

EDGAR ALLAN POE AND OSCAR WILDE
SOME COMPARATIVE NOTES: *THE FALL OF HOUSE OF USHER* AND
THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

*„Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme
development, invariably excites the sensitive
soul to tears.”(Edgar Allan Poe)*

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Abstract. The present paper aims at revealing certain analogies between Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde, not only with respect to their belonging to the same literary movement, but also regarding their dramatic and misfortunate lives. Both Wilde and Poe lived till the limits of experience: Wilde, a theatrical personality, mirrored in a showy and disputed appearance, a hedonist living in the *lime lights*, an man with daring and controversial attitude that led to his being humiliated by social hypocrisy; Poe, the master of the macabre and one of the most influential authors of gothic literature, accumulating rumors and distorted truths round his life. The history of literature records their names as those of most original writers whose innovative and peculiar art went much ahead their time. Wilde was interested in the American predecessors of Aestheticism; he came to know Poe via Baudelaire who was very enthusiastic about the American writer. When Wilde wrote his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Gothic literature had long before emerged as a literary movement.

Both writers expressed their theories regarding the central principles of aestheticism in what one may call *Poetical Arts*: Poe in his *Poetic Principle*, a consistent piece of literary criticism written towards the end of his life and in which the *seeds* of the aesthetic doctrine are already visible, Wilde in his celebrated *Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in his theoretical essays. Earlier than Wilde and perhaps not so quintessential, Poe pleaded against any external influence upon art, mainly against didacticism. Several decades later, Wilde perceived the autonomy of art in terms of its detachment from any other forms of human spirituality. In terms of fictional universe and themes, Wilde and Poe have again much in common: the same type of hero; the theme of fatal attraction between the object and the hero, the *book* theme, and last but not least, the same atmosphere in which reality combines with exoticism and dream.

Key words: aestheticism; Gothic literature; art; literary themes.

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