

HOMOEROTIC DESIRE AND THE ARTIST MANQUÉ

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## Homoerotik Arzu ve Eksik Sanatçı

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### Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) homoerotik arzu
- 2) eksik sanatçı
- 3) Platon
- 4) Oscar Wilde
- 5) Thomas Mann

### Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) homoerotic desire
- 2) artist manqué
- 3) Plato
- 4) Oscar Wilde
- 5) Thomas Mann

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to examine the figuration of the artist manqué that emerges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century representations of male homoerotic desire. The analysis of this character necessitates the study of another artist figure, the master, which appears in the problematization of homoerotic desire in an earlier context. Since the status of the artist manqué is defined by its deviation from the master and the master's relation to homoerotic desire, this thesis follows the transformation of the artist figure that takes place within the textual representation of the homoerotic desire. In this regard, the readings of the erotic dialogues of Plato, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, which gave birth to the master figure, is followed by the analyses of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.

The existence of a literal tradition that problematizes homoerotic desire in accordance with the circumstances and requirements of the given period through the use of an artist figure is the major result drawn from this study. The breaking away of the artist from the role of the master in the writings of Wilde and Mann, in this sense, bespeaks the insuppressible domination of the homoerotic desire that is suggestive of the nascent homosexual identity in various fields of society. On the other hand, the appearance of the artist manqué, whose formation is marked by failure, death and decadence, betokens the associations that are attached by the same society to that identity.

**Key Words:** homoerotic desire, artist manqué, Plato, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Mann

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı on dokuzuncu yüzyıl sonu ve yirminci yüzyıl başı erkek homoerotik arzu tasvirinde ortaya çıkan eksik sanatçı temsilinin incelenmesidir. Bu karakterin analizi homoerotik arzunun sorunsallaştırıldığı daha önceki bir bağlamda beliren bir başka sanatçı figürünün, üstad karakterinin, tetkikini gerektirmektedir. Eksik sanatçının konumu, üstad temsilinden ve üstadın homoerotik arzusuyla ilişkisinden sapmasıyla belirlendiğinden, bu tez, homoerotik arzunun metinsel temsilinde yer alan sanatçı figürünün dönüşümünü izlemektedir. Bu bağlamda, Platon'un üstad figürünü doğuran erotik diyalogları *Sempozyum* ve *Phaedrus* okumalarını, Oscar Wilde'in *Dorian Gray'in Portresi* ve Thomas Mann'ın *Venedik'te Ölüm* eserlerinin analizi takip etmektedir.

Bu çalışmadan çıkan ana sonuç, homoerotik arzuyu dönemin koşulları ve gereksinimleri doğrultusunda sanatçı figürü kullanımıyla sorunsallaştıran edebi bir geleneğin varlığıdır. Bu manada, Wilde ve Mann'ın eserlerinde sanatçının üstad rolünden kopuşu, toplumun çeşitli alanlarında tanınmakta olan homoseksüel kimliği düşündüren homoerotik arzunun bastırılmaz gücünü göstermektedir. Öte yandan, varlığı başarısızlık, dekadans ve ölümle şekillenmiş olan eksik sanatçının doğuşu aynı toplumun bu kimliğe ve arzuya yüklediği çağrışımları işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** homoerotik arzu, eksik sanatçı, Platon, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Mann

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes its cue from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's designation in *Epistemology of the Closet* of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *Death in Venice*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Billy Budd* as the "foundational texts of modern gay culture" as well as the modern homosexual identity (49). Sedgwick's suggestion is revelatory of a fact that has passed unnoticed from the critical eyes. The three out of four books that she enlists, namely *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *Death in Venice*, and finally *Dorian Gray* are all texts that were constructed either in the form or as an extension of *Künstlerroman* tradition. In addition to the fact that the modern homosexual culture is shaped mostly in the form of an artist-novel, the constitution of the homosexual identity in the figuration of an artist has gone unattended in scholarly corpus. It would not be wrong to purport that the homoerotic desire finds its expression through the figurations of the artist within these texts.

The aim of the present study was at first the analysis of this articulation of homoerotic desire by the artist figures in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Death in Venice*. Such an analysis, however, had to be preceded by the examination of another period in Western thought whereby the homosexual relations were problematized through the figuration of an artist. The classical Greece hosts the problematization of homosexual relations by the Platonic theory of love with which the modern texts are in a constant dialogue. Therefore, the eventual aim of this thesis is to follow the metamorphosis of the function and position of the artist in the conceptualization of homosexual desire.

In this regard the first chapter will scrutinize the erotic dialogues of Plato with the aid of Michel Foucault's analytical contribution and historical knowledge. The historical and social background of the period will show that the homosexual relations, especially the Greek love of boys, were problematic to Greeks, although they were accepted by law and culturally celebrated. Plato's erotic dialogues offer a way of soothing the anxiety that was clustered around the pederastic form of homosexual love by bringing to the fore a figure: the master, either as a philosopher or an artist, who was impelled to a truth beyond this world. *Phaedrus*, which is analyzed in the first part of Chapter One, sets the ground that the figure of the master is to evolve with prescriptive suggestions on the part of the master. *Symposium*, on the other hand, the analysis of which makes up the second part of the same chapter, portrays the master figure in the perfect exemplar of Socrates. It also puts forth an art theory that is born out of the conduct of the Platonic theory of love. This art theory advocates and prioritizes the homoerotic relationship as long as the physical desires are sublimated into works of intellect and spirit. The master, leading the young boy too, has to ascend to Beauty from the earthly, which should find its reflection in his works as well.

As opposed to this figure is the nascent artist manqué of the modern texts who tries to conceive his homoerotic desire in terms of the Platonic theory. The attempt, which is incongruous chronologically, socially, artistically, and most importantly sexually, fails inevitably, installing the tragic view of the artist. The failure of the artists of the modern texts in the Platonic conception of love that brings destruction on their part will be followed in the analysis of *Dorian Gray* and *Death in Venice* in the second chapter. This process will first be followed in the former novel where Basil Hallward, the painter, not only brings self-destruction but also leads the destruction of the target of his desire, Dorian. Mann's novella will be read in a similar fashion in the second part of this chapter, tracking the way that Aschenbach, the artist-hero of Mann, moves to his death. The conclusion will serve as a coda

to the thesis as it will be devoted to personal evaluations on the figure of artist manqué who fails both artistically and sexually. The failure of the artist will be regarded also as the failure of the Platonic theory in its relation to homoerotic desire since it is incapable of conveying homoerotic desire. The result of this study will underline the homoerotic desire's power that defies the limits of the Platonic theory of love, which sublimates the same desire, in need of fulfillment of the desire. Although the desire is detached from the confines of Platonic theory, it remains unfulfilled by the intervention of death, an issue which will be dealt by the later twentieth century figurations of the homosexual artist.

## CHAPTER ONE – The Master in the Platonic Theory of Love

A thorough analysis of the problematization of the homosexual love in the classical Greek society can be possible with the historical and social background of homoerotic love in that specific society. What did this love mean to ancient Greeks? How was this love formulated? What were its characteristics? These are some questions that shall be answered before we can comprehend the process of problematization of this love, as seen, especially in the erotic dialogues of Plato. The position of this love in the ancient Greek society can be a confusing matter for the minds of the modern reader. The general tendency that is born out of this confusion is to valorize the liberalism of the ancient Greek society on the subject of sexuality. This misleading conclusion is the direct result of an anachronistic application of our hetero/homo division to the subject. Robin Waterfield, in his introduction to *Symposium*, notes that people in Athenian society could be attracted to either or both of the sexes and that neither homosexual nor heterosexual relations were considered perverted or normal (xv). Foucault, in *The Use of Pleasure* where he devotes himself to the inquiry of the rooting of “sexuality,” elaborates on the issue: “The Greeks did not see love for one’s own sex and love for the other sex as opposites, as two exclusive choices, two radically different types of behavior” (187). “We can talk about their ‘bisexuality,’” adds Foucault, “thinking of the free choice they allowed themselves between the two sexes, but for them this option was not referred to a dual, ambivalent, and ‘bisexual’ structure of desire (188). According to Foucault, the motivation for a man or a woman to desire someone was the notion of beauty and a craving for beautiful humans regardless of the sex (188). Foucault informs further that

homosexual love was not legally restricted; was generally acknowledged; was encouraged in various institutions; found place in religious happenings; and was part of a cultural practice in which a whole body of literature were devoted to it (190). Although there were other forms of same-sex relationships, along with the ones that were between men and women, a special attention was given to a specific form of same-sex relationship, that of between the lover and the beloved (Foucault, *Use* 196). This relationship “could be established between an older male who had finished his education - and who was expected to play the socially, morally, and sexually active role-and a younger one, who had not yet achieved his definitive status and who was in need of assistance, advice, and support” (Foucault, *Use* 195). Waterfield’s summary of this relationship suggests an exchange between the two men. According to this summary the boy was to yield the sexual conquest of the lover passively, as his name *eromenos* (beloved) implies, while his feelings for the man were to be in the form of friendship (xvi). The lover, on the other hand, who enjoyed the sexual conquest, was expected to have him under his patronage for the boy’s future political advancement (xvi). In this sense, taking account of Foucault’s assertion that parallels political education of a man with his training in virtue (*Use* 76), this sort of relationship that is based on exchange embodies “educational practices and philosophical instructions” within (*Use* 195). It is according to this fact that certain courtship practices, which are followed by Foucault, were formed. The moral reflections on this relationality, on the other hand, finds its basis on this fact too.

This brings us to Foucault’s major preoccupation that he undertakes in his volumes of *History of Sexuality*. In this project Foucault dedicates himself to show how sexuality became a tool of subjectification in Western civilization where the individual finds himself as a subject of sexuality and desire while sexuality gained a moral dimension. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault returns back to Greco-Roman culture, tracing the earlier implications of this process. The classical Greece supplies Foucault with the picture in which the constitution

of sexuality as a moral domain takes place in the very domain of same-sex relationality. Although same-sex relations were commonly accepted and free from any prohibition, they, especially the one in the pederastic form, were nonetheless problematized by many philosophers and moralists. To put it in Foucault's own words, "the Greeks practiced, accepted, and valued relations between men and boys; and yet their philosophers dealt with the subject by conceiving and elaborating an ethics of abstention" (*Use* 97). This ethics of abstention is based on the Greeks' moral devaluation of two aspects: excess and passivity, "the two main forms of immorality in the practice of *aphrodisiac*" (Foucault, *Use* 47). The devaluation of these aspects is strictly related to a free man's position in the rule of the city and other people. A man had to govern desires and pleasures in order to be free from their effect (78). By means of this freedom, one was supposed to exercise power over others (Foucault, *Use* 80). Hence, "the relationship with oneself would become isomorphic with the relationship of domination, hierarchy, and authority that one expected" (Foucault, *Use* 83). It was according to this isomorphism that the moralization of the pederastic form of love took place with its emphasis on the role of the Greek boy. Since "the importance of his honor . . . [was] related to his status, his eventual place in the city" (Foucault, *Use* 206), he was not expected to behave passively, "to let himself be manipulated and dominated, to yield without resistance, to become an obliging partner in the sensual pleasures of the other, to indulge his whims, and to offer his body to whomever it pleased and however it pleased them, out of weakness, lust, or self-interest" (Foucault, *Use* 211). In addition, Foucault identifies another isomorphism that is existent in the ancient Greek society: the isomorphism between sexual relations and social relations. He explains this principle in detail as follows:

What this means is that sexual relations – always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity opposed activity and passivity – were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an

individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished. . . And this suggests that in sexual behavior there was one role that was intrinsically honorable and valorized without question: the one that consisted in being active, in dominating, in penetrating, in asserting one's superiority. (*Use* 215)

In this sense, the passivity in the sexual intercourse becomes the most potent symbol of the passivity in the social sphere. If one assumed the subordinate role in the sexual intercourse, it was not possible to be dominant in the civic and political life (Foucault, *Use* 220). “What was hard for Athenians to accept,” says Foucault, “. . . was not that they might be governed by someone who loved boys, or who as a youth was loved by a man; but that they might come under the authority of a leader who once identified with the role of pleasure object for others” (*Use* 219). Then, the issue was a very problematic issue for the Greeks when the beloved’s relation to his lover is considered. The paradox was that everyone accepted that the boy for a certain span of time was an object of pleasure but “day would come when he would have to be a man, to exercise powers and responsibilities, so that obviously he could then no longer be an object of pleasure” (*Use* 221). This was the paradox that all the moralists and philosophers tried to solve.

The solution that Plato brings for this paradox carries the same-sex relation on to a completely different level. Plato offers a form of abstention that “was linked directly to a form of wisdom that brought them into direct contact with some superior element in human nature and gave them access to the very essence of truth” (Foucault, *Use* 20). In the formulation of Plato the way to reach that wisdom was only possible through a spiritual ascent gained only by an absolute resistance to earthly sensations. In the Platonic theory of love, an artist or a philosopher figure, epitomized by “the master” Socrates, emerges as the most liable person to experience this relationship according to its rule. As the sexual domain is turned into an

ethical ground through the intrusion of a spiritual goal which can be achieved only by a prescribed way of life, the artist becomes a moral figure and gains a moral function. The moral artist changes into a key figure in this relationship by helping the moral, spiritual, and thus political upbringing of his beloved. His status in this relationship also becomes exemplary for others to follow. On the other hand, this theory of love gives birth to an art theory with the introduction of the philosopher and the artist to the formulation of perfect pederasty. Plato's erotic dialogues give way to the discussion of this theory in detail. These dialogues, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* will be analyzed respectively in order to see the workings of this theory more clearly.

### **I. I. *Phaedrus***

*Phaedrus* seems to set the ground that the *Symposium* is based on. The dialogue is between Socrates and Phaedrus instigated by a speech of Lysias on the subject of lovers. Socrates comes across Phaedrus, who is to take a walk out of the walls of Athens, around the gate of the city. Phaedrus convinces Socrates to accompany him in his perambulation by promising to discuss what he has heard in Lysias' company. Hearing that Lysias has given a speech about the distinction of the lover from the non-lover, Socrates persuades Phaedrus, who happens to own the text of the speech, to read it. The two rest under the plane tree beside the banks of the Ilissus for philosophizing. Lysias' speech illustrates the tendency of the period to add a moral dimension to the field of sexuality. Its one and only argument is that the candidate for the role of the beloved should pick the non-lover instead of the lover. Lysias' addressee in the speech is a young boy with whom he seems in an effort to establish his relationship that will work for the advantage of both of them. As Lysias is dismissing the role of a lover, he is proposing that the best way for sustaining such a relationship is that of one

between the non-lovers (401). Agreeably, in this speech the figures of the lover and non-lover are utterly opposed to one another as the non-lover is instilled with positive values. His argument starts with the accentuation on the transience of passion on the part of the lover. The non-lover who is free from passion will therefore never repent his deeds he has committed for the sake of his lover (401). Since passion is transient the lover will certainly move to new beloveds when desires are quenched (401). Likewise, since being passionate is equated to be in wrong mind, what will become of the feelings of that state of mind as soon as the lover gets in his right mind? Surely, they will not be thought good anymore (401). The stress moves from this interpersonal level to a more social one as Lysias puts forth that there are more non-lovers than lovers to choose from, which, to him, enhances the chances of finding the right person (401). On the other hand, the conduct of a relationship of the non-lovers on the social level is more acceptable, he observes, “because people know that talking to another is natural, whether friendship or mere pleasure be the motive” (402). And the non-lover will not be as boastful as the lover who sees his relationship in terms of a success against his rival fellows. The same lover would also detach his beloved from society in the fear that he would become superior of him in wealth and intellect (402). Just as he is greedy, he is also jealous in that he does not wish anybody influence his beloved. He warns the candidate that if he submits to his lover’s will, he is to remain friendless; if he defies his lover, he will have to quarrel with him, who is much more angry than the non-lover, whereas a dispute with a non-lover would be beneficial to him (402). The non-lover, “whose success in love is the reward of their merit,” rather, is not jealous, and wants accompany along with his beloved, “for more love than hatred may be expected to come to him out of his friendship with others”(402). Since it is the physical beauty that enables the lover to love his beloved, he may not remain friend with the beloved when the passion has passed away (402). However, when the non-lovers are considered, “the friendship is not lessened by the favours granted; but the recollection of these

remains with them, and is an earnest of good things to come” (402). Lysias furthers the dichotomy by stating that he as a non-lover would improve his beloved, while the lover would spoil him due to the fact that he would sing his praise on false grounds, since they are to attract him and his judgment is impaired by passion (402). Thus, Lysias claims that the lover should be pitied instead of being envied (402). He warrants his beloved that he “shall not merely regard present enjoyment, but also future advantage, being not mastered by love,” but by being his own master (402). He also promises that he will forgive unintentional offences as well as trying to prevent the intentional ones as “the marks of a friendship which will last” (402). Therefore he suggests that

surely you ought not to be granting favours to those who besiege you with prayer, but to those who are best able to reward you; nor to the lover only, but to those who are worthy of love; nor to those who will enjoy the bloom of your youth, but to those who will share their possessions with you in age; nor to those who, having succeeded, will glory in their success to others, but to those who will be modest and tell no tales; nor to those who care about you for a moment only, but to those who will continue your friends through life; nor to those who, when their passion is over, will pick a quarrel with you, but rather to those who, when the charm of youth has left you, will show their own virtue. (402-3)

He concludes his speech with an aphorism that can summarize his theory behind the speech:

“[L]ove ought to be for the advantage of both parties, and for the injury of neither” (403).

Though it may seem to possess minor importance, mostly by the mere presence of Socrates’ revisionary second speech, Lysias’ narration is itself significant simply because it gives vent to dissatisfaction that had been clustered around the pederastic culture. As one can easily discern the lover has already gained a disreputable status that is now center of a critical assessment. In this point of view the figure of the lover is an immoral who exploits the young

beloved sexually. The greedy lover who only thinks of his satisfaction does not contribute to the social and mental upbringing of the youth. Since the relationship between the lover and the beloved suggests inequality in respect to the benefits gained from different levels as a consequence of the sheer dominance of the beloved, the relationship is suggested to be replaced by a new mode of relationality, that of the friendship of the non-lovers.

What is more interesting to come is Socrates' speech that reinforces the suggestions of Lysias. Inspired by the subject of the speech Socrates claims he can orate another speech as good as Lysias' one on the same subject (404). So does he, in a more organized and trenchant fashion that strengthens Lysias' views in a clearly defined theoretical framework. Socrates founds Lysias' argument on a theory that offers a dual guiding and ruling principle that leads human beings; "one is the natural desire of pleasure, the other is an acquired opinion which aspires after best" (407). These two forces can sometimes be in harmony and sometimes in war, while, sometimes the one and sometimes the other conquers (407). The human nature is to be understood in this binary structure. When the former, "which is devoid of reason rules in us and drags us to pleasure, that power of misrule is called excess," whereas, when the latter with the aid of reason rules, "the conquering principle is called temperance" (407). Just as gluttony, love, "the irrational desire which overcomes the tendency of opinion towards right, and is led away to the enjoyment of beauty, and especially of personal beauty," is an example of an excessive state (407). Certainly, the lover is seen within this framework as the prototype of a person who is in such a state. Thus, since he "is the victim of his passions and the slave of pleasure" he is apt to perform the misdeeds Lysias has enumerated on the part of the lover (408). In his "diseased" state of mind the lover reduces his beloved to an inferior position as he rejects "any superiority or equality on the part of the beloved" (408). The mental defects of the beloved, which are delight to the lover, are sustained in the beloved (408). He is to cut from society that would make him a man and give him wisdom (408). The lover hereby gives

the greatest injury to the beloved as the beloved is now banished from “divine philosophy” (408). Socrates dwells further on the harms of the lover when he insists that the beloved will not receive adequate training of his body (409). The loss of familial ties as well as the loss of property on the part of the beloved is desired by the lover, both of which will make his attachment to the lover stronger (409). Socrates moves on to dismiss the sexual contact between two people with such an age difference. To him, the lover is mischievous and unpleasant who is merely after the sensual pleasures (409). Socrates lastly speaks of the lover’s transformation into an enemy when he has got what he has wanted. The oaths and promises, the sayings and doings in the reign of folly will be forgotten as the lover changes his pursuit into flight (410). Socrates sets up the binary positions of the lover and the non-lover when he advises the beloved that “he ought never from the first to have accepted a demented lover instead of a sensible non-lover” (410). Socrates ends his oration with a saying too, which associates lovers to animals: “As wolves love lambs so lovers love their loves” (410). Socrates’ invoked speech outclasses Lysias’ written text in its eloquence although it shares the same themes discussed. The speech develops a theory in the defense of the non-lover relationship, which is implicitly ingrained in the text of Lysias, evaluating it as a form of excess and as a state of delirium dominated by passions. On the other hand, the speech complements and develops the ideas of Lysias. It is complementary in that its emphasis is on the analysis of the figure of the lover, while the accent falls on the non-lover in Lysias’ text. Accordingly, the traits and characteristics of the lover is developed further, in Socrates’ words, as “a faithless, morose, envious, disagreeable being, hurtful to [the beloved’s] estate, hurtful to [the beloved’s] bodily health, and still more hurtful to the cultivation of [the beloved’s] mind” (410). Obviously Socrates seems to share with Lysias the belief that holds the corruption within the pederastic culture.

Immediately after this speech Socrates recognizes a significant error both in his speech and Lysias' text. He blames the "dreadful speech" Phaedrus has brought with him that drives Socrates to deliver one as dreadful (411). He finds that neither he nor Lysias have acknowledged the fact that eros, love, is also the name of the god where its meaning is derived from. Since love is a divinity and he has insulted it, Socrates concludes, he has to have a purgation (412). It will be this truly Platonic speech that the ideas in *Symposium* take their departure from. This second speech of Socrates tries to reestablish the relationship between the lover and the beloved without the elimination of the lover from the scene. The effect is done by a theoretical shift from the system of human nature that works in a binary opposition to the Chariot allegory. Socrates starts off his speech with an apology. He states that he has lied by saying that the beloved should "accept the non-lover when he might have the lover, because the one is sane, and the other mad" (414). He continues by dividing madness into two: "It might be so if madness were simply an evil; but there is also madness which is a divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men" (414). He finds this sort of madness superior than a sane mind, for the former is divinely and the latter is humanely (414). He exemplifies the kind of divinely madness that is noble with the art of prophecy and the madness of one who is possessed by the Muses to prove his point (414). However, he classifies the madness of love as "the greatest of heaven's blessings" among the list of the divinely madness (415). Socrates, then, moves on to the Chariot allegory, which recalls the Allegory of the Cave. Leaving aside the binary forces that make up human nature, Socrates takes up a triadic image: a couple of winged horses along with a charioteer. Whereas the combination of gods are all noble and of noble descent, the human charioteer's pair consists of one noble and one ignoble breed that give great pain for the charioteer while driving them in heaven. The humanely soul has to fall into an earthly frame, becoming "a living and mortal creature" as it is imperfect unlike the immortals (415-16). In an explanation

of the reason of the fall, Socrates says that the wing of the soul is nourished and grows as long as she moves by the divine that is beauty, wisdom, goodness and the like; however, it falls away “when fed upon evil and foulness and the opposite of good” (416). The life of the gods of course takes place in beauty, wisdom, and goodness, but they also have a way of moving up to the top of heaven’s vault, outside heaven, “the heaven which is above the heavens” (416). There, they behold true and absolute knowledge, the reality, temperance, and justice that are invisible to the soul of the mortal (416). The mortal souls, on the other hand, indulge themselves with great effort to behold true being as much as they can in a struggle with the charioteer and the steeds (417). The souls that fall from heaven at the end of this process come to world as human beings, rather than animals (417). Socrates creates a hierarchy according to how much of the absolute truth is seen by the soul: “the soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature” (417). The list respectively creates a nine class that ends with the figure of tyrant. Normally ten thousand years are to pass for the soul’s wings to grow to return the place she has come from (417). Philosophers are privileged once again since the wings of their soul grow in three thousand years “and they who choose this life three times in succession have wings given them, and go away at the end of three thousand years” (417). Furthermore, the philosopher is also exempt from the judgment that the ordinary men are subjected to (417). After the judgment and the punishment the souls can pick their second lives according to their wish in the form of either a man or a beast (417). However who has not seen truth will not be allowed to take the human form (417). Since the condition for the soul to incarnate in a human body is to behold that true being, everyone in the world, in one way or another, has already been familiar with it. This realm of the souls forms the base for the love theory that follows. Love should be understood in these terms, as the man will be tied not to the earthly forms, but by the image of them will be reminded of the perfection his soul has bared witness

to. The beauty in earth should direct the one to “the recollection of the true beauty” (418). The expression of divine beauty in this world is a godlike face or form that would be a tool for recalling the true beauty the soul has once beheld (419). Beauty, in this sense, occupies a special position, for it is only beauty that has visible counterpart and appeals to the senses unlike any other idea, such as wisdom (419).

Socrates progresses to describe the characteristics of the ideal relationship between the lover and the beloved. The first thing to note is dimension of spirituality that is added to the relationship. The lover carries his relationship according to the god he is associated with. It is “after the manner of his God he behaves in his intercourse with his beloved and with the rest of the world during the first period of his earthly existence” (420). The followers of, say, Apollo or Zeus,

walking in the ways of their god, seek a love who is to be made like him whom they serve, and when they have found him, they themselves imitate their god, and persuade their love to do the same, and educate him into the manner and nature of the god as far as they each can; for no feelings of envy or jealousy are entertained by them towards their beloved, but they do their utmost to create in him the greatest likeness of themselves and of the god whom they honour. (420)

This spiritual dimension is immensely influential in the conduct of the relationship between the lover and the beloved. What is inevitable is the repression of the physical pleasures almost to the point of their elimination. The effect of the beloved’s beauty should appeal to the soul of the lover. In this regard, the affection starts in the form of a reverence that is felt towards a god (419). The beauty that the lover beholds works on his soul as the closed parts that the wings have grown out of him begin to moisten and melt enabling the wings to grow (419). This defines what emotion is, “the sensible warm motion of particles which flow towards [the soul]” (419). The receiving of this emotion is the utmost pleasure for the lover when he is

across his beloved. Continuing the charioteer allegory that divides the soul into three parts, Socrates refers to the struggle that takes place within the soul of the lover. The allegory symbolizes the contestation of the tempting forces of the earthly desires within the soul. It also acts as a guidance for the taming of those desires. While the right-hand horse “is a lover of honour and modesty and temperance, and the follower of true glory,” guided by the word and admonition in no need of the whip, the other crooked horse is “the mate of insolence and pride, shag-eared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur” (421). The latter horse, when the lover’s soul is warmed, provokes his counterpart and charioteer as he compels them to approach the beloved for the sake of the joys of love (421). Although they reject to perform what Socrates calls the “terrible and unlawful deeds,” they are tempted to step forward by the insistence of the second horse (421). As the charioteer, with the help of the other horse, pulls back in restraint, the crooked horse question the courage and manhood of the two (421). They delay his wish once again only to fail the second horse, and the villain horse fights and drags them on shamelessly (421). The charioteer with his strong will physically harms the evil horse, covering him in blood (421). The act, having been repeated several times, tames and humbles the horse as he “follows the beloved in modesty and holy fear” with the lover (421).

The annihilation of sexual desire enables the lover and beloved into communion and intimacy that will develop their friendship. The beloved will notice, to his surprise at the good-will of the lover, that his friendship surpasses that of other friends of him, having “received every true and loyal service from his lover” (422). This will render a role-reversal that is to be further shaped in *Symposium*, as the beloved starts to love, defying the limits of his title “beloved” (*eromenos*). Beauty that is perceived by the eyes of the lover comes back to the beloved, letting the wings grow out of him too (422). From now on they both long for one another when away and stop suffering when together (422). The love of the beloved for the lover is the love of a friend; his is a desire, weaker than the other’s, that is gratified when he

sees, touches, kisses, and at most embraces him (422). However, the future of their relationship is on the shoulder of the lover who is to control himself since the beloved is in a state in which he cannot refuse anything that his lover asks due to his youth when they are together (422). Self-control will mark the future of such a relation. Socrates says that “if the better elements of the mind which lead to order and philosophy prevail, then they pass their life here in happiness and harmony—masters of themselves and orderly—enslaving the vicious and emancipating the virtuous elements of the soul; and when the end comes, they are light and winged for flight” (422). The perfect example for this sort of a lover is obviously the philosopher whose mind is claimed to have wings who in its own capacity tries to cling in the recollection to those things in which God abides (418). As his mind care not the world below but the world beyond, he is thought to be mad (418). However, not everyone is capable of sustaining such a relationship. Not every soul can recall the things of the other realm, for “they may have seen them for a short time only, or they may have been unfortunate in their earthly lot, and, having had their hearts turned to unrighteousness through some corrupting influence, they may have lost the memory of the holy things which once they saw” (418). These men are lost in amazement when they see earthly copies of the ideas of the other realm, unaware of the fact that these earthly images lack any of the higher ideas that the soul has perceived (418). The privilege of beauty can be a trap for “he who is not newly initiated or who has become corrupted” (419). He “does not easily rise out of this world to the sight of true beauty in the other; he looks only at her earthly namesake, . . . he is given over to pleasure, and like a brutish beast he rushes on to enjoy and beget; he consorts with wantonness, and is not afraid or ashamed of pursuing pleasure in violation of nature” (419). As for the ones who deviate from the right path, failing in their self control and leaving philosophy behind, they will lead the lower life, having yielded to what the many considers as bliss (422). Once they have enjoyed the desire of their hearts, they will not stop enjoying,

though barely, as their whole soul does not approve the deed in whole (422-23). Also, once their sexual passions are satisfied, they no longer will be dear to one another as much as they used to be (423). They might soon turn out to be enemies as they would suppose “that they have given and taken from each other the most sacred pledges, and they may not break them” (423). Finally they are to leave their bodies unwinged without any prize for love and madness (423). The distinction of the earlier speeches between the non-lover and the lover is now replaced by the distinction between two types of lover: The spiritual lover who lives by philosophy, resisting the sexual desire, working for the bettering of his lover and aiming the heavenward journey of the afterlife; and the corrupted lover who lives by bodily pleasures greedily, is driven by bestial forces, has forgotten, or rather ignores, the recollections of the divine world. The non-lover that is dismissed out of this formulation, in the mean time, is considered worldly just like the lover of the second sort. His prudence is considered worldly along with the benefits he supplies to his beloved greedily. Socrates, therefore, warns his imaginary youth he is addressing his speech to of the real nature of the non-lover. He contends that the non-lover “will breed in your soul those vulgar qualities which the populace applaud, will send you bowling round the earth during a period of nine thousand years, and leave you a fool in the world below” (423). Having cleared of his mistake, Socrates finishes the recantation as he asks forgiveness from and sends his blessing to Eros.

What are we to make of these three speeches that discuss the issue of love? To answer the question satisfyingly, we have to bear in mind that *Phaedrus* does not end with Socrates’ final speech, but rather moves on to the topic of rhetoric and writing. Plato has already implied this when he has had Socrates organize and deliver a better speech than that of Lysias’, though uttering the same things. In the part of the speech that deals with the rhetoric Socrates remarks that “every discourse ought to be a living creature, having a body of its own and a head and feet; there should be a middle, beginning, and end, adapted to one another and

to the whole” (436). Since this is what he makes up out of Lysias’ speech, we can consider Plato criticizing the discursive power of those who are like Lysias, more than sharing their harsh censure of the lover. This is further evinced in the fact that Socrates delivers his first speech by veiling his face. Later on, he complains that Lysias’ speech has misdirected him because he has not introduced his subject matter properly as he has ignored to define what love is (412). Lysias’ speech, or rather Socrates’ corrected version, which favors the non-lover instead of the lover for a young boy is nevertheless revealing of the uneasiness at the social level that is felt on the subject of the lover. It is significant simply because it shows the point of view that dismisses the relationship between the lover and the beloved. Socrates’ second speech, orated as unveiled, restores the relationship between the two back. He establishes a binary not between by the lover and the non-lover, but by the good lover and the bad lover, just as he later on differentiates between a man that writes well and a man that writes badly (425). Therefore, Plato offers a right way of conducting the relationship of the lover and the beloved in his discussion. Two features are striking in Plato’s formulation: the spiritual aspect installed in the relationship and the repression of sexual drives in the partners. The lover and the beloved by way of friendship will gain spiritual ascent and reward by these premises in addition to receiving moral benefits and spiritual pleasures. A couple of figures, whose souls have accessed the eternal truth the most, emerge as the most suitable candidates for the conduct of the relationship in the right way: the philosopher and the artist. *Symposium* will take up the issue from here, developing an art theory born out of this Platonic love theory.

## **I. II. SYMPOSIUM**

Plato’s *Symposium* is a treatise exclusively on love and is one of the most significant texts that addresses the issue. *Symposium* consists of the monologues of “gentlemen of leisure

[who] may have occupations, but [who] do not need to work for a living” (Waterfield xiii). In this specific gathering, it is decided that each speaker should give a eulogy on love. Socrates is last of the guests to speak. As Foucault points out, the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, and Agathon in the *Symposium* are the representatives of what was customarily said in speeches on love (*Use* 230). According to Foucault, these speeches, in one way or another, “assert that it is fine to yield provided one does so in the right way, to a noble lover, that there is nothing indecent or shameful in it, and that under the law of love ‘where there is mutual consent there is what the law proclaims to be right’” (*Use* 235). Socrates, however, changes the direction of the symposium to a different point. Socrates’ speech seems to revolve around an ontological inquiry that asks what love really is, “what it means to love” (Foucault, *Use* 236).

Socrates commences his speech with reference to Diotima who happens to be master of Socrates on the subject of love. Socrates’ reference to a dialogue between himself and Diotima changes the course of the speech immediately. Foucault notes how “Diotima reproaches Socrates – and in fact all the authors of the preceding encomiums – for having looked to the ‘beloved’ object (*ton eromenon*) for the principle of what needed to be said about love” (*Use* 236). By focusing on the beloved instead of the love itself, “they thus lest themselves be blinded by the charm, beauty, and perfection of the beloved boy, and they mistakenly attributed his merits to love itself; the latter will manifest its characteristic truth only if that truth is sought in its nature and in its object” (Foucault, *Use* 236-7). Moving on to the ontology of love Diotima, in Socrates, report, defends that the goal of love is to achieve “physical and mental procreation in an attractive medium” (48). Rejecting beauty as the goal of love, she specifies “birth and procreation” as the object of love, as well as the immortality they enable (49). Diotima separates birth and procreation and explains the first in terms of birth giving: a man who is “physically pregnant” is more inclined towards women, and

conceives happiness in connection with producing children (52). The latter, however, is the doing of men who are “mentally pregnant” (52). The offspring they are replete with is composed of virtue, mostly wisdom. Just like men who are physically pregnant, this sort of men wants to give birth in a beautiful medium, rather than an unattractive one (52). The birth of this kind takes place with a partner he “can talk fluently to about virtue and about what qualities and practices it takes for a man to be good” (52). This sort of relationship is more valorized by Diotima than the first one since “the offspring of this relationship are particularly attractive and are closer to immortality than ordinary children” (52-3). But what is exactly produced in this type of relationship? The answer that Diotima gives to this question is significantly related to our topic: “All over the world, in fact, in Greece and abroad, various men in various places have on a number of occasions engendered virtue in some form or other by creating works of beauty for public display” (53). Hence, the love for boys becomes the residence for artistic production as well as mental procreation.

Diotima illustrates a theory of art as well as a guide for the lover. The proper conduct of this relationship is marked by an ascent from the physical to the ideal and requires sacrifice for the lover. The lover within this relationship sets out as a person who is fond of physical beauty at first, interested only in one body, laboring beautiful reasoning in that medium (53). Next, he should realize that all the bodies are almost alike and the beauties of those bodies are identical (53). This will let him love any beautiful body, losing his interest in a single boy which he now finds ridiculous (53). Thus, the further step would be to value mental beauty and to pay attention to that in his partner to give birth while contributing the “young men’s moral progress” (54). Then, his attention would be directed towards “people’s activities and institutions” and “the things people know” until “he has beauty before his eyes in abundance” only to conclude the unimportance of physical beauty and that “any form of beauty is much the same as any other” (54). “The slavish love of isolated cases of youthful beauty or human

beauty of any kind,” instructs Diotima, “is a thing of past, as his love of some single activity” (54). Only then, he can gain a limitless love of knowledge which “becomes the medium in which he gives birth to plenty of beautiful, expansive reasoning and thinking, until he gains enough energy and bulk there to catch sight of a unique kind of knowledge whose natural object is . . . beauty” (54). A Beauty, perhaps with a capital letter, which is “constant and eternal” (55). This beauty should be the motive for the ascent which starts with the beautiful things of this world that should be used like rungs in a ladder. “If you ever do catch sight of it,” says Diotima to Socrates, “gold and clothing and good-looking boys and youth will pale into significance beside it” (55). In this guidance the lover detaches himself from the earthly and the bodily step by step, moving up to the spiritual and eternal. In like manner, his mental procreation, including his artistic production, takes its leave from the earthly towards the absolute perfection gradually.

Later, an unexpected guest, Alcibiades, arrives to the gathering as if to prove that Socrates has taken his lesson from Diotima well as a perfect example who has recognized the true beauty. When Alcibiades gives out the eulogy of Socrates, we indeed see a man who practices what Diotima has preached, for their relationship is based on the bettering of Alcibiades, as much as it can go, and sexual reclusion. Alcibiades states that although he has listened to many men, no one other than Socrates himself has made him realize the slavishness of his life (61). Socrates reminds him of the lack in his self-development as a person situated in the Athenian politics too (61). Thanks to Socrates he is aware that he should first and foremost lead a road to perfection instead of politics (61). As a result of Socrates’ teaching and rhetorical efficiency, Alcibiades says that “I feel shame before him and him alone,” a feeling “which people wouldn’t think I was capable of feeling” (61). Alcibiades dwells more on Socrates’ self-control against his own beauty. He tells the ways through which he has planned to stay alone with Socrates to have a sexual intercourse with him. “I thought

he'd launch straight into the kind of conversation lovers make when they've got their boyfriends on their own, and this made me happy," recalls Alcibiades, but he fails to grasp what he wants in his first attempt (63). "Next, I invited him to join to me in the gymnasium and we exercised together – I thought *that* would get me somewhere," says Alcibiades, only to see that "[h]e got precisely nowhere" (63). At this point in their relationship, when Alcibiades thinks of a third and a direct assault for what he desires for, he notices that the roles in this relationship are somewhat switched: "[F]or all the world as if I were the lover and he were the boy I had designs on him," remarks Alcibiades as he invites him to a dinner (63). Step by step, Alcibiades leads Socrates to his bed, and brings up the topic himself when next to him. This time, Socrates is clear: he explains the failure of Alcibiades' thought of giving himself to him. He reproaches Alcibiades while the traditional love of boys that is based on a system of exchange between the pleasure and patronage is shattered: "[Y]ou're trying to give the semblance of beauty and get truth in return. In other words, this is a real 'gold for bronze' exchange you're planning" (65). Throughout his designs what Alcibiades receives is no more than philosophical talk. Philosophy, through which the beloved can ultimately reach virtuous perfection, is the basis of such a relationship. The physical contact of the two men is out of question. The extent of this admiration is widened as much as the sexual contact of the two men is delayed: "Although I felt I'd been insulted," says Alcibiades, "I was full of admiration for his character, self-control, and courage" (66). The delay of the contact along with its possible occurrence is the motivating force of the philosophical education. It is what strengthens the attachment of the beloved to the lover so much so that to assume the identity of the lover in the way he desires his partner. Hence, the reversal of roles: "He takes people in by pretending to be their lover, and then he swaps roles and becomes their beloved instead," complains Alcibiades (70).

As things stand clear the Greeks problematized the same-sex relationship that is performed in the form pederasty, in fact more than any other relation as Foucault records (*Use* 252). Platonic erotics is a good example of this problematization, which in fact aims to end the problems and paradoxes that surround the love of boys. These issues are solved by Plato “by replacing the question of the loved individual with back to the nature of love itself; by structuring the love relation as a relation to truth; by doubling it and placing it in the one who is in love; and by reversing the role of the loved young man, making him a lover of the master of truth” (Foucault, *Use* 242). What is important in our inquiry is the nascent figure of the master who appears as a consequence of the structuring of love relation as a relation to truth in Foucault’s terms (*The Use* 241). *Symposium* in this sense completes the doctrine that has been constituted in *Phaedrus*, adding to the theory is the characterization of the master typified by Socrates. This new figure replaces the lover; “moreover, this personage, through the complete mastery that he exercises over himself, will turn the game upside down, reverse the roles, establish the principle of a renunciation of the *aphrodisiac*, and became, for all young men who are eager for truth, an object of love” (Foucault, *Use* 241). It is through this figure that the renunciation of pleasure and the association of truth to love are realized. An art theory is also born out of this relationality which suggests the gradual rise from the physical to the spiritual that is parallel to the likes of the master. The relationship, the artistic production, and the education of the young boy are carried out with Beauty in the master’s mind as his only motivation. The domain of sexuality is sterilized from sexual pleasures through the master figure. As the Greek love of boys became an ethical domain, rather than a sexual one, the aesthetics submitted to the ethics too. The ethicizing of domain of sexuality was hand in hand with the ethicizing of the aesthetics, for the birth of the moral master is accompanied by the moralized artistic production.

## CHAPTER II – Artist Manqué in Wilde and Mann

The artist figure reappears, though in a completely subverting position, in another historical context that is crucial for the concept of homosexual desire. In *The Will to Knowledge* Michel Foucault dates the birth of the modern category of homosexuality to 1870 (43). “An entire sub-race was born, different – despite certain kinship ties – from the libertines of the past,” explains Foucault (43). Sodomy, an act that was forbidden by the ancient civic or canonical codes, states Foucault, left the stage to the nineteenth-century homosexual who “became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life of form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (43). Finally, he adds that “[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (43). Although, as Sedgwick notes, Foucault’s sketch has its shortcomings as it tends to conceive homosexuality “in a coherent definitional field rather than a space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces” (45), Foucault’s diagnosis of a shift in the conceiving of same sex desire is itself particularly significant. Sedgwick in a sense continues this view as she suggests that “[n]ew institutionalized taxonomic discourses – medical, legal, literary, psychological – centering on homo/heterosexual definition proliferated and crystallized with exceptional rapidity in the decades around the turn of the century” (2). She further delimits these decades surrounding the turn of the century with two literary figures: “[T]he period stretching roughly between Wilde and Proust was prodigally productive of attempts to name, explain, and define this new kind of creature, the homosexual person” (83). This time span demarcated by Wilde and

Proust hints Sedgwick's attention to the literary production that dealt with the formation of homosexual identity. In this respect, 1891, the date when *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published and *Billy Budd* was written is a much more substantive date than 1870 for Sedgwick. Hence, her discussion that gives way to this study:

*Billy Budd* and *Dorian Gray* are among the texts that have set the terms for a modern homosexual identity. And in the Euro-American culture of this past century it has been notable that foundational texts of modern gay culture – *A la recherche du temps perdu* and *Death in Venice*, for instance, along with *Dorian Gray* and *Billy Budd* – have often been the identical texts that mobilized and promulgated the most potent images and categories for (what is now visible as) the canon of homophobic mastery. (49)

As it has already been suggested at the beginning of this study, the artist figure plays an important role in most of these texts. As far as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Death in Venice*, the texts that will be analyzed respectively in this chapter, are considered one immediately recognizes the transformation that the artist figure experiences. The exalted position of the artist of the Platonic theory leaves itself to the tragic view of the artist in these texts. What is striking in this novel formation of the artist is the role that the Platonic doctrine plays in the fall of him. Both Basil and Aschenbach, the artist-heroes of Wilde and Mann respectively, try to conceptualize their desire according to the rules of the Platonic theory of love. As they are unable to realize this since their desire overwhelmingly dominates them, they fall from higher rungs of the ladder to abasement. Furthermore, their tragedy ends with their death which also stems from their deviation from the Platonic path. The analysis of each work will be followed by a comparative conclusion that investigates the general features of the artist manqué and the reading of the homoerotic desire that emerges in the later appropriation of the Platonic theory.

## II. I. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the only published novel by Oscar Wilde. It was first written in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890 and was later revised and published in 1891. Since its publication the novel elicited many reviews, criticism, and discussions and much have been written on it. *Dorian Gray* tells the coming of age story of a young boy under the influences of two elder men, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton. The race between the two men for taking Dorian under their sway marks the earlier stages of the Fall of Dorian. Touched by both men, Dorian's fate will bring him to death as a consequence of an obsessive narcissistic love and a corrupt life style that rule his world. This brief summary is in line with the inclination that reads the novel in terms of a Faustian Fall in the writings surrounding *Dorian Gray*. The reading that will be proposed here will differ from its preceding examples, however, in its focus on the two men's fatal influences in the *bildung* of Dorian. Replete with homoerotic desire, Basil's visual impact on and Lord Henry's verbal domination over Dorian molds Dorian's subjectivity. After analyzing the discursive power of these two men, Dorian's self in relation to these men will be examined. At the end of this study, it should be clear that Dorian, unlike Faust, does not play a conscious role in his Fall, and instead becomes the victim of the discursive forces of Basil and Lord Henry, each representing a dominant discourse within the homosexual subculture. What this study will try to show, furthermore, will also be the inadequacy and failure of these discourses, not to mention the dominant discourse of power on homosexuality, as epitomized by the Fall of Dorian, in conveying a new homosexual identity emerging at the turn of the century. It is through this web of discursive relations that the failure of the artist can be conceptualized.

The dynamics of Wildean homoeroticism need to be settled before making a thorough argument about *Dorian Gray*. Generally speaking, Wildean homoeroticism is characterized

with a strategically composed language in an attempt to defy the discourses of power. Wilde's problem with the discourses of power is scrutinized in an illuminating essay, "Oscar Wilde, W. H., and the Unspoken Name of Love," by Lawrence Danson in 1991. Danson's argument does not only give way to the discussion of this paper, but it also supplements us with the social background of the late Victorian period. The writer sees in the texts of Wilde what he labels as "narrative indeterminacy," the usage of language that could go to either way (981). He clarifies that "his language demands a choice, but it also makes either choice seem inadequate or wrong. . . Any attempt to stop the play of Wilde's narrative and to say what it is *really* about will either demonize or neuter it" (981).

Looking beyond the fiction of Wilde, Danson sees the same attitude in the trials of him. He illustrates Wilde's popular answer to the question that asks the meaning of "The Love that dare not speak its name." To his point of view Wilde's speech with an emphasized spirituality ruling out sexuality can once again be taken to either way (997). In another instance, Danson underlines Wilde's evasive language when he was asked over and over again whether a particular story of him is "blasphemous." Having answered the question repeatedly by saying that he found the story "disgusting," and yet having been asked insistently the same question, Wilde finally maintains that "blasphemous" is not a word of his (984).

Danson considers this attitude of Wilde that is existent both in his narrative and personal life a Wildean strategy reflecting "the power of *his* language to name his desire, precisely in its evasions, its silences, its refusal of determinate meaning" (984). As the writer states, all the terminology that tried to name the male same sex desire, such as "sodomy," "buggery," and even "homosexuality" were referents of anomalies within from legal structure to science (979). Thus, the author reads Wilde's efforts as an attempt "not to be trapped in

another man's system. . . In a century, that could not name Wilde's love without making it 'unnatural,' the deferral of naming was a necessary act of resistance" (997).

As seen, Danson demonstrates Wilde's struggle to reject the discourses of power that had designated homosexuality in terms of sin, sickness, and crime. This strategically developed language of Wilde that evades, gets silent, and refuses finalities can be said to be positioned right at the threshold of the "closet." With this "narrative indeterminacy," Wildean homoeroticism can move back and forth inside and outside of the closet. Wilde's language, built on an evasive ground with an emphasis on "narrative indeterminacy," that is used to break free from domination is pervasive throughout *Dorian Gray* too. The Wildean politics of (homo)sexuality with its elusively ambiguous characteristics that indicate the problems of naming the homosexual desire in the late nineteenth century is apparent in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This time, however, different from the analysis of Danson, Wilde, at the threshold of the closet, was facing towards inside the closet rather than towards outside. *Dorian Gray* can be considered to be related with what was going on within the closet. While Wilde was consciously developing strategies to defy the degrading rhetoric of power, this story demonstrates how the homosexual subculture fell short in its own limiting discourse in the naming process of the homosexual desire in *Dorian Gray*. If Wilde was aware of the failure of power's understanding of this desire, he was also very wise in the incapacities of the domineering camps of the homosexual subculture. Basil, the artist, and Lord Henry, the dandy, represent these camps in *Dorian Gray*; the first, being part of the traditional and the latter, belonging to the modern modeling of homosexual desire. In the course of the novel these two camps are problematized as their shortcomings are exposed. Basil Hallward's homoerotic desire finds its roots in Platonic conception of this desire, yet evolves in clash with aesthetic spiritualism. On the other hand, Lord Henry's desire is based on materiality without any ethical concern, namely "a new Hedonism" that simply turns out to be a

hypocritical pose. Although these two camps seem to counter each other, they come together to form Dorian's self and bring his destruction.

Basil Hallward's homoerotic desire towards Dorian finds its expression via artistic means of painting. Art supplies Basil with the performative ground on which he can move back and forth between erotics and sublimation. The "narrative indeterminacy" is exactly on this very performative ground of artistic production. Before we met Dorian, we are introduced to him through Basil's chattering with Lord Henry about Dorian. The pain he receives in his attempt to identify his relationship with and feelings for Dorian is remarkable. With hesitant and tense remarks, Basil reiterates that Lord Henry "will hardly understand it" and that he doesn't "know how to explain it to" him (11). In fact Basil is incapable of how to express his feelings as much as he is unsure of Lord Henry's conveying of them.

In an attempt to explain these feelings, Basil consoles to his artistic beliefs. "What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinous was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me. It is not merely that I paint from him, draw from him, sketch from him. Of course I have done all that. But he is much more to me than a model or a sitter," says Basil to Lord Henry (14). Dorian Gray offers him "an entirely new manner in art, an entirely new mode of styles" (14). Dorian's influence is so immense on Basil's art that even when he is simply next to Basil he could produce his best works without the necessity of Dorian modeling. This new manner in art finds its way in the domain of Platonic conception of art. "I can now recreate life in a way that was hidden from me before. 'A dream of form in days of thought'. . . it is what Dorian Gray has been to me," he explains further to Basil to identify his relation to the boy (14). The same theme of "a dream of form" is repeated later in connection with Dorian: "Indeed, there were many, especially among the very young men, who saw, or fancied they saw, in Dorian Gray the true realization of a type of which they had often dreamed in Eton or Oxford days" (100).

Christopher Craft's evaluation is guiding as he finds the traces of Platonic *anamnesis* in this approach. In his analysis of *Dorian Gray* Craft states that "Basil . . . sees in Dorian Gray the 'true realization' of a form apprehended elsewhere and reflected here. Upon first sighting, Dorian already returns to the artist a type of dream and a dream of type" (116). Therefore, "Dorian's beauty offers a late Victorian instance of Platonic anamnesis, the recollection of eternal beauty here among the delusive productions of time" (116). Craft notes, in addition, Wilde's intimacy with Plato as a consequence of the Platonic education in the Victorian period. He claims that "Wilde of course knew Plato's schedule of erotic sublimation by heart" (117). Thus, he reads Basil – Dorian relation in light of the Platonic model of sublimation as "Basil must struggle to transfer an extraordinary erotic perturbation "into artistic production according to the Platonic mandate in which elite Victorian males were routinely schooled" (117). Accordingly, Basil can convince Dorian that his love "had nothing in that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses and that dies when the senses tire" (93).

Nevertheless, as a result of the "narrative indeterminacy" that is found in the novel, the above-mentioned Dorian's "curious" influence on Basil can easily be read with its sexual connotations. These aesthetically motivated descriptions are juxtaposed with sexual innuendos and eroticized feelings. When Basil has first seen Dorian, he has grown pale and, he reports that "[a] curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (11). Later he claims that he cannot be happy unless he sees Dorian everyday and that "[h]e is absolutely necessary to me" (14). He also adds suggestive enough that "I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said" (15). To further the homoerotic motifs, Basil states that he is unwilling to exhibit the portrait of Dorian he has painted. His reasoning for

this rejection shows his manifestation on art as well, which is inclined towards a modernist outlook: “[E]very portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul” (10). The secret of his soul is not yet revealed to the readers but can be associated with his homoerotic tendencies towards Dorian. He implies this even more when Lord Henry asks the exact reason for Basil’s rejection of the portrait’s exhibition. Basil says:

Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. He shall never know anything about it. But the world might guess it; and I will not bare my soul to their shallow, prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry—too much of myself! (15)

What Basil names as “artistic idolatry,” stands out for his desire for Dorian, marks his failure, and ends the equivocation that is generated by the “narrative indeterminacy”. Lord Henry evaluates the situation quite correctly when he comments that: “What you have told me is quite a romance, a romance of art one might call it” (16).

It is really surprising to note that the group of critics who are aware of the Platonic affinities of Basil–Dorian relation, including Christopher Craft, does not notice Basil Hallward’s failure within the Platonic doctrine. Craft sees in the production of the portrait a complete Platonic sublimation. Hence, he carries his argument only to an extent that parallels “Plato’s noble justification and [Wilde’s] own nubile language” in the representation of homoerotic desire (118). On the other hand, it is equally surprising that the critics who are more inclined to read *Dorian Gray* from the *Künstlerroman* tradition as a tragedy of the artist

miss out the Platonic connection. The apt observations of Joyce Carol Oates and Houston Baker Jr., for instance, do not refer openly to Basil's failure within the Platonic doctrine. However, Basil's "artistic idolatry," his investment in the physical, obviously is a step that defies the Platonic frame. The world of artistic possibilities that Dorian offers to him is in clash with what Basil does with Dorian. Basically, Basil does not practice what he preaches. To him, Dorian represents a new mode of artistry whereby the body and the soul unites: "Unconsciously he defines for me the lines of a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek. The harmony of soul and body-- how much that is! We in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void" (14). When he paints the picture of Dorian, however, Basil is lost in the beauty of Dorian. "Artistic idolatry," as he calls it, which discards Basil's claim and means the disjuncture of the harmony of soul and body in favor of the body, is the result of this infatuation. In fact, if Basil is discouraged from exhibiting Dorian's portrait lest his secret would be revealed, he is also discouraged as much, for he fails to realize what is artistically right: "An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. We live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost the abstract sense of beauty. Some day I will show the world what it is; and for that reason the world shall never see my portrait of Dorian Gray" (15). The portrait is obviously far from the abstract sense of beauty, the Greek ideal, and instead appeals merely to the physical beauty of Dorian.

Basil's artistic idolatry of Dorian reaches to such an extent that he calls the portrait as "the real Dorian" and prefers to stay with him at the end of the second chapter (28). Dorian, flattered by this, asks if he is really like that. The answer he receives is another suggestion of the value Basil attributes to physical beauty: "At least you are like it in appearance. But it will never alter. . . That is something" (28). Later on, when Dorian is closer to Lord Henry than he

is to Basil, Basil visits Dorian a couple of times. In his earlier visit he reveals his secret, specifically his intense interest in him, and tells the process of the portrait making to Dorian. This speech reflects the paradox that Basil is in. He expresses his attention to Dorian in artistic terms with Platonic references that echoes his earlier explanations to Lord Henry: “You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream” (89). However, the sentences that follow this sentence cancel out the spirituality of the previous one: “I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you” (89). Basil once again strives to conceptualize his homoerotic desire within the frames of Platonic conceptions of love, yet again pushing the boundaries of it, reminding Alcibiades rather than Socrates. His own words reflect the details of this process as he continues his speech:

Weeks and weeks went on, and I grew more and more absorbed in you. Then came a new development. I had drawn you as Paris in dainty armour, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms you had sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, gazing across the green turbid Nile. You had leaned over the still pool of some Greek woodland and seen in the water's silent silver the marvel of your own face. And it had all been what art should be – unconscious, ideal, and remote. 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. Whether it was the realism of the method, or the mere wonder of your own personality, thus directly presented to me without mist or veil, I cannot tell. But I know that as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my

idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it. Then it was that I resolved never to allow the picture to be exhibited. (89-90)

Basil's betrayal to the ideal art is well described with his own words in this passage as he distances himself from it. Now, however, he insists that his artistic beliefs have transformed. He has changed his opinion of art by now as he does not believe in the realistic art anymore and tends towards a more modern understanding of art: "Even now I cannot help feeling that it is a mistake to think that the passion one feels in creation is ever really shown in the work one creates. Art is always more abstract than we fancy. Form and colour tell us of form and colour--that is all. It often seems to me that art conceals the artist far more completely than it ever reveals him" (90). This is why he wants the portrait from Dorian to be exhibited in Paris. It is too late for this for the deed has been done and the portrait carries both Dorian's and Basil's secret. The homoerotic desire has already worked against the Platonic doctrine. After Dorian's rejection, he grants Dorian right, changing, once again his opinion: "I see now that you were right. The picture cannot be shown" (90). With this sudden change, it seems that Basil has taken the new point of view of art in order to legitimate his idolatry and desire, and to persuade Dorian to sit for him again. "You must not be angry with me, Dorian, for what I have told you. As I said to Harry, once, you are made to be worshipped," finishes Basil (90). Eventually he asks Dorian to come and sit to him several times only to be rejected. "I can't get on without you," says Basil, only to receive rejection (87). "You spoil my life as an artist by refusing, Dorian", he says (91). It is, therefore, clear that Basil has not developed into a better artist according to the Platonic theory of love as his artistic improvements depend on Dorian's physical presence in his life. Instead of taking the opportunity to ascend as an artist, he sinks in the depths of Dorian's physical charms.

Basil's worshipping of Dorian's physical beauty is operative in the transformation of the pattern of this relationship too. The "romance of art" takes the shape of a triangle as Lord

Henry Wotton becomes part of it with the aid of Basil. Joyce Carol Oates, who interprets the novel as a treatise on the ethical function of the artist, points out that the novel illustrates how “one might indeed be poisoned by a book . . . and that the artist, even the presumably ‘good’ Basil Hallward, is the diabolical agent” in this interaction (420). It is with Basil’s words and incomplete painting of Dorian that Lord Henry’s curiosity along with his enchantment grows stronger. Basil’s “artistic idolatry” sets the basis of Henry’s desire as he is struck by the beauty of the boy, not of the picture. “There is no doubt but that Basil initiates the tragedy,” affirms Oates, “for it is his worshipping of the young man's physical beauty and his appropriation of his image (as "art") that calls Dorian's attention to himself and stimulates Henry's undisguised homoerotic interest” (422). Upon seeing the unfinished portrait Lord Henry conceives of Dorian “as if made out of ivory and rose leaves” and someone “who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence” (9). He wants to meet with this young man who has had an immense effect on his friend’s life and art. His wish is granted as Dorian comes to Basil’s house for further modeling. Lord Henry’s first impressions of Dorian turns out to be true when he sees him: “Yes, he was wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. . .No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him” (18). The dynamics that attaches Basil to Dorian, the physical attraction, is at work for Lord Henry too. Finally, it will be the physical attraction of these two men that will make up who Dorian becomes.

While the problematized homoerotic relationship between Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray is modeled after a more traditional type of the one between the artist and his beloved, the relationship of Lord Henry to Dorian is that of a dandy and his partner, the modern conception of homoerotic/sexual relations of the Victorian period. Lord Henry, a typical representative of the nineteenth century esthete, is as much a master of words as Basil is of

paint. Basil is afraid of Henry's verbal abilities to abrogate Dorian, to take him away from him. This is why Basil does not want Henry to meet Dorian, although he becomes the link that connects them anyway. Basil's fears are justified in the process. Fascinated with this young man, Lord Henry gives a sermon on an extreme form of *carpe diem* to the young Dorian. The speech, besides being a tool in seducing Dorian, is the declaration of the philosophy of the camp that Lord Henry represents. In this speech Lord Henry recommends Dorian to surrender his will and desire, and to live freely: "I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream – I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal – to something, richer than the Hellenic ideal," he starts out (20). The homosexual motif and tone of the speech intensifies as he continues to condemn "self-denial:" "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what is monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful" (20). The homoerotic undertone of the speech reaches its peak with the last words of Lord Henry that bewilder Dorian so much so that he cuts out Lord Henry's speech: "You, Mr. Gray, you yourself with your rose-red youth and your rose-white boyhood, you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have fined you with terror, day-dreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheek with shame—" (20). With these words in his mind, Dorian stands there still with his lips parted and eyes bright. It is this effect that is transferred on to the canvas by Basil. In addition to Basil's desire, the portrait is thus instilled with Lord Henry's desire. This portrait will become a crucial agent in the development of Dorian's character.

The teachings of the two are incarnated in the presence of the portrait. The portrait that depicts the utmost physical beauty is completed with Lord Henry's words. The moment when

the final touches of the artist are taking place is also the moment when the words of Lord Henry strike the young man. The audiovisual interaction that makes up the picture, which in turn makes up Dorian, is pointed out by Craft: “Lord Henry's flux of language suffuses Dorian's ear only to transform his mind and visage, where Basil's eye catches the crucial effect and passes it on to his painter's hand. At the moment of its completion, then, the portrait steps forth as the material formalization, the visual precipitate, of the complex erotic interfluence, the circulation of audiovisual flows” (122). Therefore, it is Basil’s touches and Lord Henry’s words that are infused with homoerotic desire that make up who Dorian is in the story. They come together and form the picture that is painted by Basil. They complement each other as, in a sense, Lord Henry’s seductive provocations supply a theory for sustaining the physical beauty. It is this portrait that changes the course of the novel and the identity of Dorian. It will awaken him to the words of Lord Henry who is advancing in the race of flirting Dorian. Basil is extremely happy with the effect, “the most wonderful expression” of Dorian and declares the work as his masterpiece (21). As Basil busies himself with the portrait Dorian gradually develops a liking of “the tall, graceful young man who was standing by him”(22). Noticing and encouraged by this, Lord Henry moves on to deliver another speech, a complementary to his previous one, on the subject of youth. He justifies his earlier speech, which suggested the fulfillment of every wish, with youth’s transience. This is his doctrine in full picture:

Ah! realize your youth while you have it. Don't squander the gold of your days, listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar. These are the sickly aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing. . . . A new Hedonism-- that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol. (23)

Lord Henry also refers to the topic of beauty as he equates youth to beauty: “Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it” (23).

Dorian will be able to comprehend the words of Lord Henry only when he sees the portrait. These words will take effect shortly when Dorian Gray will see his portrait, his real self. Dorian is enamored of himself in a scene that recalls Narcissus’ meeting with himself: “A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time” (25). Via the picture he can conceptualize his beauty that he has been unaware of:

The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. Basil Hallward's compliments had seemed to him to be merely the charming exaggeration of friendship. He had listened to them, laughed at them, forgotten them. They had not influenced his nature. Then had come Lord Henry Wotton with his strange panegyric on youth, his terrible warning of its brevity. That had stirred him at the time, and now, as he stood gazing at the shadow of his own loveliness, the full reality of the description flashed across him. (25)

Right after this revelation of the portrait can Dorian understand the meanings of Lord Henry’s words: “How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young” (26). What is astonishing in this realization is his reasoning of it. Dorian becomes aware that the two men are attracted to his physical appearance and the attraction will fade away along with his beauty. Dorian’s tragedy is initiated with his homoerotic expectancy from the two men: “How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that” (26). This lesson brings the change of Dorian’s life as he prays for the picture to change himself and to stay the same.

The influence of the picture as the physical embodiment of the influences of Basil and Lord Henry exposes the domination of Dorian's self. Dorian, in this web of relations, is designed as a *tabula rasa*, a clean sheet on which anything can be inscribed. In the molding of his character Dorian's passivity as opposed the activity of the artist is noticed by Oates as well: "Dorian's wickedness appears to be involuntary; he would not have exchanged his soul for eternal youth and beauty had not an artist, Basil, presented him with an utterly new, unrequested, and irresistible image of himself" (421). Not only is he regarded as object of pleasure by these men, he is also considered to be a mere object. He is the sitter of Basil to become an object of art and he becomes Lord Henry's object in his trials of him. "Dorian has no soul or worth of his own;" indicates Oates, "he functions as the artist's muse or anima, and his value lies in his unconscious (and feminine) stimulation of the male artist's energy (422). Lord Henry, on the other hand, sees Dorian as "a brainless creature" that can be played with (9). The fact that Dorian's self is a humanly touched one is implied with Dorian's textuality. Dorian's name is replaced by the names of various figures. In the course of the novel, he has been called as Narcissus, Adonis, and Prince Charming as his destiny brings into mind many other figures including Faust and Frankenstein. The two men, therefore, are solely responsible for Dorian's moral downfall.

As a result Dorian is confined to the perils of material beauty and the extremities of youth. Two loves dominate his life: the love of himself and the love of the material. As soon as Dorian's prayer is granted, Dorian gradually becomes a different man from the innocent boy whom we have seen in Basil's studio. The major effect of Basil's involvement in Dorian's Fall is revealed in Dorian's relation with his own image. While as an artist he fails to carry his art to the ideal level that Dorian offers to him, he opens Dorian's eyes to physical beauty and incarcerates him to his own body, making a Narcissus out of him. Dorian's self love is fairly evident throughout the text. This scene is repeated several times:

Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead or crawled around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible, the signs of sin or the signs of age. He would place his white hands beside the coarse bloated hands of the picture, and smile. He mocked the misshapen body and the failing limbs.

(99)

Dorian's habitual visitations to his closet function in two distinct levels. At the first level Dorian's gaze works to check the mutation in the picture after each sin that is committed. At the second level his gaze is directed to his own stable body in admiration and adoration. Craft pointedly formulates the situation:

[E]ach new sin, howsoever committed and with whomsoever enjoyed, ultimately serves the same old solitary purpose, sending Dorian back to his closet so he may consult portrait and mirror again. Whether "homo" or "hetero" in relation to its presumed external objects (and the text authorizes both), Dorian's eroticism remains fundamentally self-motivated and self-directed" (116).

The author also thinks that Dorian's self love leaves behind any relation he has had with others as his relation to his own body is based on shutting others out (116). Dorian in fact

attempts to involve someone in the story of his life. The same aesthetically motivated judgment that is found in his autoerotic relation is at work in this relationship too. Just as his self-love is born through a work of art, as he falls in love with himself through an image, he falls in love with the artist Sibyl Vane through her artistic talents. It is significant that Dorian is struck by Sibyl at first when she is on stage. His love grows as Sibyl becomes a different character one night and another the next successfully. In fact it is these characters and Sibyl's artistic talents that Dorian falls into. The artistry blinds Dorian to the sexual and social differences that might have prevented their coming together. No sooner does Sibyl stop acting well than Dorian awakens from this enchantment. Sibyl Vane's artistic production may amount to the artistry of the portrait. However, the reality behind the image, art's representation, cannot amount to the perfection of Dorian's body. As a result he is disgusted with her now that he sees her for what she is. She repels him as much for she has humiliated him by acting terribly before his friends, not surprisingly Lord Henry and Basil. The ending of this relationship brings death as Sibyl Vane commits suicide, signifying also the impossibility of a heterosexual affinity within a homoerotically structured system. From this moment on Dorian acknowledges his only attachment: his own body.

Dorian's "self-motivated and self-directed" eroticism that has emerged from his gained aesthetics channels himself to self-indulgent life. This way of life is represented in the teachings of Lord Henry. Lord Henry's already summarized ideas find their expression in an artistic production, strengthening Dorian's affinity with textual compositions. Lord Henry's lessons are materialized in a yellow bound "poisonous book" that he gives Dorian (98). The book stands out as the doctrine of decadence that Lord Henry propagates. Dorian is so influenced by the book that he orders nine copies of the book in nine different bindings, each of which appeals to a specific mood of him. Though not specified, as far as the descriptions of the book are considered, Huysman's *A Rebours* seems to be the book which poisons Dorian

Gray. The plotless book with only one character is a psychological study of a Parisian who realizes every wish, lives as he wants, and answers every passion. Dorian identifies himself with its character as “the whole book seemed to him contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived” (98-99). With the influence of the book, Dorian is now lost in the dark sides of London. Christopher Lane, who concentrates on the homosexual art of painting in the works of James, Wilde, and Beerbohm in his extensive study, holds that the discussion of desire leaves itself to the examination of sin and guilt in *Dorian Gray* (937). He claims that since Dorian exchanges his identity for the portrait’s truth, his desire is transcribed on the canvas. “Dorian’s incorporation of the image’s facelessness is thus the condition of his identification; it allows him to pursue pleasures that are unrepresentable: he yields to each temptation, and moves flawlessly between London’s West End theaters and East End opium den” (937). As the secret of his life is held by the portrait in his closet, Dorian lies easily and effectively. In fact, to Lane, “the capacity to lie effectively becomes the condition of a successful personality” for Dorian (940). Lane attributes this to a classical phenomenon. For Dorian “Dorian’s deceit generates an ontological demand for *prosopopoeia* – that is the production of another face. . . *Prosopopoeia* suggests how subjects could use personae to veil or echo the difficulty of sexual representation in fin de siecle British culture” (940).

The fact that Dorian moves from lie to another and sin to sin exposes the paradox the romance of art embodies for the artist. Unaware of his ill influence in Dorian’s character, Basil cannot comprehend and thus tries to deny Dorian’s sinful and decadent nature in the guise of such a beauty. His visitations to an isolated Dorian stem from this paradox. In these visits to Dorian, Basil reproves Dorian’s deeds and endeavors to lead him to the right path. Yet, his obsessive care for physical beauty rules out any reproaches of Basil. In his first visit, shocked by Dorian’s insensitivity to the news of Sibyl Vane’s suicide, Basil is compliant: “I want the Dorian Gray I used to paint,” he says (86). At the end of this visit he assures himself

of Dorian's good nature. According to his way of thought, immorality exposes itself in ugliness. Yet, Dorian has been the topic of many conversations with various allegations against himself. Basil's oscillations in this paradox are heightened with the gossips surrounding Dorian. He questions how such a beauty, without a single change in his appearance, can indulge himself in the acts that are rumored. In his final visit Basil brings the rumors he has heard anywhere about Dorian and his decadent nature. Judging and reproaching him, he asks "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men?" to Dorian (117). Dorian slaps the truth to Basil's face:

Years ago, when I was a boy . . . you met me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain of my good looks. One day you introduced me to a friend of yours, who explained to me the wonder of youth, and you finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of beauty. In a mad moment that, even now, I don't know whether I regret or not, I made a wish, perhaps you would call it a prayer... (121)

This accusation put the blame on the artist for the decadence of Dorian. Basil's formulation is well fitting: "I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished" (122). What is more disappointing for an artist than to receive these words is the end Basil faces. Reminding *Frankenstein*, Basil is killed by his own creation. It is ironic that the first carnal meeting of the two men occurs with the penetration of the stab. The artist is basically killed by the person from whom his art was emanated and to whom his desire was directed. When Dorian stabs the portrait at the end of the book, the inverted roles of art and life are normalized. The old and decayed body of Dorian lies on the floor as the picture portrays the young man. In addition to his artistic failure, Basil fails in his apprehension of this homoerotic relation and its deployment within the artistic boundaries.

Wilde seems to continue the tradition that problematizes the homoerotic culture and relations within and through the artistic culture of the classical Greece. He seems to be

indicating the shortcomings of such a deployment at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when homosexual identity were in a constant renewal and development. As far as we have seen the two men's relation to Dorian is not formed as a philosophical/artistic conduct that aims the bettering of Dorian morally and socially. On the contrary, Dorian's self under the discursive domination of these two men is created on a false premise. Basil Hallward, the real artist of the novel, conceptualizes his relationship with Dorian within the boundaries of the Platonic conception of the master and his disciple. He himself breaks the rules of this conduct by what he calls as "artistic idolatry," losing himself in the physical charm of Dorian. His artistic production, the portrait of Dorian, is, therefore, a child begotten in contradistinction to the Platonic doctrine. This defective product attaches Dorian to superficial beauty that will rule over his world. His attachment leads to a wish that changes his world as he gains eternal youth, having exchanged his humane qualities with the artistic ones. He is enamored of his own self as perfection incarnated and leads a life of self-indulgence. Lord Henry Wotton whom Dorian is introduced by Basil supplies him a theoretical background to enjoy himself. Dorian's doom is accelerated from now on as he loses himself in moral degradation, material beauty, and life in excess without any sensitivity. The artist, who is considered as the sole responsible of the situation, is killed by the hands of his own beloved, who later on commits a semi-suicidal act by stabbing the picture and breaking the magic.

## **II. II. – *Death in Venice***

Having been published twenty-one years later than *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* conveys the same issues of the former novel. Despite the formal nuances, the self-evident differences in the setting and the characterizations, and finally the stylistic changes, Mann follows Wilde's path in thematical concerns. The major

preoccupation of the novella is, in Mann's own words, "Geist-Leben dilemma" that prepares the basis of the story of the fall of the artist (Luke, xxii). Mann's formulation of the working of Geist-Leben dilemma has been a guidance for the critics in the analysis of *Death in Venice*. According to this formulation, through which this study will partake the story's analysis as well, Mann situates Aschenbach, his artist-hero, in the midst of a dichotomy. Geist-Leben dilemma is projected through two opposing forces: the Apolline and the Dionysian forces of life. Mann juxtaposes "Dionysian spirit of lyric poetry as it individualistically and irresponsibly pours itself out" with "the Apolline spirit of epic narrative with its objective commitment and its moral responsibilities to society" (Luke, lii). This juxtaposition that is set in artistic terms will also be reflected in two disparate modes of life. The novella portrays Aschenbach moving from the Apolline to the Dionysian end of this juxtaposition that is concretized with his journey from Munich to Venice, the home of the writer's downfall. The working of this juxtaposition in Aschenbach's life which is initiated by passion and which will prepare the fall of the artist is, "passion that drives to distraction and destroys dignity," to attend Mann's own words yet again (Luke, lii). Passion as the subject matter of the novel that drives the artist-hero to his demise not surprisingly appears in the guise of homosexual desire. As Aschenbach is drunkenly and blindly lost in his passion, however, Mann implies another opportunity for Aschenbach in between the two extremes that would function as "an equilibrium of sensuality and morality" (Luke, lii). It is the Platonic theory of love that serves itself as the middle way between the Apolline and Dionysian modes in its bringing together of life and art. Although Aschenbach tries to render his relationship in terms of the Platonic doctrine, he fails to do so in his pursuits of Tadzio, the fourteen year old adolescent. Like Basil Hallward, Aschenbach's embracement of the theory and its release will be the tragic error on part of Aschenbach driving him to his death. This study will attempt to analyze the journey of Aschenbach that transforms him artistically, physically, and mentally in its relation

to the Platonic theory of love whose anachronistic rendition once again proves fatal and infertile.

Thomas Mann presents an artist whose formation differs from that of Basil Hallward in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The same formation makes up the Apolline characteristics of Aschenbach. Aschenbach was not born as an artist but has become one with hard work, self-sacrifice, self-restraint, and self-discipline, the qualities on which his entire life and artistry have been rested. The narrator notes how an observer has once underlined Aschenbach's self-restraint with a gesture of clenching his fist tightly, and adds that "Aschenbach's native constitution was by no means robust, and that the constant harnessing of his energies was something to which he had been called, but not really born" (29). As a child Aschenbach certainly had a talent, but it had to be invested, worked on, and developed. His development as an artist comes with a deliberate effort from his family and himself instilled with the notion of success and hard work: "Ever since his boyhood the duty to achieve – and to achieve exceptional things – had been imposed on him from all sides, and thus he had never known youth's idleness, its carefree negligent ways" (29). Aschenbach's evolution as an artist takes place in social isolation too. He could not go to school as a result of medical advice and care, and has received home education.

The characteristics of the earlier stages of Aschenbach's artistic development can still be traced in his elder years. The man who has missed the colorful possibilities of youth is now missing his chances for the relaxed days of his mature years. As soon as he wakes up, he dedicates his most fruitful hours to writing. How he writes is another example for his diligence:

[his books] had been built up to their impressive size from layer upon layer of daily opuscula, from a hundred or a thousand separate inspirations; and if they were indeed so excellent, wholly and in every detail, it was only because their creator, showing the

same constancy of will and tenacity of purpose . . . had held out for years under the pressure of one and the same work, and had devoted to actual composition only his best and worthiest hour” (30).

The same attitude can be observed in his current work that he is on as he can hardly distance himself from it for a walk. Aschenbach’s fastidiousness, as he acknowledges himself a perfectionist, is another aspect of his artistry. He considers perfectionism “as the innermost essence of talent” (27). For the sake of it he sacrificed his feelings since “he knew that feeling is apt to be content with high spirited approximations and with work that falls short of supreme excellence” (27).

What sort of an artist Aschenbach is can be answered with textual evidences. The first thing to note is that Aschenbach is a writer renown for his prose. There is no suggestion of any poetic production of him. What Achenbach has written so far, limited to the list of his maturer works for the readers, present us a better picture of him as an artist. To start the list, he wrote a massive epic in the form of prose about the life of Fredric of Prussia in a pellucid style. *Maya*, a novel that is “so rich in characters, gathering so many human destinies together under the shadow of one idea” is another work by him (28). He is also the author of a powerful tale called *A Study in Abjection*, “which earned the gratitude of a whole younger generation by pointing to the possibility of moral resolution even for those who have plumbed the depths of knowledge” (28). Finally, *Intellect and Art*, “which in its ordering energy and antithetical eloquence has led serious critics to place it immediately alongside Schiller’s disquisition *On Naïve and Reflective Literature*,” completes the summary (28). What is striking in the descriptions of these texts is the wide spectrum of audience from youth to critics that Aschenbach can appeal to. The narrator implies this observation too: “His talent, equally remote from the commonplace and from the eccentric, had a native capacity both to inspire confidence in the general public and to win admiration and encouragement from the

discriminating connoisseur” (29). Another feature of his writing is evident from the list as well: Aschenbach’s moral concerns. In addition to *A Study in Abjection*, Aschenbach’s emphasis on morals is found in the historical novel about Frederic the Great. The novel is the apotheosis of his motto “stay the course,” “which to Aschenbach epitomized a manly ethos of suffering action” (29)..

These two striking features of Aschenbach as an artist shed light on his relation to the bourgeoisie. Aschenbach is the artist of the bourgeoisie. In the literal sense of the sentence, he belongs to “the kind of upper-bourgeois status which is occasionally the lot of certain intellectuals” in the context of the story (33). On the other hand, his very nature, including his artistic self, has been shaped within the values of the bourgeoisie. Having been molded in the cast of the bourgeoisie, Aschenbach establishes close affinity with the same class in his writing, representing it and its values. He creates with the middle class in his mind. It seems that acknowledgment by the masses is an issue Aschenbach pays particular attention to. The condition for a wide and intense immediate appeal is “a hidden affinity, indeed a congruence, between the personal destiny of the author and the wider destiny of his generation” (30). “[T]he real reason for their applause,” he says, “is something imponderable, a sense of sympathy” (30). It can be assumed, then, that his artistic creation is based on producing the effect of this “sense of sympathy”. Therefore, it would not be a mistake to conclude that Aschenbach creates within the limits of his society’s imagination. He considers himself an extension of the society he belongs to. He is fed from the society and life, and represents a world congruous with the one he lives in with ethical values. “Lively, clear-outlined, intellectually undemanding presentation” is what appeals to the great mass of the bourgeois and this is what he gave to them (31). On the other hand, he is as well aware of what youth is interested in. To him youth is interested only in problems and “Aschenbach had been as problematic and as radical as any young man ever was” (31). Therefore, while he was giving

pleasure with life-like realness of his descriptions and raising their spirits and minds, “he, this same youthful artist, had fascinated twenty-year-olds with his breathtaking cynicisms about the questionable nature of art and of artist himself” (32). Aschenbach’s bourgeois composition is noteworthy because it demonstrates his relation to society. This earlier Aschenbach is in the confines of the bourgeois society as far as his literal production’s morals and its depth are considered.

The narrator notes a passage amongst Aschenbach’s writing that suggests “that nearly all the great things that exist owe their existence to a defiant despite: it is despite grief and anguish, despite poverty, loneliness, bodily weakness, vice and passion and a thousand inhibitions, that they have come into being at all” (30). This outlook is “positively the formula of his life and his fame, the key to his work,” and more importantly the moral formula of his characters (30). His are the characters who “stay the course” and survive despite many negative forces. An incisive remark by a commentator precisely describes the conception of the recurring type in his fiction as “an intellectual and boyish manly virtue, that of a youth who clenches his teeth in proud shame and stands calmly on as the swords and spears pass through his body” (30). This is considered “an active achievement, a positive triumph” as Saint Sebastian becomes the symbol of this sort of art (30). This sort of figures that occupies the writings of Aschenbach is directly borrowed from the outer world. In a sentimentalist fashion, “the heroism of weakness” is given a shape:

Gustav Aschenbach was the writer who spoke for all those who work on the brink of exhaustion, who labor and are heavy-laden, who are worn out already but still stand upright, all those moralists of achievement who are slight stature and scanty of resources, but who yet, by some ecstasy of the will and by wife husbandry, manage at least for a time to force their work into a semblance of greatness. (31)

These men, the heroes of his age, can recognize themselves in his work and “found that it confirmed them and raised them on high and celebrated them; they were grateful for this, and they spread his name far and wide” (31). His own life, too, was similar to the figures found in his work. Like them he has risen from hard times to dignity, “that goal toward which, as he declared, every great talent is innately driven and spurred” (31). He considers his life as an ascent to dignity whereby he has eliminated all the skepticism and irony that he utilized. Moreover, he “stayed the course” by discipline, although he has been very fragile since his childhood, belonging “to a breed not seldom talented, yet seldom endowed with the physical basis which talent needs if it is to fulfill itself” (29).

Finally, the picture is clear. Here we have a portrait of an artist who is beyond his fifties and portrayed as a complete and a successful author. Aschenbach is far from the camp that is represented by Basil and alike in his distance to romantic notions of artistry and artistic creativity. He can be considered realist as an artist with his audience in mind. Imbued with the goal of success, his life in isolation has been marked by hard work. He is not spiritually inspired, at the same time is appealing to the intellect more. Away from aesthetic idealizations, he prioritizes style and morals. These two priorities that make him up as an artist are rewarded with the honorary title “von” that has been presented to him on his fiftieth birthday. Moreover, his style, “the fastidiously conventional, the conservative and formal even formulaic” earned him the honor of being included in selected school readings (33). In *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*, an extensive study of the artist hero in Western literary tradition, Maurice Beebe reads *Death in Venice* in the Ivory Tower Tradition. Outlining the general characteristics of the artist of this tradition Beebe underscores how art is espoused as religion by the artist. Some of Beebe’s observations are also valid for Aschenbach. Beebe discusses that “[f]ar from wanting to live more fully, [the artist of this tradition] resents his carnal appetites and natural instincts. . . The artist tries to become a saint, . . . strong enough to

withstand all worldly temptations” (114). Mann’s story begins with the picture of an artist who has accomplished to become a saint for the sake of art. In Aschenbach’s life, life has already been replaced by art and art has already become a sacred ritual. To him, “art is an intensified life” (34). He wants to grow old only to see himself produce as effectively and fruitfully at all stages of his life. Even fear of death within him stems from artistic issues lest his time might run out before he has had a chance to express himself, he finishes a project. His is a life that is devoted to art and art only.

“As the Ivory Tower tradition gains momentum,” adds Beebe, we shall see a new emphasis on internal consciousness, a predilection for the unnatural, a striving for the unknown and the unseen” (114). As if to confirm Beebe, Aschenbach is right at the merge of this crucial breakpoint at the beginning of the novel. An unaccustomed feeling for such a disposition, “a youthful craving for far-off places,” a desire to travel precipitates in him (25). This feeling comes to him along with a vision. It is a vision of a wildly and savagely exotic place. This is in contradistinction to who Aschenbach is as he is “[t]oo preoccupied with the tasks imposed upon him by his own sensibility and by the collective European psyche, too heavily burdened with the compulsion to produce, too shy of distraction to have learned how to take leisure and pleasure in the colorful world” (26). Aschenbach oscillates frequently from one end of various dilemmas to the other throughout the story. The first one of these occurs when “the moderating and corrective influence of common sense and of the self-discipline he had practiced since his youth” attempts to repress his desire to travel (26). He does not want to be lost in leisure and pleasure at the cost of his work. He resolves this dilemma, as he does every time after his oscillations. Instead of the summer house on the mountains that he uses for his habitual recessings Aschenbach opts for “[a]n interlude, some impromptu living, some *dolce far niente*, the invigoration of a distant climate, to make his

summer bearable and fruitful” (27). He makes up his mind to travel and to travel to south this time.

In fact the desire to travel that attacks him is not totally unmotivated in Aschenbach. The desire to travel coincides with Aschenbach’s self critique. That Aschenbach as a writer is prone to change and self formation is clearly expressed in the text. He has left skeptical and ironical style of his behind as with his problematical work that appeals to youth. Instead, as a mature master he repudiates knowledge “in the recognition that knowledge can paralyze the will, paralyze and discourage action and emotion and even passion (32). As such, he despises “an age indecently undermined by psychology” (32). The moral aspect of his work is heightened as he repudiates the sympathy with the abyss and the laxity that holds “that to understand all is to forgive all” (32). On the other hand, the changes in his style that takes on “noble purity, simplicity and symmetry” would cause his exaltation as a classical master (32). In his later years his style takes on “an official air, of an educator’s stance” as he emits “direct audacities, new and subtle nuances,” developing toward that formulaic manner (33). Likewise, we sense a feeling of change in Aschenbach’s discontent with his artistry. Even though having been nationally honored, “he took no pleasure in it himself, and it seemed to him that his work lacked that element of sparkling and joyful improvisation, that quality which surpasses any intellectual substance in its power to delight the receptive world” (27). He asks himself whether his repressed feelings “are avenging itself by deserting him, by refusing from now on to bear up his art on its wings, by taking with it all his joy in words, all his appetite for the beauty of form?” (27).

In accordance with his discontent with his writings Aschenbach later on confesses himself his real reason for his desire to travel. The reason that Aschenbach leaves his Ivory Tower has been “an urge to escape, to run away from his writing, away from the humdrum scene of his cold, inflexible, passionate duty,” a submission to the call of life, probably, to

enrich his artistic skills and to carry his artistry to a different level (26). His wish to halt writing for a change inhabits itself a desire to take part in life. In the course of his journey Aschenbach questions “his grave and weary heart, wondering whether some new inspiration and distraction, some late adventure of the emotions, might yet be in store for him on his leisured journey” (37). How and where this desire of travel visits Aschenbach carries significance for other factors in Aschenbach’s decision to travel. Robert Tobin, who analyzes *Death in Venice* from a gay perspective, likens the position of the guitarist singer at the end of the novel who mocks while causing the spectators to laugh to the “same role that the novella does, captivating a heterosexual audience that does not understand its gay codes” (229). As the writer traces the elements of homosexual subculture successfully in the work, he gives way to the existence of a repressed homosexual in Aschenbach. The first thing to note is where Aschenbach takes his decision for a travel. The English Garden, Tobin notes, “has been a meeting place for male homosexuals since its constitution at the end of the eighteenth century” (229). Aschenbach’s desire for travel in this setting is initiated by a queer looking man too. The characteristics of the man as well as his outfit “are all part of signifiers that link this man with all other threatening men whom Aschenbach meets on his journey. . . [and] all of these strangers diverge somewhat from the norm: they are unusual, even queer” (230). The encounter with the man before evoking the Dionysic vision provokes “an extraordinary expansion of his inner self, a kind of roving restlessness” (230). “The subsequent vision hints that his initial expansion is a release of a previously repressed sexuality,” the writer concludes (230).

Tobin finds further evidence to Aschenbach’s repressed homosexuality in the homosexual subtext of his writings. According to him, “Aschenbach’s subject matter. . . consistently revolves, once again, if not *in* the life of homosexuality, then *around* it” (231). Obviously, the figures of Aschenbach who are likened to St. Sebastian calls his attention as

“that often erotically charged and aesthetically beautiful icon of the penetrated male, rumored to have been the beloved Diocletian before his conversion to Christianity, has been a favorite of homosexual men for generations” (232). He also finds traits of closeted homosexuality in the characteristics of the variants of the Sebastian figure in Aschenbach’s writing. Inevitably, he sees a homosexual connection in the book on Frederick whose homosexuality has been speculated: “Indeed, ‘the flashing Exchange of the dialogue between Voltaire and the King’ concerned not only the ‘subject of war’; it also contained accusations and counter accusations of sodomy and buggery” (232). It is not surprising, then, such a repressed nature chooses his next destination as Venice, the self evident route, the place he has wanted to travel, after a dissatisfying trip to an Adriatic island. Venice, as Ritter notes, has been associated with moral corruption since Shakespeare (14). Tobin, on the other, reminds us that Europeans of certain wealth had been frequenting Italy and other Mediterranean points for homosexual encounter since the eighteenth century (233). Aschenbach’s affiliation with homosexuality exposes itself when he quotes from the lines of August Graf von Platen, “the best-known nineteenth century German homosexual writer” (Ritter, 12). All of these connections suggest that Aschenbach’s submission to the call of life carries within sensual motivations, more than that of artistic ones, though invisible to Aschenbach himself.

The self-repressive Aschenbach’s contact with the outer world at its earlier stage becomes painful. Although Aschenbach has sympathy for the middle-class and is deeply concerned with the appreciation by the masses, they do not necessarily reflect Aschenbach’s content with the outer world. His relation to the world should also be evaluated within the Ivory Tower tradition. Beebe explains that if the artist of this tradition ever looks out of his Ivory Tower, he looks not *at* the world but *down* upon it (114). And, Aschenbach, taking a step outside of his Ivory Tower for a change, perfectly exemplifies this elitist attitude throughout his journey. In his journey on board the images of the world strike him repugnant,

the people seem repulsive. The descriptions of the surrounding and people are filled with negative attributions, reflecting physical deformation and artificiality. From the very start, Aschenbach is welcomed by “a grubby hunchbacked seaman” who leads him to “an artificially lit cavelike cabin” (35). Next is the man at the counter, “a goat-bearded man with the air of an old fashioned circus director and a slick caricatured business manner” (35). He is a pose with empty talk whose yellow bony fingers attract the attention of the writer. His dexterity, quick movements, and his attempt to praise the city “as if he were anxious that the traveler might have second thoughts about his decision to go to Venice” seem suspicious to Aschenbach (35). Later on the ship continues floating on the “dirty glinting water,” while a steward with “a grease stained frock coat” wanders around (36). “Flecks of soot drifted down on the washed deck which never seemed to get dry,” as “the sky and the sea remained dull and leaden” (36-7). The meal Aschenbach has been served is also described as “wretched” (37).

Aschenbach’s disturbance reaches its zenith when his repressed sexuality is tested with one of those recurring queer types that show up in the book. A man, who is luridly noticeable in his colorful outfits, catches the attention of Aschenbach when he observes a group of young men on board at the moment of departure. With a slight scrutiny, Aschenbach realizes, to his amazement, that the man’s youth is fake with make-up and that he is old. The man does not occupy a place in Aschenbach’s sterilized vision of the world. To him, “he had no right to be wearing foppish and garish clothes like theirs, no right to be acting as if he were one of them” (36). The young old man’s existence is simply beyond his comprehension and challenges Aschenbach’s world. With utter disillusionment he closes his face with his hands and his eyes as, to him, the world was “becoming increasingly deranged and bizarre, and that perhaps this process might be arrested if he were to cover his face for a little and then take a fresh look at things” (36). Aschenbach’s eyes catch the sight of the dandified old man once

again. This time he is drunk, swaying back and fro, “in a condition repugnant to behold,” to Aschenbach (38). As the man is lost in all kinds of meaningless behavior, for instance licking his mouth with his tongue “in a repellently suggestive way,” Aschenbach is attacked by a feeling that “the world was somehow, slightly yet uncontrollably, sliding into some kind of bizarre and grotesque derangement” for the second time (38). He keeps watching the man “with frowning disapproval” (38). The old man thrusts himself to his attention while Aschenbach is about to disembark from the ship. Aschenbach hardly escapes as the driving man flirtatiously utters his compliments to Aschenbach’s sweetheart when “the upper set of his false teeth dropped half out of his jaw” (39) Apparently the old man becomes the symbol of this “deranged and bizarre” world while the imperfect images from all over bombard Aschenbach.

If this journey sets Aschenbach’s stance as opposed to the life and functions as toil for who Aschenbach will become, the next trip with the gondola into the depths of Venice embodies symbolic signification. Continuing the corrupt world imagery with again one of those recurring types in Aschenbach’s journey, the ride symbolizes Aschenbach’s passage to a different world, the world of Hades. The coffin-like Venetian gondola marks this new phase as the suggestion of what is waiting Aschenbach. Aschenbach feels dread and uneasiness before the gondolier paddles through the stillness of the night. As the gondola drifts through the water, however, Aschenbach finds peace sitting in the most comfortable of all seats, comparing it to the final silent journey: “It will be a short ride, he thought; if only it could last forever! In a gently swaying motion he felt himself gliding away from the crowd and confusion of the voices” (39). The silent journey in the night evokes in Aschenbach the image of River Styx in which he is being carried by Charon to the house of Hades. Aschenbach’s desire to travel has already been initiated by the gaze of the stranger in the cemetery. This gondola trip reinforces the underlying death motif that is associated with Aschenbach’s

journey. In addition, the scene adds to the list of queer men by who Aschenbach feels threatened. Just as Aschenbach is threatened by the gaze of the queer looking man in the English Park and sexually by the flamboyant old dandy, he feels physically threatened by the gondolier. Aschenbach's contemplative state is disrupted as he senses that he is cheated by the gondolier. He is being dragged to Lido where his resort is against his wish while he wants to be taken to Venice and continue his journey on land. He finds "the man's abrupt, presumptuous manner, so uncharacteristic of the way foreigners were usually treated in this country" unacceptable (40). As his wish is granted, after a dispute with the uncouth gondolier, Aschenbach finds the gondolier having cleared off before he could pay his money. He learns from the old attendant in the pier that he is the only gondolier without a license. At the end of the journey all of his experiences in the outer world weigh on his mind. They throw Aschenbach into complete confusion as he is unaware of what to do with them: "Without in any way being rationally inexplicable, without even really offering food for thought, they were nevertheless, as it seemed to him, essentially strange, and indeed it was no doubt this very paradox that made them disturbing" (43).

So far we have seen how Aschenbach's mold has been casted in Apolline lifestyle. The same lifestyle shapes Aschenbach's artistic life, tying him to the artists of Ivory Tower tradition. The recluse Aschenbach, whose characterization signals a repressed homosexual, is visited by a feeling to step into the life he has sacrificed for the sake of his art. The earlier stages of his journey illustrate the difficulty of this process with meetings that shatter his world. The landmark in Aschenbach's story takes place in Venice where he comes across Tadzio, "a long haired boy of about fourteen" (43). It will be this meeting that will free Aschenbach's repressed desires and passion that the former meetings have slightly touched on. From the moment he sees Tadzio onward, we will attest to gradual changes in Aschenbach. The earlier phase of this change is based on his initial conception of his

relationship with the boy. In this phase Aschenbach will try to establish his relationship with the boy in terms of a truly Platonic one. To a certain extent he will be successful in this.

However, as we will later see, his initial response to the boy's beauty will change its intensity and its course, resulting in Aschenbach's failure within the Platonic doctrine.

Throughout the novella, Aschenbach's relation to the boy will always be limited to a certain physical proximity. The next day of their meeting, Aschenbach feels a short stirring of regret seeing his table to be at distance from the Polish family, but this distance will keep itself in this relationship. This will lead his affinity with the boy to be restricted to and based on mostly his vision as well as olfactory and aural associations. This suggests the nature of his love, that he is attracted only to the physical attractions of the boy. Within the boundaries of this physical space, Aschenbach tries to catch anything he can that is associated with the boy. The first time Aschenbach sees Tadzio is within the multinational atmosphere of the resort hall. His eyes capture the sight of the family with the help of an aural effect, hearing Polish in his immediate vicinity. Tadzio's beauty strikes him immediately amongst his three sisters and an accompanying lady. Aschenbach is aesthetically moved for the first time in the outer world and it is realized by a boy who has just stepped into adolescence. In the initial conception of the relationship, Tadzio, just like Dorian, is thought to be "entirely beautiful" (43) and compared to "Greek sculpture of the noblest period" with his formal perfection (44). In this comparison, Tadzio is exalted, since no beholder could meet with "such unique personal charm. . . in nature or art, anything so consummately successful" (44). Later on, he is resembled to the figure of the *Boy Extracting a Thorn*, to further his association with art, especially classical art (44). Next morning, when Tadzio walks into the dining room having slept in to the later hours of the day, Aschenbach's "little Phaeacian," takes the shape of an Eros sculpture "by the truly godlike beauty of this human creature" under the admiring eyes of Aschenbach (47): "It was the head of Eros, with the creamy luster of Parian marble, the

brows fine-drawn and serious, the temples and ear darkly and softly covered by the neat right-angled growth of the curling hair” (47). Accompanying this gaze that attributes artistic qualifications to the sight of Tadzio is the sound that is associated with the boy’s name. He comes across to hear the boy’s name called. However, except for the “u” sound he discerns precisely, the name remains in vague, sounding “something like ‘Adgio’ or still oftener ‘Adgiu’” (49). In this relationship even the boy’s name is difficult to attain, although, in its amorphous nature, “[t]he sound pleased him, he found its euphony befitting to its object, repeated it quietly to himself” (49). The “u” sound, to him, has both sweetness and wildness about it. He could only discover the name with his own effort appealing to a few Polish recollections of his later on. Along with the “u” sound at the end of boy’s name, Aschenbach is enchanted by the voice of the boy. Although he does not understand a word of it, the uttered word turns into a liquid melody and gains a musical status. It was music to his ears. In this physically distant relationship Aschenbach is to be satisfied with the perceptibility of his optical and aural senses. The boy charms Aschenbach in either way as the incarnation of sculpted or composed perfection.

The boy’s association with art is well established at this early stage. In this regard, Aschenbach’s first eye contact is crucial: the first reciprocal interaction, though visual, takes place when Aschenbach has his papers in his lap. The formation of this relationship is, therefore, once again structured within a triangular schema, with art in the middle. Art has to be included in the formation of this relationship. In accordance, this physical attraction, at its early steps, is something useful for Aschenbach. It comes with an intellectual stimulus causing abstract and transcendental reflections, no matter how futile they are:

He meditated on the mysterious combination into which the canonical and the individual must enter for human beauty to come into being, proceeded from this point to general problem of form and art, and concluded that his thoughts and findings

resembled certain seemingly happy inspirations that come to us in dreams, only to be recognized by the sober senses as completely shallow and worthless (46-7).

Enjoying the privilege that the boy receives by sleeping later than his sisters, Aschenbach's spirit rises and quotes: "Varied garments to wear, warm baths and restful reposing" to himself (46). And, by the sight of the boy on the beach, his thoughts are transcended: "[the] sight filled the mind with mythical images, it was like a poet's tale from a primitive age, a tale of the origins of form and of the birth of the gods. Aschenbach listened with closed eyes to this song as it begun its music deep within him" (51). At this stage Aschenbach appreciates this masterpiece of nature and can move on to his daily schedule easily: "Good, good! thought Aschenbach, with that cool professional approval in which artists confronted by a masterpiece sometimes cloak their ecstasy, their rapture. And mentally he added: Truly, if the sea and the shore did not await me, I should stay here as long as you do! (47). Later on we will witness a different Aschenbach who will neglect all other pleasures of his as well as his responsibilities.

This object of beauty gradually gains a soul before Aschenbach, which in turn increases Aschenbach's infatuation. The appreciating gaze of Aschenbach is accompanied by voyeuristic evaluations and deductions on the boy in this distanced and unilateral affection while that "statuesque masterpiece of nature" takes a human shape. In one of Aschenbach's close observations of the boy, finally, how Aschenbach makes sense of this relationship emerges. What is at work here is the complete and evident manifestation of the attempt that has been trying to position this relationality with vague allusions so far. When a friend of him, kisses Tadzio, Aschenbach wittily expresses his jealousy, citing once again another classical allusion: "Aschenbach was tempted to shake his finger at him. 'But I counsel you, Critobulus,' he thought with a smile, "'to go traveling for a year! You will need that much time at least before you are cured.'" With this allusion to Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Aschenbach reincarnates a Platonic relationship. In this passage Xenophon depicts Socrates

reproaching Critobulus, who has kissed Alcibiades, as he gives vent to his criticism of bodily pleasure. Aschenbach, directly voicing inwardly the lines of Socrates, declares his position as Socrates in this relationship. This is of course an assertive claim since Aschenbach at the very beginning of this relationship declares himself as the master of the Platonic doctrine who has reached the zenith of the ascent. Obviously, Tadzio becomes the Alcibiades of this relationship, who as we have already discussed, the most attractive man in the classical Greece. In fact, to a certain level he can sustain this relation in terms of a Platonic one. In line with the Platonic doctrine of *eros* that is inclined toward *philia*, Aschenbach, along with the beauty of the boy, at this stage, underlines the juvenile nature of him. The “childlike modesty” makes the boy more beautiful even according to Aschenbach. Moreover, the pederastic relationship is structured through paternal affection of the lover:

It almost seemed to him that he was sitting here for the purpose of protecting the half-sleeping boy – busy with doings of his own and yet nevertheless constantly keeping watch over this noble human creature. . . . And his heart was filled and moved by a paternal fondness, the tender concern by which he who sacrifices himself to beget beauty in the spirit is drawn to him who possesses beauty. (51)

As an artist, Aschenbach moves on to the issue of begetting beauty.

Aschenbach continues to delimit this relationship in the framework of a Platonic conception of love. Lost in the perfection of the boy’s body once again on the beach, Aschenbach is inspired intellectually:

What discipline, what precision of thought was expressed in that outstretched, youthfully perfect physique! And yet the austere pure will that had here been darkly active, that had succeeded in bringing this divine sculptured shape to light – was it not well known and familiar to Aschenbach as an artist? Was it not also active in him, in the sober passion that filled him as he set free from the marble mass of language that

slender form which he had beheld in the spirit, and which he was presenting to mankind as a model and mirror of intellectual beauty? (60)

The boy's beauty is reflected once again in terms of an artistic success as the work of nature. Aschenbach correlates this creativity to his artistic self. He, as an artist, can create too. As he watches the boy he feels as if "he was gazing on Beauty itself, on Form as a thought of God, on the one and pure perfection which dwells in the spirit and of which a human image and likeness had here been lightly and graciously set up for him to worship. Such was his emotional intoxication; and the aging artist welcomed it unhesitatingly, even greedily" (60). Immediately he is lost in trance as a vision comes to him. He sees the old plane tree next to the walls of Athens and two men, "one elderly and one young, one ugly and one beautiful, the wise beside the desirable," namely Socrates and Phaedrus, in the shade of the tree (61). Aschenbach envisages the scene whereby Socrates lectures Phaedrus on desire and virtue in *Phaedrus*. Unlike the first scene, Aschenbach does not quote direct statements from the text, yet he paraphrases the conversation. Aschenbach repeats Socrates' teachings on beauty. Socrates explains Phaedrus the hegemony between the two phenomena, namely beauty and spirit. At the beginning he speculates on how a noble soul reacts in awe, reverence, tremor, and a sacred terror when he beholds beauty in the form of "a godlike countenance, a perfect body" (61).. To him this is because Beauty is the earthly reflective form of the spiritual that is perceptible to man's eyes. Therefore, he considers Beauty as a stepping stone to the spirit, the real goal that has to be reached: "Thus Beauty is the lover's path to the spirit – only the path, only a means little Phaedrus," says Socrates in Aschenbach's reverie (61-2). Another hegemonic relation is established on the basis of this hegemony as far as the relationship between the lover and the beloved is considered. The dictum of the Platonic conception of love that enables a role-reversal in this relationship is also revealed in this scene: "[H]e who loves," formulates Socrates, "is more divine than the beloved, because the god is in the

former, but not in the latter” (62). Aschenbach’s conceptualization of this relationship is evinced with this scene too. Aschenbach in this scene sets the background of Platonic theory of art placed in the Platonic conception of love as he strengthens his association with Socrates.

Right after setting the background of this relationship, Aschenbach does what preaches. Such a relationship bears its fruits; the begetting of beauty from the impregnation of beauty by the spirit is realized. In perfect harmony with the laws of the ideal Platonic conception, Aschenbach is stimulated to the extent of writing. The meticulous and scrutinizing method of production leaves itself to inspirational expression: “He suddenly desired to write. . . [while] his excitement was driving him to produce” regardless of the occasion (62). He feels an insuperable urge to write on an issue that is “familiar to him” and “close to his experience” that have been directed to himself (62). Another desire, a craving to work in the presence of Tadzio rules him, “to take the boy’s physique for a model as he wrote, to let his style follow the lineaments of this body which he saw as divine, and to carry its beauty on high into the spiritual world, as the eagle once carried the Trojan shepherd boy up into the ether” (62). The merging of the artistic production and desire amazes Aschenbach: “The writer’s joy is the thought that can become emotion, the emotion that can wholly become a thought” (62). This combination presents Aschenbach the possibility of another realm:

Never had he felt the joy of the word more sweetly, never had he known so clearly that Eros dwells in language, as during those perilously precious hours in which, seated at his rough table under the awning, in full view of his idol and with the music of his voice in his ears, he used Tadzio’s beauty as a model for his brief essay – that page and a half of exquisite prose which with its limpid nobility and vibrant controlled passion was soon to win the admiration of many. How strangely

exhausting the labor! How mysterious this act of intercourse and begetting between a mind and a body! (62)

As seen, Aschenbach consciously takes part in the positioning of this relationality in Platonic doctrine as well as fulfilling its requirements. As a writer, having the textual knowledge on the Platonic conception of love and possessing the lexicon of it, he deliberately situates this relationship in it. As he associates himself to Socrates in the homoerotic relation he finds himself in, Tadzio takes the role of Alcibiades. Moreover, he seems successful in sustaining this relationship in this domain as long as his interest in the boy remains at a moderate level. The intellectual activities within Aschenbach's mind are also stirred as Aschenbach finds himself in the middle of certain questions on art and life. He is loyal to laws of the doctrine so as to realize the spiritual impregnation and bear a child out of it.

Though working alright, this, nonetheless, is not a perfect apprehension of a Platonic relationship. Rather, we can think of it as an adaptation with certain shortcomings that are suggestive of further problems. The first and foremost sign of the breakpoint in Aschenbach's relationship is Aschenbach's approach to Tadzio as "his idol" (62). Foreshadowing what is to come later on, in his first day on the beach he gives up work to watch Tadzio in zest. Less than fifteen minutes of work,

he felt that it was a great pity to turn his mind away like this from the present situation, this most enjoyable of all situations known to him, and to miss the experience of it for the sake of an insignificant activity. He threw his writing materials aside, he returned to the sea; and before long, his attention attracted by the youthful voices of the sand castle builders, he turned his head comfortably to the right against the back of his chair, to investigate once more the whereabouts and doings of the excellent Adgio. (49)

Idolatry will find its place in this novella too. Aschenbach's idolatry will grow into an obsession to the boy's image. Another indicative for the future of this relationship might be

Aschenbach's decision to stay in Venice despite its exacerbating effects on his health. Coextensive with the physical attraction is the literally decaying Venice and the deteriorating health conditions of Aschenbach in it. The next morning of his meeting with Tadzio, Aschenbach opens his window to the stink of the stagnant air of the lagoon that vexes him. He is reminded by this smell of his earlier Venice trip which he had to cut short for health precaution. The same symptoms, "that unpleasant feverish sensation, the pressure in the temples, the heaviness in the eyelids," of the erstwhile trip appear (46). He does not unpack as he thinks of moving elsewhere one more time in case the wind would not change. Under the influence of the boy Aschenbach dispels the thought of leaving.

These advance signs that signals the future of this relationship are doubled by two important decisions given by Aschenbach. As Aschenbach's interest in the boy grows, the images of decaying Venice fulfill the text. His condition worsens accordingly and compels him to the decision of leaving the city for the second time surely. Not only is he worried that the city is injurious to him but "he was effectively and irksomely disenchanted by the cutpurse mercantile spirit of the sunken queen of the Adriatic" (53). Yet, after a brief encounter with Tadzio in which, impressed by the beauty of the boy he utters aloud to himself "May God bless you!," we see Aschenbach in a different mood (54). Following this chance encounter, Aschenbach is thrown into an inner conflict once more. Suddenly he finds himself attached to the "atmosphere of the city, this slightly moldy smell of sea and swamp from which he had been so anxious to escape" (54). He relates the grief, sorrow, the suffering, the anguish of the soul that bring him to the verge of tears, to the intuition "that he would never see Venice again, that this was a parting forever" (54-5). He regards this conflict as the "contention between his soul's desire and his physical capacities" that disturbs Aschenbach (55). This contention "seemed to the aging Aschenbach so grave and important, the bodily inadequacy so shameful, so necessary to overcome at all costs, that he could not understand the facile

resignation with which he had decided yesterday, without any serious struggle, to tolerate that inadequacy and to acknowledge it” (55). Thus, he both wants to catch and miss his train. With touch of fate, he misses his train and returns back to his hotel in joy. The next midday his eyes catch the sight of Tadzio from his room’s window. His image comes along with a realization “that it was because of Tadzio that it had been so hard for him to leave” (129). He leaves aside the thought of leaving Venice eternally as he decides to stay in Venice and even elongates his stay. Aschenbach has once remarked that “[t]o stay on willfully would be contrary to good sense” (52). He distances himself from good sense as he risks his precarious health condition which is to be tackled in favor of his soul’s desire. Aschenbach’s choice within the dichotomy rejecting the physical limitations of his body starts his departure from reason.

Another choice of Aschenbach supports this attitude. The following day of his productive inspiration, Aschenbach wants to be able to speak to Tadzio. He sees this natural and an obvious thing to do. Yet, he fails to take the step in several attempts and gives up the idea in confusion. His failure of speaking with the boy,” which might have dispelled his intenser feelings and established a normal relationship” according to Reed, actually takes place as his refusal to speak with the boy (147). Reed continues by saying that Aschenbach does not want to talk with the boy because “intoxication is too dear to him” (147). He does not care whether the act is immoral. As a result of this decision, he familiarizes himself to the thought of communicating with his lover only by means of the eyes:

Nothing is stranger, more delicate, than the relationship between people who know each other only by sight – who encounter and observe each other daily, even hourly, and yet are compelled by the constraint of convention or by their own temperament to keep up the pretense of being indifferent strangers, neither greeting nor speaking to each other.  
(65)

He even sees this limitation as the source of his love as well as something that strengthens the relationship: “For man loves and respects his fellow man for as long as he is not yet in a position to evaluate him, and desire is born of defective knowledge” (65). Therefore, as Reed notes, “[l]ong before [Aschenbach] has given up all pretence and admitted that he loves Tadzio (end of Chapter Four), doubt has been cast on his motives” (147). He aptly says that “Aschenbach has no eye for his underlying motives” (147). For this last decision, he adds, finally, that “[t]he verdict on this late failure reflects back on Aschenbach’s many preceding failures (or refusals) to suspect passionate motives beneath the aesthetic pretext” (148).

The doubts indeed are prevailing until Aschenbach confesses his love and frees himself from any pretension. By now, Aschenbach’s feelings have proved more intense. His day starts with Tadzio and ends “when Tadzio had disappeared from the scene” (64):

Aschenbach saw much of the boy Tadzio, he saw him almost constantly; in a confined environment, with a common daily program it was natural for the beautiful creature to be near him all day, with only brief interruptions. . . . But it was during the mornings on the beach above all, and with the happiest regularity, that he could devote hours at a time to the contemplation and study of this exquisite phenomenon. Indeed, it was precisely this ordered routine of happiness, this equal daily repetition of favorable circumstances, that so filled him with contentment and zest for life, that made this place so precious to him, that allowed one sunlit day to another in such obligingly endless succession. (58)

Because of his love, the days take a mythical transformation. The dawning day begins with the wonders of the Gods in front of his eyes. Despite his growing crave for the boy Aschenbach ascertains that this relationship will be limited to the glances of the partners in it. Having been sure of the only way possible in this relationship, Aschenbach concentrates on the eyes of his lover. He is sure that some kind of relationship and acquaintance will develop

between himself and the boy as he finds that his interest and attention are somewhat responded to. Any move that is inclined towards Aschenbach and glimpse that he captures in Tadzio's eyes work as evidence for reciprocity. He believes that the boy takes the front way rather than the boarded walk behind the bathing cabins on the beach advertently to pass close by Aschenbach. Sometimes, his eyes meet, with Aschenbach concealing his feelings. A chance encounter bearing natural reflexes cause Aschenbach's confession. In this encounter Aschenbach is struck by the beauty of the boy, inexplicable through words. He is distanced from the world of words by the effect of such a beauty, for he painfully realizes that "language can only praise sensuous beauty, but not reproduce it" (66). The words are not enough for Aschenbach from now on. He wants to experience that sensuous beauty which is not available for him through words. In this unprepared meeting, Aschenbach lets out joy, surprise and admiration through his face. To his surprise, Aschenbach beholds the smile in Tadzio's face as a response: He,

smiled at him, speakingly, familiarly, enchantingly and quite unabashed. . . It was the smile of Narcissus as he bows his head over the mirroring water, that profound, fascinated, protracted smile . . . a very slightly contorted smile, contorted by the hopelessness of his attempt to kiss the sweet lips of his shadow; a smile that was provocative, curious and imperceptibly troubled, bewitched and bewitching. (66-7)

Having received the smile and carrying it away with him like a gift in a deeply shaken mood, Aschenbach moves into the darkness. Titillated by this smile, Aschenbach utters resentful and tenderly: "You mustn't smile like that! One mustn't, do you hear, you mustn't smile like that at anyone!" followed by "the standing formula of his heart: 'I love you!'" (67). This confession marks the breakpoint in Aschenbach's relationship with the boy. From this point onwards he dismisses his morals, work ethics, and the intellectual influences of the boy; that

is, shortly, he stops living by the conduct of the Platonic ideal. He will leave aside his original nature, devote himself to change and stop utilizing this relationship in his work.

Aschenbach seems to be deviating from the Platonic conception of homosexual love that works for the benefit of the intellect of the lover and the beloved. The spiritual beauty that lovers should reach is emitted from this formulation as Aschenbach's love gains the form of idolatry. The goal becomes the beauty, which is to be only means, instead of the spirit. Aschenbach gives in any of his preoccupation, including writing, and his responsibilities. It is only the boy and nothing else in his mind. On the other hand, the targeted moral and spiritual evaluation of the beloved is also dismissed from this relationship. Aschenbach's only concern seems to be based on sexual attraction solely. He craves for the boy and thinks nothing else. There is nothing thought on behalf of the boy, he becomes a simple object. The erotic subtext is much more evident than that of the *Dorian Gray* too. In his surrendering to Dionysian rule he will break certain rules and make certain crucial mistakes, betraying the rules he has already designated for himself as Socrates.

Aschenbach's relationship with the boy transforms into a different mode as his interest takes the shape of a frantic and maddened obsession. Intoxication and drunkenness mark this phase of Aschenbach's story as he is lost blindly in a Dionysian fashion. He starts to follow the Polish family "by a mad compulsion" now (67). The daily routine of watching the boy is just not enough for Aschenbach any more. He dogs Tazio's steps and goes wherever they lead him to. "The beguiled lover" tiresomely and breathlessly runs after the beloved, seeks him, slows down his pace according to the family's speed, stops and hides when they turn around, lingers around when they stop (69). He even follows them when they travel through gondola with the same vehicle. The level of his passion is extended to obsession as "he could no longer think of anything or want anything except this ceaseless pursuit of the object that so inflamed him: nothing but to follow him, to dream him when he was not there, and after the

fashion of lovers to address tender words to his mere shadow” (70-1). Furthermore, “[s]olitariness, the foreign environment, and the joy of an intoxication of feeling that had come to him so late and affected him so profoundly – all this encouraged and persuaded him to indulge himself in the most astonishing ways” (71). For example, one night he stops in front of the boy’s room, “leaning his head against the doorframe in a complete drunken ecstasy” (71). To him, the boy also qualifies Aschenbach as his “lover” now: “But sometimes, too, and the older man noticed it with a mind-dizzying sense of triumph as well as with terror, he would turn his head hesitantly and cautiously, or even quickly and suddenly as if to gain the advantage of surprise, and look over his left shoulder to where his lover was sitting” (73-4).

This overflowing of feelings on part of Aschenbach coincides with the intensification of the imagery of the decaying Venice. In the fourth week of his stay, Aschenbach realizes “certain uncanny development in the outside worlds” during his stay, for “as the height of the season approached, the number of guests at his hotel was diminishing rather than increasing” (67). Along with this realization the smell of the bactericide strikes Aschenbach’s attention, “a peculiar aroma . . . – a sweetish smell that suggested squalor and wounds and suspect cleanliness” (68). The smell pervades throughout the city in which Aschenbach is after his beloved, reaching in every corner. The posters and announcements declare the precautions of the authorities. Aschenbach suspects the nature of the incident. Just as he pursues his beloved, he is after this smell and the truth behind it. It is as if the sight of Tadzio, the “u” sound at the end of his name is complemented with this smell. Some conversations with the locals convince him of a clandestine cooperation that is established between the authorities and the locals. He is convinced that they want it to be kept quiet, covered, and concealed. However, Aschenbach indulges himself with this secret and finds “his heart filled with elation at the thought of the adventure in which the outside world was about to be involved” (68). He

volunteers to be part of this game as he connects his covert feelings to Tadzio with this secret surrounding the city: “Aschenbach felt an obscure sense of satisfaction at what was going on in the dirty alleyways of Venice, cloaked in official secrecy – this guilty secret of the city, which merged with his own innermost secret and which it was also so much in his own interest to protect” (68-9). The merging of this secret with Tadzio and Aschenbach’s quest for him resonates in the “adventure of the outside world which darkly mingle[s] with the adventure of his heart” (69). He is, therefore, actively taking place in this secret and takes “a perverse pleasure” from it (72). Aschenbach’s justification for this link is the possibility of Tadzio leaving with the unraveling of the secret and his desire to be close to him as long as possible. He realizes that “he would not be able to go on living if that were to happen” (69).

Aschenbach’s metamorphosis is initiated with a far more immoral act. Aschenbach’s moral corruption occurs when the truth behind the scene is whispered into his ear. Aschenbach’s decision of betraying the good of Tadzio for his own sake greedily is the first chain of incidents that mark his deviance from the rights of the ideal relation that has been conceptualized earlier. Aschenbach is revealed the facts and the truth of what is going on behind the scenes from an English tourist agent. The reality is that Venice is under the threat of an outbreak of a cholera epidemic that is slowly seizing the city, which originates from Asia and arrives to Venice. It is already suspected the foodstuffs to be contaminated by the taint and the condition for the spread of the infection with the help of the excessive heat to be ready. What the agent notes further bespeaks the situation of Aschenbach. He asserts that the crisis the city is facing “led at the lower social levels to a certain breakdown of moral standards, to an activation of the dark and antisocial forces, which manifested itself in intemperance, shameless license and growing criminality” (79). Having explained the gravity of the situation, he straightforwardly recommends Aschenbach to leave as soon as possible. Subsequently Aschenbach thinks of warning the Polish family; he even rehearses his speech

on the subject. He soon gives up the idea, nevertheless, since “[i]t would lead him back to where he had been, give him back to himself again. . . [T]he the thought of returning home, of levelheadedness and sobriety, of toil and mastery, filled him with such repugnance that his face twisted into an expression of physical nausea” (80). The old Aschenbach and the world he once belonged to is so far away from him that even the thought of returning back to it sickens him. Hence, his complicity:

‘They want to keep it quiet!’ he whispered vehemently. And: ‘I shall say nothing!’”

He revels with the idea of this complicity which “intoxicated him as small quantities of wine intoxicate a weary brain. The image of the stricken and disordered city, hovering wildly before his mind’s eye, inflamed him with hopes of monstrous sweetness. What, compared with such expectations, was that tender happiness of which he had briefly dreamed a few moments ago? What could art and virtue mean to him now, when he might reap the advantages of chaos? (80)

This chaotic atmosphere promises him a future with Tadzio. As the truth leaks and people are running away from Venice, Aschenbach imagines a vision in which he and the boy left alone in the island no matter whether people died or gone. On a more realistic level though, Aschenbach is desperately dependent on this chaos: “as he sat every morning by the sea with his gaze resting heavily, recklessly, incessantly on the object of his desire, or as he continued his undignified pursuit of him in the evenings along streets in which the disgusting mortal malady wound its underground way, then indeed monstrous things seemed full of promise to him, and the moral law no longer valid” (82). How the whole thing is comprehended by Aschenbach is clear. He knows his desire to be amoral, but he considers the decaying Venice destroying the moral code. His is the love, the desire that can be legitimate only in such a state.

The most ironic part of the novel, which is the symbol of Aschenbach's complete transformation, is the part that displays Aschenbach becoming the fop once he despised and felt sick of. In an attempt to please his beloved and in the fear of failure of this Aschenbach begins to take care of himself more frequently and further: "As he beheld the sweet youthful creature . . . he felt disgust at his own aging body, the sight of his gray hair and sharp features filled him with a sense of shame and hopelessness. He felt a compulsive need to refresh and restore himself physically; he paid frequent visits to the hotel barber" (82-3). Now he wears vivid clothes, jewelry, perfume. Furthermore he lets the hotel barber to dye his hair. When he lets the barber get his hand on his complexion what we see is the dandy in the ship:

[T]he shape of [Aschenbach's] eyes lengthened, their brightness enhanced by a slight underlining of the lids; saw below them a delicate carmine come to life as it was softly applied to skin that had been brown and leathery; saw his lips that had just been pallid nor burgeoning cherry-red; saw the furrow on his cheeks, round his mouth, the wrinkles by his eye, all vanishing under face cream and an aura of youth – with beating heart he saw himself as a young man in his earliest bloom. (83)

In addition to the moral transformation of Aschenbach, his physical transformation is completed as well.

At this point an interesting development that can be traced within the text manifests itself openly. The narrator whose relationship to his protagonist is described by Dorrit Cohn as one of an increasing distance portrays Aschenbach's transformation in a sarcastic tone (133). The narrator points our attention to the before and after of Aschenbach who has just lost the traces of his beloved. Relieved by a few overripe strawberries that have most probably been contaminated, Aschenbach with his new physical appearance is described. He is now the completely opposite man he used to be, embracing what he had already dismissed:

There he sat, the master, the artist who had achieved dignity,... he who in such paradigmatically pure form had repudiated intellectual vagrancy and the murky depths, who had proclaimed his renunciation of all sympathy with the abyss... whose fame was official, whose name had been ennobled, and on whose style young boys were taught to model their own - there he sat, with his eyelids closed... and his drooping, cosmetically brightened lips shaped an occasional word of the discourse his brain was delivering, his half-asleep brain with its tissue of strange dream-logic.

(85)

Dorrit Cohn differentiates between the author and the narrator, the second author of the novella. According to her, the second author within the text becomes apparent “when he departs furthest from straightforward narration, when he moves from the mimetic, storytelling level to the nonmimetic level of ideology and evaluation” (133). Parallel to Aschenbach’s fall, the attitude of the narrator towards his protagonist transforms too: “In the early phases of the story it is essentially sympathetic, respectful, even reverent; in the later phases a deepening rift develops, building an increasingly ironic stance” (133). As opposed to typical Bildungsroman tradition, “the protagonist, far from rising to his narrator’s ethical and cultural standards, falls away from them” (133). She notes that as Aschenbach drifts himself amidst of moral corruption, the narrator holds tightly “the cultural pinnacle that had formerly brought forth his protagonist’s own artistic achievement” (133). A comprehensive and a coherent personality is drawn in Cohn’s analysis of the narrator: “This narrator is for discipline, dignity, decorum, achievement, and sobriety, and against disorder, intoxication, passion, and passivity.”

In this sense the voice of the narrator can also be considered as the discourse of heteronormative culture that views Aschenbach. It is the echo of the rumors critical of Dorian that Basil hears and carries. As Cohn has already noted in the earlier chapter this moralistic

outlook of the narrator manifests itself when the tense of the narration turns into a generalizing present from the reporting past tense (128). One example of such an intervention occurs when Aschenbach begets beauty from his relationship to Tadzio. The narrator comments on this production beside the mark: “It is well that the world knows only a fine piece of work and not also its origins, the conditions under which it came into being, for the knowledge of the sources of an artist’s inspiration would often confuse readers and shock them, and the excellence of the writing would be of no avail” (qtd. in Cohn 140-1). To Cohn, “[t]his is by far the least motivated, the most disconcerting of the narrator’s interventions. It seems as though he were taking headlong flight onto familiar ground – the psychology of the reading public – from the mysteries of a creative endeavor that is beyond his comprehension” (141). The commentary clearly expresses the narrator’s critical stance for the homoerotic motivation behind the work’s emergence. However, it also, implies his acceptance of the situation as long as it is productive. This brings us to Reed’s observation that “Tadzio is celebrated hymnically, the passion he inspires is affirmed because it is fruitful” (155). It is with the extract which sarcastically portrays Aschenbach’s situation with “the fall it builds between the before and the after, the former self-image and the present reality” that the disjuncture between the narrator and Aschenbach becomes manifest (Cohn, 142). “The elevation itself,” continues Cohn, “is constructed by sardonically piling up phrases we have heard before in a different context: they are the very phrases the narrator employed in the laudatory curriculum vitae of the summary chapter 2” (142). She analyzes this passage in relation to the subsequent Socratic dialogue that Aschenbach will envisage. The timing of the narrator’s strategy is crucial because, to Cohn, “no other mode of presentation could have disengaged him as effectively from the ensuing discourse. But the terms he uses to introduce it – ‘half-asleep brain,’ dream-logic’ – are, of course, meant to be more immediately alienating; they disqualify its meaning in advance, as much as to warn us that the words we

are about to hear are arrant nonsense” (142). The narrator, as the mouthpiece of the heteronormative culture, underscores Aschenbach’s fall and tragedy.

What Aschenbach is imagining subsequent to the narrator’s introduction is the final testimony of Aschenbach’s fall. Aschenbach imagines another scene including Socrates and Phaedrus. Again he is not quoting direct lines from *Phaedrus*. Yet, his reincarnation of the scene differs from the previous version in that it changes the original content of the dialogue represented. He invents a monologue whereby he continues his role of Socrates, subverting the original meaning. The Socrates of Aschenbach’s creation here becomes the spokesperson of Aschenbach and reveals Aschenbach’s deeds. The monologue is revealing of Aschenbach’s deviation, his inability to stay loyal to the Platonic conception of love. It starts repeating the gist of Plato’s teachings that Beauty is the artist’s path to the spirit. “But,” imagined Socrates asks, “do you believe, dear boy, that the man whose path to the spiritual passes through the senses can ever achieve wisdom and true manly dignity? Or do you think (I leave it to you to decide) that this is a path of dangerous charm, very much an errant and sinful path which must of necessity lead us astray?” (85). And he explains that it is not possible for artists to walk this road straight: “[W]e artists cannot tread the path of Beauty without Eros keeping company with us and appointing himself as our guide; yes, though we may be heroes in our fashion and disciplined warriors, yet we are like women, for it is passion that exalts us, and the longing of our soul must remain the longing of a lover ... that is our joy and our shame” (85). As a result, the writer can neither be wise nor dignified as depraved emotional adventures.

Therefore, he adds

The magisterial poise of our style is a lie and a farce, our fame and social position are an absurdity, the public’s faith in us is altogether ridiculous, the use of art to educate the nation and its youth is a reprehensible undertaking which should be forbidden by law. For how can one be fit to be an educator when one has been born with an

incorrigible and natural tendency toward the abyss? We try to achieve dignity by repudiating that abyss, but whichever way we turn we are subject to its allurements. And so we reject it resolutely, and henceforth our pursuit is of Beauty alone, of Beauty which is simplicity, which is grandeur and a new kind of rigor and a second naïveté, of Beauty which is Form. But form and naïveté, Phaedrus, lead to intoxication and lust; they may lead a noble mind into terrible criminal emotions, which his own fine rigor condemns as infamous; they lead, they too lead, to the abyss. I tell you, that is where they lead us writers; for we are not capable of self-exaltation, we are merely capable of self-debauchery. (86)

The passage, drawing the impossibility of a Platonic theory in practice, in a way, summarizes the process that has been explained throughout this part of the study. It also tells the story of Basil Hallward who experiences the same phenomenon in a similar fashion. Moreover what is interesting in this passage is that Aschenbach, although self-assessing and self-critical he may be, universalizes his position. Not only does he not speak for himself but he also makes Socrates his partner in this failure. Aschenbach's faithlessness to the Platonic theory is once again shown by making Socrates his mouthpiece and suggesting Socrates' failure. And it is his betrayal to the theory, his deviation from the conduct of the theory, and not the complete transformation of Aschenbach that drives him to his end. Aschenbach's abandoning of moral concerns in order to experience his homosexual desire brings self-destruction. In this passage Aschenbach recalls a Greek-hero who recognizes his tragic error. Inevitably, his punishment is on its way. Aschenbach collapses before Tadzio's eyes on the beach and dies before realizing his passion.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion that has been followed so far enables a combined conclusion that can draw the general characteristics of the artist figure that is found in *Dorian Gray* and *Death in Venice*. Generally speaking, the exalted position of the artist of the Platonic theory leaves itself to the tragic view of the artist in these texts. What is interesting in this novel formation of the artist is that his fall takes place within the limits of the Platonic doctrine. The Platonic love theory that ethicized the homosexual ties permeates the text as a possible conception for the artists to conceive the homoerotic desire they feel towards the young men. They attempt to locate their relationship within the boundaries of that relationship, trying to sublimate their feelings into an artistic form. This relationship they think they have established seems to them a new epoch in their artistic lives. However, the two fail to perform their relationship according to the right conduct of the theory, which in a way brings their destruction. Basil Hallward fails in that conception at the early steps of his supposed ascent when he stops painting Dorian and paints him as an idol. Although he acknowledges this, he compels to situate his relationship into the Platonic theory. On the other hand, Aschenbach to a certain extent moves on the right track, begetting intellectual and artistic children marked by the unity of the body and the soul, which have been aspired but missed by Basil. Like Basil, though, Aschenbach distances himself from the theory by dogging after the steps of his idol in the streets of Venice. These decisions, if you may call them decisions, prepare the fatal end of both artists. As they descend the rungs of ladder and get stuck on the base level, they leave aside any moral concern for the sake of their desires. The idolatry that Basil instills into

Dorian's character through his portrait of Dorian not only attaches Dorian to his own body but also becomes the background for the theories of Lord Henry that drive Dorian towards evil. Aschenbach, in the meantime, risks both his and his beloved's health as he decides to partake in the secret of the city by staying in Venice and ignoring to warn Tadzio's family. Both artists end up dead at the end of their moral degradation. Basil is killed tragically by a virulent Dorian who holds Basil as the sole responsible of his situation. Aschenbach dies before his beloved's eyes on the beach because of the contaminated strawberries he has eaten. As a result, the homosexual artist figure of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century turns into an artist manqué from the role of the master. His is a life that is structured in contrast to life of a master. The direction of his life is downwards, in the form of a descent, as he is enchanted by the worldly. Rather than the rise of the master's spirit to eternal truth, beauty, and virtue, he is represented to be destined to fall into immorality. He is in thrall to his passions, for he cannot dominate his feelings. He fails artistically as he cannot live up to the conduct of the Platonic theory of art. Most notably, he fails in his relationship as well since he cannot fulfill his desire, neither emotionally or sexually. While the master is held in esteem, admiration, and love by his beloved, the feelings of the artist manqué are not returned. Finally, the artist manqué's desire turns out to be fatal and self-destructive, and even destructive for the lives of the others sometimes, including his beloved.

It should be noted once more that the failure of the artist manqué occurs according to the Platonic theory of love as he cannot live by the rights of the theory. The tragedy of the artist, likewise, is the direct result of his failure of clinging to the Platonic theory. If the vantage point that focuses on the artist is changed into a new viewpoint that highlights the ontological status of desire, might not one see the transgressive homosexual desire that exceeds the limits of the Platonic theory? The theory that sublimates the homoerotic desire for young men proves inadequate for the same desire that now overflows in an uncontrollable

fashion. The attempts of Basil and Aschenbach to conceptualize this desire in terms of the Platonic theory is simply ineffective as the feelings involved find a way of breaking free from the restraints of the theory. In short, the failure of the artist is tantamount to the failure of the Platonic theory. That the Platonic theory of love is not apt for the emerging homosexual identity and the desire that surrounds that identity is crystallized in the failure of the reciprocity of the relationship and the death that is immanent in its anachronistic application. Therefore, these works, with their conscious and direct references to a specific period, seem to disrupt, or rather subvert, the ground of homosexual love that had already been sterilized and ethicized. The ground that had been ethicized by the medium of aesthetics, art, and mostly the artist is problematized by the very same medium with a reverse effect. The domain of sexuality is filled once more with passion and desire, and is now exempt from the restriction of them through sublimation, repression, and moderation, giving the clear message that desire is to be fulfilled.

The cost, however, is dear, even too dear for the artist though. The independence from the restrictions of Platonic theory brings death, destruction, and loss; while, at the same time, the detachment does not guarantee the coming together of the partners. This carries the texts to another end of cultural representation of homoeroticism in “degenerate and decadent forms” as opposed to the “civilized homoeroticism,” as formulated by Jonathan Dollimore (291). In his introduction to *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*, Dollimore, speaks of “[the] connection of homosexual desire and death” not only as part of a homosexual history but also “part of a more general cultural history” (xii). He makes it clear once again that “[homosexuality] is also the focus of intense cultural, psychic and political anxieties about degeneration and death” (xxxix). Reading *Death in Venice*, Dollimore states that as Aschenbach thwarts from the Platonic idealism qua ‘civilized’ homoeroticism to its degenerate and decadent forms, he “succumbs to decadence, disease and death” (291). To

him, this is the emergence of the other cultural representation of homosexual desire as “the Freudian narrative of desublimated perversion unites with the pathological narrative of the degenerate, the decadent, and the primitive” (291). *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, on the other hand, involves the death of the young Dorian next to the death of the artist. Sedgwick finds a whole corpus of literature that nurtures tragic early death “in centuries of homoerotic and homophobic intertextuality” from Achilles and Patroclus to Vito Russo’s *Celluloid Closet* (145). Most of the twentieth century homosexual artist figurations, now free from the burden of ethical restraints, will deal with death that envelops the homoerotic love and desire. As the most of the century will witness the discussion of death in relation to degeneration and decadence, the latter decades of the century will attest to the employment of the issue in regard to AIDS epidemic. The problematization of homoerotic desire through artist figurations will continue to shape and to be shaped by the cultural and social forces of its context as it is seen here both by the figures of the master and the artist manqué.

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