the footman] 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. 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. (Wilde 220)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The many parallels that exist between Gogol's *The Portrait* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggest that these authors drew mutually from similar sources. The nature of the portrait in Wilde's novel, and the thematic concerns surrounding it, as well as the bargain with the devil are all elements shared (sometimes rather transparently) with Goethe's *Faust*. Though it is difficult to identify Gogol's sources, his novella shares so many elements with Wilde's novel, and after further analysis, with Goethe's play, that a link to *Faust* is likewise suggested, and it does seem that a reading of *The Portrait* in such a light is productive. Further comparisons (drawn from the scholarship of Melissa Frazier) between Gogol's works and those of Goethe suggest even more connections between these two authors, especially between Gogol's thought as revealed in his collection, *Arabesques*, and Goethe's essay, "On Arabesques", and his writings on architecture in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Where Gogol and Wilde remain similar to one another yet mutually differ from Goethe, there is a demonstrable link to the trope of the literary vampire, which may itself be read as a natural extension of the diabolical predation present in Goethe's *Faust*.

The many points of comparison between these texts—that is, between *The Portrait* and Gogol's *Arabesques* in general, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Faust* and

various of Goethe's critical writings, and the various texts dealing with vampirism in folklore and in literature, serve as points of initiation into a conversation across time and space. Gogol and Wilde can speak to one another by way of Goethe and the literary vampire, and one reading these texts *in dialogue* is able to see their themes open up and evolve far more than one reading the texts in isolation. If one sees Goethe's Magic Mirror in the portraits of Gogol's usurer and Wilde's young dandy, then the exploration of, for example, the tensions that exist between various ideas of truth and beauty in any one text is at once clarified, questioned, and expanded upon by the other texts. Where these texts come together, then, alike yet distinct, they are like mirror-images of one another, or like a painting is to its subject—each contains the image of the other, and each, thereby, reveals the other in greater clarity, image opening upon image to show those most important things that lie beneath the mere surface.

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Vita

Matthew Neil Anderson was born in Norfolk, VA in 1983. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in history from the University of Texas at Austin in 2006 and entered the Master of Arts program in Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Texas at Austin that same year.

Email address: mranderson01@hotmail.com

This report was typed by Matthew Neil Anderson.