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Declaration of authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this thesis in English all by myself.
Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages
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1 Introduction

The following thesis will take you on a journey to workhouses, stifling family affairs and dandyism and, most importantly, into the world of three of the finest English writers: Charles Dickens, James Joyce and Oscar Wilde.

As the title already suggests, the main focus of this work is on two radically opposed positions of art and morality in the following three Bildungsromane: *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, *The Portrait of the Artist as a young Man* by James Joyce and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

Dickens, the master of English serials and the “most popular author in history up to his time” will mark the beginning of this journey, which starts right in the heart of Victorian England reigned by Queen Victoria (Mosely 443). *David Copperfield* was the novel most dear to Dickens himself, and as evident in the fact that the initials resemble his name as well, the story is closely linked with the biography of Dickens. Consequently, when writing the novel, Dickens was passionate and very emotional about his famous Bildungsroman when he wrote:

I am within three pages of the shore; and am strangely divided, as is usual in such cases, between sorrow and joy. Oh, my dear Forster, if I were to say half of what *Copperfield* makes me feel to-night, how strangely, even to you, I should be turned inside out! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World (qtd. in Johnson 676).

In Dickens' realist novel, David's growth is challenged by various issues of class, nature and fate. The theme of charity and the humanist position of Dickens are evident; however, what exactly is the implication of this in terms of art and morality? Can an orphan escape his milieu? And what makes a man a gentleman?

Joyce also put a lot of his own heart into his well-respected masterpiece. *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* was first published in 1914, when the modernist movement was already very influential. However, common opinion about the novel was polarizing since some called it “extraordinarily dirty” and claimed that “no clean-minded person could possibly allow it to remain within reach of his wife, his sons or daughters”, while others found his novel brilliant (qtd. in Johnson 7).

This thesis tracks Stephen’s metamorphosis into the man he comes to be. However, will Stephen realize his artistic talent living in the Irish dilemma and a nation divided into petty factions, or will he get lost on his path to artistic vocation? Moreover, does an artist have moral obligations? Are church and fatherland moral values with eternal meaning?

The last part of this journey is *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by the notorious Oscar Wilde. Although he has been one of the most heavily discussed writers for generations, he is still considered fascinating to the public. Certainly, while his other works contributed to his legacy, he owes much of his success to his one and only novel where a young and handsome man becomes obsessed with his own beauty. Wilde’s extravagance, however, and the excess of dandyism made him known to the art world and public in general. This thesis takes a close look at the people Wilde depicts in *The Picture* and analyses the role of art within the novel. Finally, it follows Oscar into his darkest moments when he caused moral outrage – the Oscar Wilde trials.

Please note that the order in which the three novels are analysed is in no way arbitrary, but rather, this order chronologically depicts a shift in views on art and morality which reach their absolute climax with Wilde’s novel.

2 The Bildungsroman

“Happy season of youth, (...) happy times of the first wish of love!” (Goethe 67)

The term Bildungsroman has its roots in German romanticism. A Bildungsroman relates to a novel, which centres around self-development and transformation. However, there are various synonyms such as “the novel of youth, the novel of education, of apprenticeship, of adolescence, of initiation, even the life-novel” (Buckley 7f.). With regard to these synonyms it is important to note that the “first two are perhaps the least unsatisfactory alternatives, if ‘youth’ can imply not so much a state of being as a process of movement and adjustment from childhood to early maturity, or if ‘education’ can be understood as a growing up and gradual self-discovery in the school-without-walls that is experience” (8).

Within the genre Bildungsroman, there are a few similar genres such as the *Entwicklungsroman*, which tells a story of general growth, the *Erziehungsroman*, which focusses on training of formal education, and finally, the *Künstlerroman*, which tells the story of the protagonist and his or her transformation into an artist. However, here are some features, which make a Bildungsroman a unique genre, traits, which a reader can identify in a novel to determine whether or not it fits this characterization (see 12).

Buckley claims that the first characteristic of a Bildungsroman is “the story of a single individual’s growth rather than self culture” (11). Moreover, there must be some kind of loss or tragic failing at an early stage of the hero’s life so that he gets away from the family setting such as in Dickens’ *David Copperfield*.

Furthermore, the long process of transformation includes constant conflict with society, or at the very least, a feeling of alienation. Finally, in the end of a Bildungsroman, the protagonist has found his place in society and knows his vocation (11).

All three of the novels this thesis examines fall under the term Bildungsroman, but exemplify the genre in greatly different ways. For instance, the novels have different views on when the final step of education and maturity is reached. Nevertheless, the central theme of all three is that their heroes discover and find their true selves and thus self-awareness. *David Copperfield* is the most classic novel, which still has the so-called “disciplining of the heart“, as its major goal for maturity.

Pip’s search is quite different; in *Great Expectations*, the major goal is not to find the artist in oneself, but rather to become a gentleman. This can be seen as “symptomatic for the age of Victorianism as it was believed that the constant strive for social advancement and impeccable morals would equate maturity and well-being” (Berberich 35).

Joyce’s novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a clear *Künstlerroman*, in other words an *artist’s novel*. Moreover, since James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus share parts of their life story, one might also call it “the Victorian autobiographical novel of youth“ (Buckley 8).

Wilde’s main character, however, faces a different struggle where his personality is challenged by a hedonistic principle that allows too much room for egotism.

The roots of the Bildungsroman can be found in the Germanic Romantic tradition of the eighteenth century, starring Johann Wolfgang Goethe with his famous novel *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, which soon became the prototype form which most modern *Künstlerromane* are drawn from. In this way, Goethe’s concept of Bildung is applied; accordingly, the Bildung in a Bildungsroman means “the full development of a person’s possibilities“ (Buckley 17). However, the term *Künstlerroman* was only adapted by the English speaking and writing world in the 19th century (see 12).

The *Künstlerroman* had become a popular method for authors to explore their artistic nature. According to Buckley the process of writing a *Künstlerroman* is often a form of “self-exploration“ (12). This self-therapy is supposed to come very early in the artistic life of an author. Consequently, the *Künstlerroman* is very often autobiographical.

However, despite all these characteristics that define a Bildungsroman, it is important to keep in mind that:

[...] no single novel, of course, precisely follows this pattern. But none that ignores more than two or three of its principal elements – childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy – answers the requirements of a Bildungsroman. (Buckley 18)

3 Victorianism

3.1. The age of Hypocrisy?

The Oxford English Dictionary cites the following definitions for Victorian: “prudish, strict; old fashioned, out-dated”. Gardiner argues that the adjective is “filled out, stretched, over-stretched and continually re-invented to describe all manner of things that occurred in the space of sixty-four eventful years” (4).

Victorianism was of course not a homogenous era, but regardless, certain elements can certainly be called a characteristic of Victorian England. The Victorian age is often considered a time of economic growth, similar to the industrial revolution. The urbanization of the middle class is also an oft-cited factor when one has to summarize what this particular age stood for. Nevertheless, it is difficult to approach the Victorian essence since what many consider a time of “moral hypocrisy” is considered “deliberate sentimentalism” or even or “social snobbery by others” (Buckley 1952, 3).

The Victorian era can be divided into three phases: the early, the mid and the late Victorian phase. The early Victorian period spans the time of circa 1837 to 1850. This was a very hectic time, full of change and the industrial life awakening. The mid Victorian phase, however, ranging from 1851 to 1870, was a time of peace and prosperity. Finally, the late period, after 1870, is marked by a period of complete reformation again (see Gardiner 4).

Some say Victorianism, and the 19th century in general, “was distinguished by the rise of the bourgeoisie, dragging after it into the unfamiliar dazzle of lime-light its habitual manners and morals “ (Burgum 273). Others, more euphorically announce it as “a period of most wonderful transition” (Houghton 43).

However, the age that bears Queen Victoria’s name “had to become a favourite derogatory epithet to a generation which, ironically enough, was spending lavishly of its pounds and poetry to celebrate Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. And into the twentieth century ‘Victorianism’, defined ambiguously if at all, persisted, a shield for the conservative and a target for the modernist” (Buckley 1952, 2).

As with any other era, the Victorian age is best described by the people who experienced it first-hand. Hamilton Buckley (1952) states that the Victorians were poor people, conformists in mind and still torn by doubt. He further describes them as utterly religious, idealistic but unable to live in the present.

Politically they were governed by narrow insular prejudice, but swayed by dark imperialistic designs. Intellectually and emotionally, they believed in progress, denied original sin, and affirmed the death of the Devil; yet by temperament they were patently Manichaens to whom living was a desperate struggle between the force of good and the power of darkness. While they professed 'manliness', they yielded to feminine standards; if they emancipated woman from age-old bondage, they also robbed her of a vital place in society. Though they were sexually inhibited and even failed to consider the existence of physical love, they begat incredibly large families and flaunted in their verses a morbidly overdeveloped erotic sensibility. (2)

The age of transition, or of "dying feudalism", was characterized by both destruction and reconstruction (Houghton 3). While old orders were attacked or modified, new orders were constructed. The feudal order was replaced by a democratic one and the power of aristocracy was weakening due to the Reform Bills of 1832, which extended voting privileges to lower and middle classes in 1867 and 1884. Moreover, speed played an essential role in daily life; not only the tempo of work but also the tempo of living had increased (see 4-7).

After the reform act, the middle-class was striving to form a new kind of society that was based on different foundations where class distinctions were less important, so they therefore wanted to end aristocratic corruption. The middle-class that formed was defined by taking on the responsibility for oneself and one's family, in opposition to former times, where success was mostly dependent on privilege and inheritance (see Loftus, *The Rise of the Victorian Middle Class*).

Social advancement was one of the main themes of this society. However, class still mattered greatly. In fact, the old two-class system of rich and poor remained in place during this time. Impoverished citizens had neither the energy nor the education to reflect on their status in society. Although things were markedly improving "society was a seamless hierarchical web" (Gardiner 10).

The following passage of *David Copperfield* supports the view that the strength and importance of the two-class system remained untouched. The scene the reader encounters here is the scene in which Emily and Steerforth have run away together and Mr. Pegotty asks Steerforth's mother to do address this issue.

'Unless he brings me back a lady,' said Mr. Pegotty, tracing out that part with his finger. 'I come to know, ma'am, whether he will keep his wured?'

'No,' she returned.

'Why not?' said Mr. Pegotty.

'It is impossible. He would disgrace himself. You cannot fail to know that she is far below him.'

'Raise her up!' said Mr. Pegotty.

'She is uneducated and ignorant.'

'Maybe she's not; maybe she is,' said Mr. Pegotty. 'I think not, ma'am; but I'm no judge of them things. Teach her better!' (385)

The unchangeable feature of social status, and accordingly of class, supports a naturalistic view that it is impossible to escape your milieu.

4 Dickens a Victorian?

Dickens can be considered a social commentator; in fact, he was an outspoken critic of social injustice and believed in the power of his writing to change England's society for the better. Thus Dickens used his words to criticize the moral, social and economic abuse in the Victorian era. As an artist, following this moral code resulted in his fiction not only being read for the purpose of pleasure, but also as being seen as a reminder of moral responsibility. Throughout his life, Dickens was an advocate for the mistreated and the poor, and consequently contributed to several social Reforms (see Marlow 132).

However, his empathy had its roots in his own personal background since Dickens was a child of Victorian England.

4.1. Childhood in Victorian England

In England in the 1930s, the poor suffered under the English legal system. The exploitation of the lower social class and especially the exploitation of children are central characteristics used to describe the Victorian era. Although Victorianism was a child-dominated society in which children comprised one third of the population resulting from a population boom, the popular attitudes towards children were very inconsistent. On the one hand, there was a so-called "cult of child" which suggested that a child symbolizes purity and should be protected (Gubar, *The Victorian child*). On the other hand, however, there was a rather de-romanticized notion of childhood (see *The Victorian child*).

This view had been put into words by Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, as he spoke for many when he argued that the working man's children were "part of his productive power", an indispensable source of family income (qtd. in Horn 100).

Children were needed for the economy in the 1830s and 1840s, and families were large and depended on the children working as well. The children's income was in

most cases crucial to the economic stability of the family. However, child mortality rates remained astonishingly high, for which poor sanitary conditions and infectious diseases were responsible. The most common jobs for children were to be found in coal mines and textile factories. Although child labour itself was nothing new, it became more and more visible as industrialization continued. There were various attempts to regulate child labour, but no attempts were made that would have reduced child labour to a point at which it no longer existed. At that time, education was predominantly neglected, and only became increasingly important towards the end of the century (see Gubar, *The Victorian child*).

Another example supporting the inconsistent view on children was the rising interest in a child's mind. The belief that understanding the child's mind would logically lead to understanding the adult mind gave rise to the popularity of Victorian novels written about childhood. This idea, however, had not been very popular before the mid-19th century because, as previously mentioned, children were viewed as immune from any form of mental illness or psychological sufferings (see Shuttleworth 212f.).

Artists played a pivotal role in drawing attention to child cruelty. According to Shuttleworth Dickens was a pioneer with novels such as *Dombey and Son*.

Drawing on emerging cultural concerns about overpressured education, Dickens creates the first detailed portrait of what came to be known as 'brain-forcing' in his depiction of Dr Blimber's academy. This establishment, Dickens remarks, 'was a great hot-house, in which there was a great forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green-peas were produced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year round. Nature was of no consequence at all' [...]. (212)

Interestingly enough, *David Copperfield* is filled with anecdotes David came to collect when he was forced into child labour.

Moreover, the novel provides insight into educational practice. The following scene is taken from David's notorious incident with Mr. Murdstone.

'Can't you indeed, David?' he said. 'We'll try that.' He had my head as in a vice, but I twined around him somehow, and stopped him for a moment, entreating him not to beat me. It was only for a moment that I stopped him, for he cut me heavily an instant afterwards, and in the same instant I caught the

hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth and bit it through. It sets my teeth on edge to think of it. (Dickens 58)

The hero of the novel suffers dramatically, being robbed of all the love that was left, and he finds himself alone in the coldness of Victorian age and the rules of industrial society. This society was unsurprisingly patriarchal in nature, making David even weaker since, being fatherless, his sensitive mother could not compensate for that lost authority.

Dickens uses an authentic voice when he lets David recollect on schooling, which is in fact, rather similar to what we will later encounter in Joyce's educational career, however, for different reasons.

In a school carried on by sheer cruelty, whether it is presided over by a dunce or not, there is not likely to be much learnt. I believe our boys were, generally, as ignorant a set as any schoolboys in existence; they were too much troubled and knocked about to learn; they could no more do that to advantage, than any one can do anything to advantage in a life of constant misfortune, torment and worry. (Dickens 88)

5 The role of Art in Victorianism

Victorian age was the age of realism in literature and arts in general. Furthermore, it was also a time of nationalism and romanticism in music and culture. In Victorian society, art had the mission to be moral. Art had to teach. Thus it is said to be the time of realism: art was not there for art's sake but for the moral implication it held.

If art was to mirror a larger totality, its function, they thought, must be at least implicitly moral [...] (Hardy 143)

For literature, in fact, for Dickens especially, the development of the novel is of great concern. In Dickens' time, the novel had reached immense popularity. Not only did it allow the authors to take on new perspectives on social experiences, it also became epic in the way that it performed the function of an epic by allowing for "comprehensive unfolding of interrelated destinies" (Hemstedt 3). The novel as a literary form had a long tradition before Victorian times, being used by authors such as Fielding, Smollett or Austen. However, the Victorians took it a step further by simply putting society as a whole into one work of art (see also 3).

The term "novel" did not arise until the end of the eighteenth century, although the content itself had been formed earlier in the century by Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Smollett (see also Karl 6). Ian Watt further attests to this point by stating that Richardson and Fielding were the founders of a new form writing (9). This form of literary art was bound to flourish since there was an increase in literacy as the middle class rose in its power and importance (see Daiches 890).

Dickens was highly influenced by the market. Taste, again, demonstrates the role of art. His serial writing was a rather new thing during that time, and the sensationalist value of his work also contributed to the shaping of the Victorian art era.

[...] abundance, variety, popularity, artistic growth – is found nowhere more sensationally than in Dickens. The process of change in his work have been partly reflected in shifts of critical taste, and our own mythic sense of what Victorian England was like, has been importantly shaped by his works, which themselves have been abstracted into myths. (Hemstedt 6)

The British literary world in early Victorian times was dominated by Romanticism, but this was soon followed by Realism and Naturalism in the 1840s. It was only at the very end that New Realism and Aestheticism became the dominating movements, which will be clearly visible when looking at Joyce's and Wilde's work in contrast.

Certain concepts of naturalism and realism are very important for the understanding of Dickens' novels such as Social Darwinism.

Social Darwinism also played a major role in the development of naturalism and its application in literature. As noted in most naturalists' works, the major focus is on the lower class who obviously struggle to survive in an economically competitive world. The capitalist environment impacts their well being by subjecting them to exploitation, unbearable living conditions leading to diseases and death. The fittest poor manage to survive by resorting to crime, otherwise the capitalist environment will swallow them up. It is evident that during the Industrial Revolution, the environment favoured the capitalist while the socially disadvantaged suffered; a phenomenon which has extended to our contemporary world. (Makati 21)

6 Art in David Copperfield

The novel begins with the main character retelling the story of his life. The first person narrator makes it hard to distinguish between our real life author and the narrator. Bermann even claims that: "There are, in effect, three narrators of David Copperfield. The first is Dickens himself; the second is David as the novelist he has become; and the third is the child who directly experiences events that become narrative " (44). The parallels between Dickens and David are also quite clearly shown in the initials of the name; they already serve as a hint of autobiographical elements that can be found in the novel. Therefore many critics have referred to *David Copperfield* as "the clearest account we have anywhere of the secret springs of Dickens' imagination" (Miller 151).

If David is a fictional character, there was no need for Dickens to make him a novelist, unless his life was to be, partly at least, of interest through his development as a novelist. If, on the other hand, David's writing was merely a factual item intended to confirm the autobiographical nature of the novel, then we may still wonder what the image of a novelist that emerges from David Copperfield reveals about Dickens' conception of his craft. (Simon 41)

However, the novel follows the consistent pattern of a Bildungsroman, presenting the moral growth of our hero. Thus Simon states that "as a Bildungsroman it traces the development of David from the innocence of childhood, through his confrontation with the world and his initiation into evil, to maturity and self-realization in a world very different from the Eden of childhood" (40).

From the start, David is presented as author. Not only does David need to go through moral change during his life, but he also experiences artistic growth, which is why it can be considered a Künstlerroman. As a Künstlerroman, David Copperfield is interesting in that the role of art has to be seen within the mind-set of the Victorians. In this way, Barbara Hardy argues that David is "one of the strangest portraits of an artist ever written" (153). The reason why critics see David as such a strange version of an artist is simply the fact that David tells us very little about his conceptions or feelings about art. This difference will become even more obvious when looking at

Joyce's work, where Stephen, our hero, is a "priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life" (Simon 40).

Quite naturally, this difference stems from their creators and their different approaches towards art. David is presented to us as a perfect Victorian version of an artist, which is to say a professionalist. The novel lacks any form of romanticism, which sees the artist as driven by his vocation and somebody who can fully rely on his natural talent. Simon (42) claims that Dickens was attempting to satirize the latest forms of Dandysim and believed art to be hard work, something requiring structure, order and effort. Simon further relates this to the fact that in Victorian times the prestige of the novel was rather low, so in order to be taken seriously as an artist, Dickens had to make the Victorian conception of art into *his* conception of art. This conception becomes clear when we see the "businesslike manner" David takes on when it comes to writing (42). Consequently, lacking this romanticism there is no dreamy attitude of "art for art's sake" in Dickens' novel (see 42).

Moreover, Simon further writes that this lack is obvious in David's focus on his success with writing rather than finding personal fulfilment in the world he creates (42).

The following example demonstrates this theory.

[...] one evening, as I was returning home from a solitary walk, thinking of the book I was then writing- for my success had steadily increased with my steady application, and I was engaged at that time upon my first work of fiction- I came past Mrs Steerforth's house [...] (Dickens 544)

6.1 David, the Artist

Art is a constant in David's life although it may never be obvious to the reader. There is a lot of cultural evidence in David's surroundings, an almost naturalistic approach when it comes to the connection of class and intellect in the form of love for culture. Despite David being an orphan very early on in the book and fatherless from the beginning, the reader senses that there is something cultivated within David. The fact that David does not really encounter a proper education all his life suggests that this drive was always apparent in him, instead of being fostered by outside influences. Furthermore, there are small hints that his love for books has always given him a feeling of home. However, until becoming a writer, David has to search for a home.

This was my only and my constant comfort. When I think of it the picture always rises in my mind, of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I sitting on my bed reading as if for life. (Dickens 57)

David has a curious mind from an early age. Unfortunately, he cannot develop this natural talent since the arrival of the Murdstones marks the end of innocence. Their cruel teaching lessons starkly contrast his former experiences of love and support.

When David reminisces about his earlier life, one can see his aesthetic sense. There is nostalgia in him, but he is "saved from indulgence by his gift for aesthetic distance, which marks him as an artist, that is, by his ability to re-create his younger self with his feelings and responses, and at the same time to judge him " (Simon 45).

The more David grows morally and in experience, the more he becomes aware of what is in him, such as the gift of imagination and storytelling.

By way of going in for anything that might be on the cards, I call to my mind that Mr. Micawber, about this time, composed a petition to the House of Commons, praying for an alteration in the law of imprisonment for debt. I set down this remembrance here, because it is an instance to myself of the manner in which I fitted my old books to my altered life, and made stories for myself, out of the streets, and out of men and women; and how some main points of the character I shall unconsciously develop, I suppose, in writing my life, were gradually forming all this while. (Dickens 147)

One character is of special interest regarding David's artistic development, namely Mr. Dick, who is struggling with a writing process as well. In fact, it is also his Memorial he is trying to finish. "Dickens has given Mr. Dick part of his own name, and an obsession with the head of a king named Charles. Mr. Dick's Memorial is an autobiography he is struggling to write, within the autobiographical novel Dickens is writing" (Robert 114).

Robert claims that Betsey serves a therapeutic function for Mr. Dick, however, the role of writing as a form of self-therapy is more important. Art is what keeps Mr. Dick sane.

[...] though he cannot complete his Memorial, he can publish it in parts, King Charles's head and all, by using his manuscripts to make kites which sooner or later fly away, to land somewhere, perhaps to find readers, and so proclaim the story of Mr. Dick's wrongs. After Dick meets Dr. Strong, the kites become a way of spreading the learned doctor's fame far and wide. As autobiography and as bids for recognition they parody the publication of David Copperfield, in serial installments, the very enterprise of which they are a part. (114f.)

It is only at the end of the novel that our hero finally has found his position in society. David it seems has always been determined for authorship in a sense that makes it a naturalistic novel. Birth and thus nature have made him what he is: an aristocratic artist by blood.

Having some foundation for believing by this time, that nature and accident had made me an author, I pursued my vocation with confidence. Without such assurance I should certainly have left it alone, and bestowed my energy in some other endeavour. I should have tried to find out what nature and accident really had me, and to be that and nothing else. (Dickens 758)

Hara, however, claims that David's growth is only formal, rather than internalized. He further states that the novel is an "anti- Bildungsroman, if it is subsumed to a genre, because it depicts not the growth of the novelist's mind but rather its division and denial with its telos, the reign of order and discipline, repeatedly overturned by the internalized subversive power of apprentice " (14).

6.2. The undisciplined heart

David suffers significantly from “the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart“ (Dickens 570). The writer in him needs the Victorian order of stability and pattern and so does the heart. Consequently, for the artist in David in order to become who he is, he has to achieve natural goodness. He must find happiness and, in doing so, he will find artistic vocation. This, however, is closely connected to him disciplining his heart. Hardy argues that “once David sees that his heart is undisciplined, the path ahead is fairly smooth and straight [...]” (Hardy 130).

The Victorian desire for order also applies to David as an artist. Not only does he have to be a disciplined writer, but he also must be emotionally disciplined in order to be this writer. “David’s romantic nature needs to be brought under control before he can find happiness. Steerforth and Emily lack discipline, and this leads them to ruin, whereas Annie Strong saves herself by disciplining her heart“ (Hughes 31).

Throughout the novel, David constantly goes back and forth in the way he narrates his life story, and accordingly displays the personal growth of the protagonist. It is the inner life of this novel’s hero that is so remarkable for his artistic vocation. Needham further argues that had Dickens written the novel in the eighteenth century, he could have simply called it “The history of a Man of Feeling“ (Needham 85).

However, especially in the beginning of the novel when David has not yet found his way, the reader sees his undisciplined heart well. David falls in love with Emily at first, a good-hearted but undisciplined woman. Still a boy and undisciplined himself, he fails to see that she might not be the right choice for him and is far from an ideal woman, in contrast to the character Agnes. Another character the reader becomes familiar with is Dora, whom he marries. However, he eventually discovers that she was unfortunately also not a good choice for a wife because of her lack of discipline. She is not a great help to him, not fully able to contribute to the household and adores him in a way little girls adore their fathers.

Therefore, he often refers to her as his “child-wife“, as the next example shows.

The next time I sat down to write and regularly afterwards, she sat in her old place, with a spare bundle of pens at her side. Her triumph in this connection with my work, and her delight when I wanted a new pen– which I very often feigned to do– suggested to me a new way of pleasing my child-wife. (Dickens 530f.)

He soon realizes that “[...] that my own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora; and that if it had been disciplined, it never could have felt, when we were married, what it had felt in its secret experience“ (570). Experience and sorrow lead him to the ideal woman, Agnes, who ultimately teaches him that “I was to discipline my heart, and do my duty to her“ (686). Therefore one can argue that “only when he discovers his mature attraction to Agnes Wickfield does he attain a broader view of life and a recognition of past errors“ (Dunn 794). However, Paroissien argues that by doing so “David seems to be abandoning sexual passion for boring domesticity[...]” (372).

Nevertheless, Dora is often a doll, not the muse one could imagine for a writer. David knows she is less intelligent than him.

‘Then let me always stop and see you write.’

‘I am afraid that won’t improve their brightness, Dora.’

‘Yes, it will! Because, you clever boy, you’ll not forget me then, while you are full of silent fancies. Will you mind it, if I say something very, very silly?- more than usual?’ inquired Dora, peeping over my shoulder into my face. (Dickens 531)

Hardy writes that it might be rather difficult for the modern reader to understand that the lack of Dora’s housekeeping skills is used to characterize David’s patience (124).

Moreover, one has to realize that Dickens used neither a stereotypical artist nor a real Victorian concept of the artist. “Wilhelm Meister, before David Copperfield, and Will Ladislav or Hans Meyrick, after him, are quite close to the Bohemian stereotype which makes us expect the artist to be irrational, unstable, rootless, unhappy,

wounded. Dickens himself fits our idea of the wounded artist [...]“ much better (Hardy 124). However, “here again we are likely to extract the Victorian admiration for industry, placed in a curious collocation, and accept the less dateable part of the portrait [...]“ (124).

Further, a disciplined heart, or *the good heart* as Dickens and Victorian society believed, is a heart that “must have no ‘alloy of self’, must love humanity as well as persons. It must be self-reliant and possess constancy and fortitude in order to be strengthened, not conquered or merely softened, by adversity and sorrow. The good heart must learn the nature of ‘real truth and love’ in order to overcome ‘evil and misfortune in this world’” (Needham 86). Consequently, the heart is the symbol for David’s home as it represents him.

7 Morality in David Copperfield

7.1. The moral mind of David

Victorian morality is closely connected to concepts such as prudery, hypocrisy, sexual repression and rigid social control. However, Victorian morals also included the notion of self-help, which required that no matter how low one fell, it was their own responsibility to improve their situation, which explains why discipline was such a big virtue and why Dickens prioritized David becoming disciplined (see Mitchell 259).

Interestingly enough, “moral philosophy was in vogue earlier in the Victorian period, and throughout Dickens' career” (Rainsford 273). The most popular school of thought at Dickens' time was Utilitarianism, opposed to the school of Intuitionists. Utilitarianism can be considered a combination of the studies of philosophy, politics and economy. Rainsford best describes it as “rational assessment of society with an attempt to calculate the best steps to be taken for the promotion of the greatest good and/or happiness of the greatest number, pioneered by Jeremy Bentham in the early decades of the nineteenth century [...]” (273).

The most important moral virtue was work. Even David preaches the dignity of labour to the reader. Reading books, enjoying culture and even studying were only acceptable after work was completed. Every person and everything should be at best useful and promote charity, philanthropy and social welfare work. Another critical term for this time is “respectability”. It was used as a social distinction rather than one of class. However, for the middle and lower class, being “respectable” meant self-respect and public reputation. It further included having tidy clothes, good manners and a clean house (See Mitchell 262).

David is the ideal example of being respectable as he rarely complains about his troubles, is humble and is able to live independently.

Victorians argue that moral character, and not circumstance of birth, best defined both hero and gentleman. In David Copperfield, model male variety is notably absent in both David's idol, Steerforth, and his lowly memesis, Uriah Heep. But David himself, writes the story that, with Smile's subsequent moral

directive, exemplifies the nineteenth-century sense of a gentleman—moral motive force [...]. (Smiles qtd. in Murray 26)

Prominent themes in *David Copperfield* are education and religion since they inhibit moral identity. “Salem House is based upon a discipline whose actual, experienced form is fear. Family life, even more important than education or religion [...] shows public morality in private relationships. It allows issues to be taken up that in the Victorian novel must be suggested, symbolized, or even disguised. These are the issues of sexual attraction and emotional constraint” (Berman 40).

Sexuality does not appear to be a major theme in the novel at all. However, Bermann writes that this is only “the expression of tabu within convention. Charlotte Brontë does this with passionate descriptions of turbid streams and flowering mountains; and elsewhere Dickens amuses himself intellectually by substituting language for act. [...] David's childish initiations of sexuality, hatred, and belief are woven together [...]” (44).

The gloomy taint that was in the Murdstone blood darkened the Murdstone religion, which was austere and wrathful. I have thought, since, that its assuming that character was a necessary consequence of Mr. Murdstone's firmness, which wouldn't allow him to let anybody off from the utmost weight of the severest penalties he could find any excuse for. Be this as it may, I well remember the tremendous visages with which we used to go to church, and the changed air of the place. Again the dreaded Sunday comes round, and I file into the old pew first, like a guarded captive brought to a condemned service. Again, Miss Murdstone, in a black velvet gown, that looks as if it had been made out of a pall, follows close upon me. (Dickens pp. 18, 21f.)

Hager further states that *David Copperfield* can be read as a novel about the “institution of marriage and the miseries it causes” (132). She further claims that while it may initially appear to be a novel about traditional marriage, that is simply not the case. Rather, in *David Copperfield's* experience, marriage is not the solution to the challenges of life such as solitude, identity or selfhood. On the contrary, in the novel marriage is more likely to be the cause of these problems. Moreover, the fact that David works as an apprentice at Doctor's Commons serves as an example of the bad image of marriage as the people are only concerned with the legal aspects of

marriage there. Thus Hager would even go so far as to read the novel as a novel of adultery (see 132).

In the novel, the reader finds a list of moral and immoral characters, easily recognized and rather flat from this perspective. There is hardly a character to be found that is a nuanced combination of both; rather, the reader mostly encounters one or the other. His first impressions of his childhood surrounding naturally include Miss Pegotty, a motherly and good-hearted figure. His generosity towards her is shown well in the following example. Moreover, this excerpt demonstrates that Dickens did not necessarily make a connection between knowledge or intellect and a good heart, as Pegotty herself seems uncertain whether a crocodile is some kind of vegetable. However, having an unreliable first person narrator, it is not easy to trust the impression of a time long gone.

Pegotty and I were sitting one night by the parlour fire, alone. I had been reading to Pegotty about crocodiles. I must have read very perspicuously, or the poor soul must have been deeply interested, for I remember she had a cloudy impression, after I had done, that they were a sort of vegetable. I was tired of reading, and dead sleepy [...]. (Dickens 25)

At the beginning, our narrator seems to be blessed with an instinctive dislike of immoral people. The first time he is introduced to Mr. Blunderstone, he immediately feels that this person is not good in a moral sense, that the affectionate behaviour is not authentic. Furthermore, the reader sees a form of Oedipus Complex developing in young David that shows his growing realization of the world around him.

He patted me on the head; but somehow, I didn't like him or his deep voice, and I was jealous that his hand should touch my mother's in touching me-which it did. I put it away, as well as I could. (Dickens 27)

Mr. Blunderstone is immoral in the way he treats David's mother, psychologically abusing her in contrast to David's biological father, whom she often refers to as a gentleman. Additionally, he physically and emotionally abuses David and almost succeeds in ruining David's life. Through most of the novel it seems that Mr. Murdstone, like Uriah later in the novel, is the anti-good. An early scene

demonstrates this rather well, when Mr. Murdstone plays a trick on David, and David, still innocent and unreliable as a narrator recalls the following:

There was a more laughter at this, and Mr. Quinion said he would ring the bell for some more cherry in which to drink to Brooks. This he did; and when the wine came, he made me have a little, with a biscuit, and, before I drank it, stand up and say, 'Confusion to Brooks of Sheffield!' The toast was received with great applause, and such hearty laughter that it made me laugh too; at which they laughed more. In short, we quite enjoyed ourselves. (Dickens 31)

His biological mother lacks courage; she is a good-hearted and tender person. A childish quality lies within her, which shows that her heart is undisciplined. Nevertheless, she is a woman in Victorian society, meaning her hands were tied.

However, one of the most interesting characters David faces in the book is Steerforth. Steerforth is encountered by David with utmost respect, sometimes even like a fatherly figure.

In order to understand why Steerforth can be considered immoral in terms of the Victorian mind-set and why he nevertheless he remains one of the most intriguing characters of the novel, one must look at the initial dialogues between David and Steerforth.

'What money have you got, Copperfield?' he said, walking aside with me when he had disposed of my affair in these terms, I told him seven schillings.

'You had better give it to me to take care of,' he said, 'At least, you can, if you like. You needn't if you don't like'. I hastened to comply with his friendly suggestion, and opening Pegotty's purse, turned it upside down into his hand.

'Do you want me to spend anything now?' he asked me.

'No thank you.' I replied.

'You can if you like, you know,' said Steerforth. 'Say the word.'

'No, thank you; sir,' I repeated.

'Perhaps you'd like to spend a couple of schillings or so, in a bottle of currant wine by-and-by, up in the bedroom?' said Steerforth. 'You belong to my bedroom, I find.'

It certainly had not occurred to me before, but I said, 'Yes, I should like that.'

'Very good,' said Steerforth. 'You'll be glad to spend another schilling or so, in almond cakes, I dare say?'

I said, 'Yes, I should like that, too.' (Dickens 80)

Steerforth is both a protector and a bully to David. He soon tries to feminize his young friend by calling him "Daisy". There is a shift of power once Steerforth sets in. Steerforth lacks ambition: he is an upper class man and he is fully aware of that. (see Oulton 49)

However, Steerforth recognizes a lack of morality within him and it often seems as though David is not so attached to Steerforth, but instead the other way around. Thus, Steerforth very often seems attracted to David's innocence.

[...] 'I know that there is not a joy or sorrow, not an emotion, of such people, that can be indifferent to you. And I admire and love you for it, Steerforth, twenty times the more!'

He stopped and looking in my face, said, 'Daisy, I believe, you are in earnest, and are good. I wish we all were!' (Dickens 266)

According to Carolyn Oulton Steerforth seduces Emily because of her similarities to David.

David's dependence on Steerforth's continued interest itself suggests a power dynamic in which the younger figure is vulnerable to the fickle changes of heart associated with the decadent aristocrat. Echoing and extending the stereotype of the blameless girl and the roué who proves her undoing, Steerforth is irresistibly attracted to David's innocence. (Oulton 49)

There are some homoerotic elements in their friendship, but "Victorian commentators were themselves aware of the dangers of over-interpretation, and towards the end of the century, with the advent of sexology and such public scandals as the Oscar Wilde trial of 1895, the nature of such friendships did indeed come under more severe scrutiny" (Oulton 157).

Steerforth is a complex character and "as an indulged and self-indulgent, aristocratic dandy, Steerforth is simultaneously feminized and the embodiment of rapacious masculine sexuality and economic power" (Pykett 51).

However, it is only through meeting Steerforth that David eventually grows and “much of what he becomes is a reflection of or revulsion from these three [Steerforth, Traddles and Heep] contemporaries. All three exhibit parallel development [...]“ (Lary 123).

7.2. Morality in Great Expectations

Despite both Pip and David being orphans and sharing autobiographical elements, Pip's story is inherently different from David's. Pip, a blacksmith boy, does not strive to be an artist in any way; his main desire is to become a gentleman. Therefore this story presents another example of social mobility.

The notion of the gentleman is highly important for England at Dickens' times. However, Dickens' view on it was particularly interesting as the following quote explains.

Dickens who saw the gentleman from the outside came to appreciate both the centrality of the gentlemanly idea in Victorian culture and its underlying irony that however moralized; the concept depended for its existence upon exclusion on separating the gentleman from the non-gentleman. *Great Expectations* is the fruit of that understanding. (Majumdar 101)

Ostry further states that in *Great Expectations*, Dickens uses the "Cinderella motif", a fairy tale in order to show Pip's social and personal vision of himself (Ostry 17).

During the time *Great Expectations* was published, the concept of the gentleman began to be reconsidered. Formerly known as something only aristocrats could obtain, it became more and more important that a gentleman was "morally upright". Gilmour notes that exactly this is what Dickens reflects by using the fairy tale scheme in *Great Expectations* (Gilmoure qtd. in Ostry 17).

Berberich claims that the obsession with the gentleman, which could be found in Dickens' era, had its roots in society's belief that social advancement was possible. In the beginning, Pip has wrong conceptions of what makes a man a gentleman, namely thinking that simply "wealth, clothes, pompous behaviour" were the necessary ingredients, instead of inner values (35).

However, social status in no way equals high morals, as shown in the case of Miss Havisham. She is a rather dark and scary figure to David. In fact, there are even some goth elements in the depiction of her character.

'Who am I,' cried Miss Havisham, striking her stick upon the floor and flashing into wrath so suddenly that Estella glanced up at her in surprise, 'who am I, for God's sake, that I should be kind?' (Dickens 328)

Pip's main struggle throughout the story is his wrong vision of what constitutes a gentleman. Pip is a good boy and the fact that he helps Magwitch at the beginning of the book only shows that again Dickens has created a hero with an intrinsically good nature, despite his cruel upbringing by the hands of his sister who viewed him as a great burden to her. However, once his benefactor provides him with money, Pip neglects Joe, alongside other characters, although he is a very kind and loving person, possibly being the only friend Pip had in his younger years. This episode is followed by the realization that he can only become a true gentleman through moral growth. The climax here can be seen as the scene when Pip assists Magwitch in his escape and also, as the quote below shows, when he finally sees that morally correct actions make a man a gentleman, not just social wealth. Only when he overcomes this superficiality can he then be a full gentleman.

For now my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (Dickens 408)

8 Joyce the Modernist

James Joyce's *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* first appeared in 1914 in the magazine called "Egoist", and was highly polarizing as readers debated the novel's merit. Accordingly, when the publication of the book followed two years later, those who had read it divided themselves unequally into two groups: those who found it "extraordinarily dirty" and those who found "passages in this book comparable with the best in English literature" (qtd. in Johnson 7).

So while Ezra Pound, for instance, thought of the novel as "damn well written" and W.B. Yeats praised its author as "a man of genius" and the most remarkable new talent in Ireland to-day", others even questioned whether *A Portrait of the Artist as a young Man* could be considered literature at all, asking "Is it Art? We doubt it" (qtd. in 7).

A new century had begun and new values were being established. When Joyce started writing, the era could be "recognized as a time of much questioning of conceptions about sexuality and as a time of considerable visible change in the institution of marriage, in legal control over the position of women in society and in attitudes to sexual perversity" (Brown 4). Most importantly however is the fact that these changes are "most familiarly represented as years of transition from 'Victorian' sexual repression and ignorance to 'modern' enlightenment and toleration" (4).

Quite naturally, Joyce was familiar with Dickens' work. However, Joyce did not rely on old literary traditions. In fact he was influenced by what would soon become the *modernist movement*. T. S. Eliot for instance told Virginia Woolf that *Ulysses* "would be a landmark, because it destroyed the whole nineteenth century" (Woolf 57). Moreover, "Contemporary scholarship has tended to reinforce the notion that Joyce is rooted outside the tradition of the English novel by reading him in relation to a host of literary forbearers: Homer, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Rabelais, and the French Symbolists, to name a few" (Bolten 243). Especially the importance of Aristotle and his aesthetic theory will be soon become evident with a look at *Portrait of the Artist*.

Joyce and Dickens are both novelists of the city: Dublin has the same significance to Joyce as London has to Dickens. Both authors are highly detailed in their description of street names, architecture and the aspects of urban life, ranging from prostitutes to lawyers (see also Clayton 327). In this sense, they share a realistic notion of art, the depiction of urban reality as a favoured theme.

Nevertheless, times have changed and Joyce's and Dickens' views on art and morality clearly differ. A new century has begun: "Modernist artist at the beginning of the century were to large degree moved to this unprecedented freedom of confidence in stylistic experiment by what they saw as radically new ideas [...]" (Butler 67). Furthermore, prominent themes such as religion as depicted in *David Copperfield* are treated very differently by Joyce. Joyce was opposed to religion and most of philosophy that seemed to be part of the last century, which was certainly influenced by his fondness for Nietzsche (see Butler 67f.). This becomes further apparent when Stephen Daedalus is "fond of saying the Absolute is dead" (Butler 68). Wilde also shares this belief by saying: "It is enough that our fathers believed. They have exhausted the faith-faculty of the species. Their legacy to us is the scepticism of which they were afraid" (Wilde 1039f.).

9 Art in Joyce's Portrait

As the title already suggests, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a portrait of an artist. Moreover, it is a Künstlerroman. Consequently the role of art is more obvious than it was in Dickens' work. Furthermore, the novels differ very much in as how their heroes find their artistic voice and more importantly in what they consider the duty of an artist to be. While Dickens' David has to go back to his roots, Stephen has to free himself from his roots in order to become who he truly is. Joyce used an aesthetic plot structure, filled the novel with symbols and a naturalistic beginning.

According to Burgess *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has many symbols in it but "the fundamental one is of a creature trying to escape from the bondage of grosser elements, earth and water and learning painfully how to fly" (Burgess 45).

More importantly, it soon becomes obvious that Dickens and Joyce do not share the same views on artistry. Dickens' David has to discipline his heart in order to achieve natural goodness and thus become the artist he is supposed to be. Additionally, Dickens does consider the artist to be a social commentator: the purpose of art is very clear. In contrast to this, there is Joyce, whose character Stephen has to undergo metamorphosis of a certain kind – he has to free himself of all the bonds in order to find artistic vocation. Thus instead of finding home as David has to, Stephen must leave home.

Joyce's view on the artist can be best described best with a quote by Thomas Mann:

Literature is not a calling, it is a curse, believe me! When does one begin to feel the curse? Early, horribly early. At a time when one ought by rights still to be living in peace and harmony with God and the world. It begins by your feeling yourself apart, in a curious sort of opposition to the nice, regular people; there is a gulf of ironic sensibility, of knowledge, scepticism, disagreement, between you and the others; it grows deeper and deeper, you realize that you are alone; and from then on any approachment is simply hopeless! What a fate! (Mann 153f.)

Riquelme claims that Joyce was highly influenced by Pater's philosophy. "Pater's writings were central to English aestheticism of the 1800s, a movement whose

attitudes were identified in the public mind with the slogan 'art for art's sake'" (104). Also Pater's philosophy is evident in Wilde's work.

9.1. Stephen the Artist

The first draft of *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was called *Stephen Hero*.

In 1906 James Joyce wrote a letter to Grant Richards in which he tells him about the novel and speaks of it as "half-finished".

You suggest I should write a novel in some sense autobiographical. I have already written a thousand of pages of such a novel, as I think I told you, 914 pages to be accurate. I calculate that these twenty-five chapters, about half of the book, run into 150,000 words. But it is quite impossible for me in present circumstances to think the rest of the book much less to write it. (qtd. in Spencer 6)

So Joyce himself refers to the novel as "autobiographical", and the reader can see that his life is partially mirrored in the life of *Stephen Hero*. *Stephen Hero* "takes its form from the episodic, school and includes events seemingly because Joyce met their equivalents in real life. Stephen's family plays a larger part in *Stephen Hero* and yet Joyce became frustrated with the book early in his writing of it" (Johnson 12).

He then wrote a letter to his brother, Stanislaus Joyce:

I am afraid I cannot finish my novel for a long time. I am discontented with a great deal of it and yet how is Stephen's nature to be expressed otherwise? Eh? (qtd. in Johnson 12)

One can see at this point that James Joyce was not satisfied with *Stephen Hero* anymore and wanted to change something.

In order to make the novel easier to write he made it less autobiographical, and took a few steps to do so:

Most significantly he moved the narrative centre of consciousness from a wholly independent third-person narrator to one which exists between Stephen and the third-person narrator. Joyce's precise method represents a radical departure from previous modes of story-telling and profoundly affects the meaning of the novel. While there is still a third person narrator, that narrator presents Stephen's perceptions; the attitudes towards others and events are his; they are 'seen' by or 'focalized' by him. And because they are viewed by him, they reflect something about him. All go to the ends of characterizing the young artist-in-the making. (Johnson 12)

So while the first draft provides one with more details about the Joyce family, his goal was something else entirely.

Secondly, Joyce ruthlessly exercised a principle of selection. The general movement, Stephen grows up - remains, but each chapter displays its own pattern and movement. Unlike Stephen Hero, *Portrait* shows compressing selection of the salient details, arranging things to suit the aesthetic pattern of the novel, not to accord with the timing of his life history. In writing *Portrait*, Joyce selected; he arranged; he did not transcribe. (12)

Consequently, Joyce "[...] symbolized the new title, to the spiritual evolution of a serious writer who develops a new artistic creed as he revolts against those things in life that tied him down" (Jones 24f.).

9.2. Stephen's Evolution into an Artist

The name of the novel's main protagonist needs to be looked at very closely, since the name *Stephen Dedalus* suggests the main character's struggle between religion and his artistic vocation. Stephen Dedalus also continues to be present in Joyce's following novel *Ulysses*. However, the role of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* is "his role as part of the picture of universal modern man" (Jones 24).

On the one hand, the name Stephen has symbolic significance with regard to religion because the name refers to the first Christian Martyr who was persecuted for his convictions (see "Stephen Dedalus", Joyce from A- Z, 55).

In this case the parallel is that Stephen Dedalus faces some kind of persecution by his peers as you can see in this scene where he is teased by another school boy.

-Tell us Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?

Stephen answered;

-I do.

Wells turned to the other fellows and said:

-O, I say, here's a fellow says he kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed.

The other fellows stopped their game and turned round, laughing. Stephen blushed under their eyes and said;

-I do not.

Wells said:

-O, I say, here's a fellow says he doesn't kiss his mother before he goes to bed.
(Joyce 15)

On the other hand, Dedalus represents the mythical artificer who made feathered wings of wax. These wings made it possible for Dedalus and his son to escape imprisonment in the island of Crete. However, his son Icarus flew too close to the sun, causing the wax to melt and leading him to plunge into the Indian sea and drown. In this case, the parallel is that Stephen Dedalus uses art to escape his environment. His need to create helps him flee the repressive society he lived in that

included Irish nationalism and strict institutions such as the church or simply his family (see Burgess 55).

The symbolic parallel to Icarus is even directly mentioned in the novel when Stephen Dedalus refers to Dedalus in his diary “Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead” (Joyce 288).

So the name suggests the main character’s struggle and demonstrates that the “central conflict in nearly every other Bildungsroman is likewise personal in origin; the problem lies with the hero himself” (Burgess 22).

According to Burgess, *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has many symbols in it but “the fundamental one is of a creature trying to escape from the bondage of grosser elements, earth and water and learning painfully how to fly” (45).

This would be a direct parallel drawn between Stephen and Dedalus. Because Stephen Dedalus “reflects the dual characteristics of Icarus and Dedalus“, there is confusion regarding the interpretation of the novel (“Stephen Dedalus“, Joyce from A-Z ,107).

While some claim that Stephen Dedalus is Dedalus from Greek mythology and Stephen’s work of art is accordingly condemned to die, others claim that because of the autobiographical elements, the novel is Icarus and James Joyce is Dedalus (see Burgess 55).

This thesis follows the last interpretation, which claims that James Joyce is Dedalus and the novel is Icarus. However, as previously mentioned, there were more biographical elements in the first draft *Stephen Hero*, so this interpretation itself can be interpreted in many ways.

It is further necessary to explain the epigraph by OVID. The quote is taken from *Metamorphoses*. It says; “Et ignotas animus dimittit in artes“ and means “and he applies his mind to obscure arts“ (Belanger xv). This is an early hint on where Stephen Dedalus is going.

9.3. Stephen's Metamorphosis

In chapter one the reader sees a very naive and unknowing Stephen Dedalus, so naturally there is little metamorphosis in the first chapter. In general “the theme is the importance of childhood and early school-days at Clongowes Wood in forming the artist. Emphasizing the keen sense impressions of the growing child, the chapter provides background for later attitudes on family, religion and politics” (Jones 26).

Stephen's impressions of the world are restricted to very simple perceptions such as sounds and odour. Joyce “exploits simple lexical repetition, of the kind in *Dubliners* to suggest the unsophisticated mind (of a child)” (Wales 57).

The first chapter starts with his father telling young Stephen a story. This is a hint which also informs the reader about the “significance of sound and language to the artist even as a young child: the infant sense of wonder will transform all language, so strange at first, to ‘wonderful vocables’, as he both struggles to make sense of it and yet playfully manipulates it. To be a poet, an artist, is to be again as a child” (56).

This is why style is so important in this novel, because Stephen's “emotional development, are inextricably involved with his response to language. And in his use of rhetorical schemes Joyce highlights the significant episodes of Stephen's development, structurally and stylistically. The intensity of them severs to underline Stephen's own intensity of feeling” (57).

Stephen identifies with “Baby tackoo” and above all the novel starting with a story marks the importance of art in general.

Stephen is a very shy and sensitive boy, one that feels rather small and weak.

He felt his body small and weak amid the throng of players and his eyes were weak and watery. Rody Kickham was not like that: he would be the captain of the third line all the fellows said. (Joyce 8)

Moreover, Stephen feels that there is something about his family and their social status that makes him vulnerable if not different. In fact, this makes him even more of an outsider.

Their fathers were magistrates, the fellows said.

All the boys seemed to him very strange. They had all fathers and mothers and different clothes and voices. He longed to be at home and lay his head on his mother's lap. But he could not: and so he longed for the play and study and prayers to be over and to be in bed. (Joyce 13)

He felt small and weak. When would he be like the fellows in poetry and rhetoric? They had big voices and boots and they studied trigonometry. (Joyce 18)

Here we can see Stephen's early attempt at trying to fit in, however, he feels alienated already, as if he was not like the other boys. He is small and weak and would prefer lying in his mother's lap over going out and playing games like other boys. Additionally, Stephen is constantly teased by other colleagues for different reasons. In the following line, however, Athy, a girl from school tells him that he is not alone with his strange name.

You have a queer name Dedalus, and I have a queer name too, Athy. My name is the name of a town. Your name is like Latin. (Joyce 28)

These lines referring to Stephen's name are interesting because they show how he is perceived differently just because of something he cannot change as it is something that has been given to him. This could be seen as a symbol for his artistic vocation since it is also something inside of him and that he cannot change because he never asked for it. Secondly, this argument is even stronger when Athy says that his name is Latin because in this way there is a direct reference to Greek mythology and Dedalus, the Greek myth artificer.

The first chapter also provides information about Stephen attending "Clongowes Wood", a boarding school James Joyce also attended and which has been hugely important for Joyce's "growth to manhood" (Costello 74).

The school, like everything else, is run by religious men. So prayers, discipline and strictness play highly important roles. Stephen is confused with these absurd methods of discipline which are used by the Fathers of the school. For instance there

is the hitting scene where he gets punished wrongly by Father Dolan. This scene demonstrates well the cruelty, the pain and the cold atmosphere that must have been felt by a sensitive boy such as Stephen who was still trying to make sense of the world.

Stephen closed his eyes and held out in the air his trembling hand with the palm upwards. He felt the perfect studies touch it for a moment at the fingers to straighten it and then the swish of the sleeve of the soutane as the pandybat was lifted to strike. A hot burning stinging blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes. His whole body was shaking with fright, his arm was shaking and his crumpled burning livid hand shook like a loose leaf in the air. A cry sprang to his lips, a prayer to be let off. But though the tears scalded his eyes and his limbs quivered with pain and fright he held back the hot tears and the cry that scalded his throat. (Joyce 56)

However, the scene of corporal punishment is important because the young and still naive Stephen stands up against “the tyranny of Jesuit discipline” and goes to the principal (Jones 27).

He would go up and tell the rector that he had been wrongly punished. (Joyce 60)

This is the first time he actually acknowledges that something that was wrong has been done to him and that this is unfair. So after his colleagues encourage him, Stephen finally goes to the dean and tells him about the incident with Father Dolan. This is an interesting move of Stephen, who usually gives in, however, it is still a naive and childlike Stephen the reader encounters in chapter one.

In chapter two, Stephen spends the summer in his family's new house in Blackrock, a town close to Dublin. The following lines demonstrate Stephen's change in thinking:

In a vague way he understood that his father was in trouble and this was the reason why he himself had not been sent back to Clongowes. For some time he had felt the slight change in his house; and those changes in what he had deemed unchangeable were so many slight shocks to his boyish conception of the world. (Joyce 72)

Here we can see that he leaves part of his childhood behind. Generally, the “theme is Stephen’s change and growth through a variety of experiences: from childhood to adolescence, from Blackrock to Dublin, from Clongowes school to Belvedere” (Jones 28). Moreover, the financial decline of Stephen’s family forces him to see things in a less naive way and thus leave boyhood behind. This change can be interpreted in the following scene:

-Fudge! said Heron. Ask Dedalus. Who is the greatest writer, Dedalus?

Stephen noted the mockery in the question and said:

-Of prose do you mean?

-Yes

-Newman, I think.

-Is it Cardinal Newman? asked Boland.

-Yes, answered Stephen.

The grin broadened on Nash’s freckled face as he turned to Stephen and said:

-And do you like Cardinal Newman, Dedalus?

-O, many say that Newman has the best prose style, Heron said to the other in explanation, of course he’s not a poet. (Joyce 91)

What is so remarkable about this scene is the fact that Stephen actually notices the “mockery”. In the first chapter, when he was more naive he never knew what people were implying, but now he finally interprets the question correctly, and above all, expresses his opinion on art, specifically on literature.

In the second chapter, Stephen further realizes the alienation, the feeling that is for a reason unknown to him, separated from the others. There are already small hints directed to his artistic vocation.

That he was different from the others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how, but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. They would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made their tryst, perhaps at one of the gates or in some more secret place. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (Joyce 73)

Interestingly enough, in this chapter Stephen starts reading *The Count of Monte Christo* by Dumas. This is important because the novel starts with Stephen identifying with “Baby tuckoo” when Stephen was a child, and now that he is older, he identifies with *The Count*. So while “Baby Tuckoo” is a childish symbol, the reader now sees a grown-up and adventurous literary persona. This implies a certain kind of transformation, from boyhood into a more grown up Stephen Dedalus.

The reader also receives information about Stephen’s romantic ambitions for *Mercedes*, who is the love interest of *The Count* in the novel by Dumas. However, Stephen “conjures up adolescent fantasies of a beautiful Mercedes, whom he stalks in the suburbs of Blackrock” (Henke 61). However, there is “undoubtedly an ironic component, sometimes held in abeyance, sometimes, apparent even when Stephen seems most like the young Joyce” (Buckley 246).

He sees Emma, his love interest in real life, at a birthday party and later dedicates a poem to her. However, “in Stephen’s imagination, Emma becomes a nubile temptress-Mercedes in Dublin garb, Eve in nun’s habit. He interprets her gestures as ‘flattering, taunting, exciting his heart’” (61f.). Nonetheless, Stephen is not yet ready to face Emma.

Chapter two is a very rebellious one in regards to Stephen’s behaviour. It is the chapter of a slow awakening of his artistic nature, which still needs to be stabilized. Chapter three, however, is about sin, remorse and final redemption. Stephen feels increasingly worried about his sexual desires because religion has taught him that

this is sinful. However, the thought of prostitutes haunts him, and in this way he faces a constant struggle with his inner self. Stephen has not yet emancipated himself from the Catholic Church in this chapter. However, the need for him to cut these ties remains apparent.

As a result, when the rector of his school holds a speech about St. Xavier, the patron saint of the college, Stephen, paranoid and frightened, feels that every word is intended only for him.

Every word for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of god was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his disclosed conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin. Yes, the preacher was right. God's turn had come. Like a beast in its lair his soul had lain down in its own filth but the blasts of the angel's trumpet had droven him forth from the darkness of sin into the light. (Joyce 158)

It is in the third chapter that an old acquaintance, Father Allan, comes to the college in order to give a guest lecture about sin. The chapter itself is composed in large part of Father Allan's speech. The speech is mainly about the physical and psychological terror a sinner encounters in hell, driving Stephen almost insane, as one can see in the following passage.

His eyes were dimmed with tears and, looking humbly up to heaven, he wept for the innocence he had lost. When evening had fallen he left the house, and the first touch of the damp dark air and the noise of the door as it closed behind him made ache again his conscience, lulled by prayers and tears. Confess! Confess! It was not enough to lull the conscience with a tear and a prayer. He had to kneel before the minister of the Holy Ghost and tell over his hidden sins truly and repentantly. (Joyce 159)

In this scene Stephen seeks confession and finds it in a chapel. He is terrorized by the notion of sin regarding his own actions. In contrast to a continuing narrative, the style in chapter three is that of "stream of consciousness, made more poignant by the seemingly objective reporting of two sermons that are masterpieces of emotional oratory. This long epiphany, a revelation in almost the religious sense of the word, depicts a crisis in Stephen's life" (Jones 30).

Soon the reader encounters a completely different Stephen. The new Stephen is full of religious discipline that transforms his life. He starts praying every morning. Thus, in chapter four, Stephen feels that church can actually add meaning to his life.

But he would no longer disbelieve in the reality of love, since God himself had loved his individual soul with divine love from eternity. Gradually, as his soul was enriched with spiritual knowledge, he saw the whole world forming one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love. (Joyce 170)

At first Stephen is filled with pride, but upon further consideration, he is more attracted by disorder, chaos:

[he is] repelled by the passionless chilliness of the ordered life. During his walk home, he notices the disorder, misrule, and confusion that attract him more. This feeling is emphasized by finding his parents are out, looking for a new house since they have been evicted again. Struck by the pain and the weariness in life that are yet balanced by hope of better things, Stephen knows he has to reject priesthood. (Jones 32)

Regarding the language in this chapter, "the style is completely dominated by stream of consciousness, since the motivation for Stephen's decision is entirely in his own mind. This chapter, a masterpiece of interior monologue, is the high point of the book" (31f.) So it is then that Stephen realizes what goes on in his mind is more important than what happens externally. Stephen encounters various epiphanies throughout the novel that guide him to his artistic vocation. Epiphanies are very important for Symbolism and thus Modernism. One of these epiphanies is in the following scene, where Stephen, on his way home, sees a girl tiding the wave.

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips, where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and

girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face. (Joyce 195)

This epiphany shows Stephen that his life is not meant to be the one of a priest, but rather, the life of an artist. Stephen realizes that he is magically attracted to beauty, a popular theme among aestheticians.

In the last chapter of Joyce's novel, his hero, Stephen Dedalus, finally begins heading in the right direction and speaks in his own voice. Stephen is significantly more mature and able to confront himself with the reality of his own life.

So "[...] the theme is the careful development and resolving of all themes in the book as the artist meets conflicting forces both old (family, religion, politics) and new (aesthetics, science)" (Powell 33). In the end, Stephen leaves his fatherland and goes away to the bourgeoisie in Paris, where finally he can write about Ireland. Furthermore, Stephen knows his "race". He realizes he is truly meant to be an artist.

I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. (Joyce 288)

His family has abandoned him, in fact, his mother repeatedly complained about him and how university had supposedly turned him into a bad man. However, he finally managed to cut the ties to his family, releasing him of their negative influences, and enabling him to continue on his journey to becoming an artist.

In the last sentences, Stephen is referring to Dedalus, which is representative of him finally prioritizing his artistic soul. "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (Joyce 288). The language in chapter five is "a mixture of realism and consciousness, pointing toward Ulysses. Two long realistic episodes describing university life are separated by a highly imaginative account of the process of poetic creation" (Jones 34).

Additionally, the novel's style is constantly changing throughout the book, so that in the end, when Stephen finally finds his true vocation, he also finds his own language, which is demonstrated through the use of diary form. In this way, we have Stephen finally telling his story in his own words.

9.4 Irony in a Portrait

James Joyce's *Portrait* has ironic features, which is, considering his age when writing the novel, not very surprising.

Sharpless even claims that Stephen can be perceived as an anti-hero. He says that Stephen is a "callow and affected poseur, a farcial pedagogue, a morbidly sensitive pseudo artist, whose literary theory is weak Thomism, and whose literary practise a faded aestheticism" (Sharpess 320).

However, Stephen Dedalus can also be found in Joyce's novel *Ulysseus*, but there the reader encounters a different Stephen. According to Buckley, the ending of the novel presents the typical problem of many other Bildungsromane, namely the conflict of indecision and inconclusiveness. Moreover, James Joyce was "unsure of how to assess his own youth in terms of the fiction and perhaps aware that the sacerdotal symbolism was as much an evasion as an answer, Joyce carried his hero and surrogate over into Ulysseus where, having a number of characteristics to identify with, he could look at Stephen, somewhat changed in the transition, with a harder objectivity" (246).

10 Morality in Joyce's Portrait

10.1 Religion and Sexuality

For Joyce, what is “running clearly through his life are the two entwined threads of the history of the domination of Ireland by Britain, of Irish Catholics by British protestants and of those Irish Catholics themselves by the structures of the institutionalized Catholic Church” (Johnson 10). Further, Joyce’s “celebration of the heroic individual in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, oppressed not just by a shared history of violence or domination but by communal religious and political values [...]” (Nash 23).

In the first chapter of the novel one can also see the importance of religion for instance in the famous dinner scene as well as in the following scene.

And she did not like him to play with Eileen because Eileen was a protestant and when she was young she knew children that used to play with Protestants and the protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin.

Tower of Ivory, they used to say, *House of Gold!*

How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold? Who was right then? (Joyce 40)

This is the scene where Dante becomes furious because Stephen, unaware of Eileen’s religious background, tells everyone that he wishes to marry her. Here the reader can see the repressive nature religion has on Stephen and as mentioned before in the paper the political landscape of Ireland at that time. Stephen is told off only because he wants to marry a girl whom he simply thinks of as attractive.

In chapter four, Stephen models exemplary behaviour as a Catholic, which is soon met with satisfaction by the rector, who will then try to persuade him to enter into priesthood.

I sent for you today, Stephen, because I wished to speak to you on a very important subject.

Yes, sir.

Have you ever felt that you had a vocation? Stephen parted his lips to answer yes and then withheld the word suddenly. The priest waited for the answer and added:

I mean, have you ever felt within yourself, in your soul, a desire to join the order? Think. (Joyce 179)

This scene can be interpreted as ambiguous because on the one hand, what is obviously meant by the rector is the vocation for priesthood, while on the other hand, however, the reader soon becomes aware of Stephen's real vocation, namely as an artist.

But he would no longer disbelieve in the reality of love, since God himself had loved his individual soul with divine love from eternity. Gradually, as his soul was enriched with spiritual knowledge, he saw the whole world forming one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love. (Joyce 170)

The role of religion is of oppressive nature in the novel. Religion prevents Stephen from freeing himself and finding his vocation. Additionally, he is terrorized by what he is told to be sinful, namely frequenting prostitutes. Joyce did, in fact, also frequent prostitutes, instead of "entering a socially competitive marriage market. For Stephen such activities are not undertaken lightly, without awareness that they are sinful in the eyes of the church. Joyce too must have been conscious about this" (Brown 13f.).

Sexuality and marriage were fields still widely dominated by church. According to Brown, however, not everybody felt so comfortable with this and soon the ideas about marriage were challenged. Even Dickens wanted a change in marriage law.

“In Dickens’ *Hard Times* he provides in the eleventh chapter a call for reform in marriage law. This gives us indication of how important the issue was at that time. In 1857 three years after the publication of Dickens’ novel, the law was forced to change and judicial divorce was made possible in England for the first time” (Brown 12).

During Joyce’s early career different scientific and cultural discourses emerged and tried to explain various aspects of sexual behaviour. One important matter, which lead to much attention in this field were the trials of Oscar Wilde. At a time where homosexuality was considered “a woman trapped inside a man’s body” and the other way around, this trial was met with great attention. This theory about homosexuality was fed by a very important theory of that time; Psychoanalysis (Valente 213).

Not only did Freud become of interest to Joyce, Joyce also anticipated Foucault’s “repressive hypothesis“. Thus, according to Foucault, the Victorian prohibitions on sex were far from finalities in themselves (Valente 214f.). “Sexual desire did not simply fall prey to secrecy and prohibition; it was aroused by prohibition and exploited by secrecy as a renewable resource for social management. Joyce’s analysis of the late Victorian strictures on homosexuality proceeds on these lines” (214). Unlike Foucault, however, “Joyce found the seductive effects of sexual sanction to be an essential condition of eroticism itself “ (215).

James Joyce would soon write an essay titled “Oscar Wilde: The poet of Salome“. Joyce wrote it just as he was revising *Stephen Hero*. In this essay he writes that Oscar Wilde’s “notorious sexual errancy to be the ‘logical and inevitable product’ of the sexual ‘secrecy and restrictions’ endemic to British public schools (OCPW 150)” (215).

This insight is followed by his writing process:

The narrative structure of his more finished Bildungsroman follows up on this insight. The Clongowes smuggling scandal retroactively triggers Stephen's disavowed homoerotic impulses, transfiguring previously charged signifiers (,suck', ,hot' and ,cold cocks', Mooney's ,creamy sweets') into subliminal foretokens of the protagonist's maturing sexual ambivalence. (Valente 215)

10.2. Upbringing, Childhood and Ireland

The novel starts with Stephen's father reading little Stephen a story.

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nice little boy named baby tuckoo....

His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a fairy face.

He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived; she sold lemon platt. (Joyce 7)

The parallel that can be drawn between Stephen and Joyce is that Joyce's "earliest memory was of his father telling him a traditional folk story from rural Ireland." Moreover, "John Joyce used to take his son (Baby Tuckoo) out into the little park in front of the house in Brighton Square, and relate to him the tale of the magic cow which came down from the mountains and carried away little boys" (Costello 57). So the novel, from the very beginning, has autobiographical elements and thus moral implications in it.

James Joyce himself was born in 1882 into a middle-class Catholic family. The financial decline of the family was soon to follow. Additionally, the times James Joyce grew up in were the times of Ireland being ruled by the British and the general ruling of Roman Catholic domination. Naturally, the claims of Ireland often conflicted with the claims of the Roman Church. One interesting aspect here is the conflict between Ireland and the church when Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and fighter for Ireland's independence was found out to have an affair with a married woman. Most people in Ireland then condemned Charles and he lost control of the party and died within a year (see Johnson 8).

The incident with Charles Stewart Parnell is discussed in the famous dinner scene:

-O,he'll remember all this when he grows up, said Dante hotly- the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home.

-Let him remember too, cried Mr Casey to her from across the table, the language with which the priests and the priests pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave. Let him remember that too when he grows up.

-Son of bitches! cried Mr Dedalus. When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer. Lowlived dogs! And they look it! By christ, they look it!

-They behaved rightly, cried Dante. They obeyed their bishops and their priests. Honour to them!

-Well, it is perfectly dreadful to say that not even for one day in the year, said Mr Dedalus, can we be free from dreadful disputes!

Uncle Charles raised his hands mildly and said:

-Come now, come now, come now! Can we not have our opinions whatever they are and without this bad temper and this bad language? It is too bad surely.

Mrs Dedalus spoke to Dante in a low voice but Dante said loudly:

-I will not say nothing. I will defend my church and my religion when it is insulted and spit on by renegade catholics. (Joyce 37f.)

The dinner scene shows very well the constant conflict between Irish nationalism and church as an institution. There are many emotions in this scene and the opinion on Parnell is divided between those who believe that religion is before Ireland and those who believe that politics has little to do with God.

-God and religion before everything ! Dante cried.

God and religion before the world. (Joyce 43)

So the Ireland in the novel is the same that can be seen when one reads Joyce's autobiography. It is an Ireland that is "driven by terror, murder, mayhem and bad faith", as well as "economic difficulties" (Costello 59).

10.3. Clongowes Wood, Blackrock and Belvedere

The college Stephen Dedalus goes to is called Clongowes Wood. James Joyce also attended Clongowes Wood from September 1888 until June 1891. Clongowes Wood used to be an old castle which “had four towers, ivy creeping up the walls, and was as ancient as it was romantic” (Costello 72).

Interestingly enough, there was also a Father James Daly who in the novel is called Father Dolan. “Father Daly’ is mostly represented by James Joyce or rather by his autobiographers as a crude and uncultured man: Dolan: it was like the name of a woman who washed clothes” (75).

Clongowes Wood is very important for Stephen Dedalus because it has a huge effect on his transformation, process of becoming an artist. This impact, the influence of Clongowes Wood and Blackrock obvious as Costello writes:

The life of James Joyce may properly be said to begin here in the Castle of Clongowes Wood when the Rector, a bland and courtly humanist, turned him over to a black-soutaned father who guided him through the corridors to his {quarters}. This was an overstatement, but one which may reflect Joyce’s own view, for the school was nevertheless a new stage in the boy’s growth to manhood. (74)

Blackrock was crucial in Joyce’s development. From Clongowes he had brought an established taste for reading which he was now at leisure to develop on his own. Reading Dumas provided an escape, but was also a pointer to the future: that Joyce would work (like the Count of Monte Christo) to gain his way by silence, exile and cunning, in life as in literature. (75)

In this way we can see that for both of them, Stephen and James Joyce the time in Clongowes Wood and then Blackrock meant something very important for their character, for their artist persona so to say. They developed and Joyce like Stephen “became a sharper of his mind, giving it a direction towards the literary which would never be displaced. Here he began to write” (75).

11 The Victorian in Wilde

Like Dickens Wilde belongs to the Victorian age. Queen Victoria was the British monarch to rule the kingdom for all his life. “Culturally, Wilde was thoroughly of the age in which he lived. Bourgeois family man, secret lover, hack writer, Greek scholar, Irish expatriate, flâneur, criminal, his modes of identity are Victorian” (Varty 161).

However, Wilde was not a classic Victorian with regard to his writing. When *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published it caused quite a tumult not only in the literary scene but in society in general. “The The Daily Chronicle of London called the tale ‘unclean,’ ‘poisonous,’ and ‘heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction.’ The St. James Gazette deemed it ‘nasty’ and ‘nauseous,’ and suggested that the Treasury or the Vigilance Society might wish to prosecute the author “ (Ross 64). Some critics even claimed that the novel should be followed by a Criminal Investigation since writing such a novel can only be seen as crime. Therefore, it is not surprising that Wilde, in the course of four years, found himself convicted of “committing acts of gross indecency with certain male persons” (64).

Yet, according to Taghizadeh and Jeihouni (1445f.): “ Dorian Gray seems to have stabilized the name of Oscar Wilde in the history of the Victorian Novel”. Along with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is one of the prominent English Horror novels of the 19th century (see Taghizadeh and Jeihouni 1445f.). Although famous and well praised now, Wilde experienced the same sort of persistent criticism Joyce had to deal with. For instance, Athenaeum wrote:

So much may be said for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but no more, except, perhaps, that the author does not appear to be in earnest. For the rest, the book is unmanly, sickening, vicious (though not exactly what is called 'improper'), and tedious (qtd. in Beckson, 2005, p. 85).

An anonymous reviewer in the Scots Observer also claimed the novel could not be classified as art, that it is “immoral and Dorian the devil himself (Haslam 268).”

The following week (12 July), Wilde complained to the editor, W. E. Henley, that the “[...]review ‘confuse[s] the artist with his subject-matter,’ since an artist ‘has no ethical sympathies at all’ and regards [‘v]irtue and wickedness’ merely as ‘means [to] a certain artistic effec’ [...]” (Wilde qtd. in Haslam 268).

Also back in the mid-nineteenth century the novel was still associated with a lack of “seriousness and aversion to reality” (Killeen 79). The rise of rationalism and the rise of science put the Catholic Church under pressure. In fact, David Hume and of course the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* were of particular importance. The knowledge that humans could, in fact, not have been created by god and are thus not a special species, did shock the public. This further implied that if the soul was something that cannot be proved, the only philosophy left could be materialism. Furthermore, Zola and the naturalist movement took the realist tradition even further. This was achieved by depicting people of the lower class and their accents, dialects etc. fearlessly (See Killeen 80-82).

However, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has to be placed outside the literary traditions of the realist novel, since realism “made too great a distinction between reality and fantasy” (Killeen 83). Wilde’s novel includes the supernatural, which in itself has no place in the realist or naturalist tradition. “For Wilde, the novelist was an inventor, a creator, who could invest magic with conviction, and persuade us of anything if only she was good enough” (Killeen 83). In a letter to the editor of the Daily Chronicle in 1890, Wilde insisted that Dorian Gray was directed “against the crude brutality of plain realism’ governed by scientific naturalism” (Wilde qtd. in Killeen 83).

According to Taghizadeh and Jeihouni (1445f.) Wilde was aware that Dickensian realism was outdated and fiction had to search for a new meaning.

From its [fiction's] earliest days, it had become conscious that it was meant to be the voice of the silenced folks, and the appearance of such titans like William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens proved it. It could be claimed that the main aim of the English fiction in this era was not the realization of artistic sublimity but to show the asperity of life as experienced by the multitude. However, the abrupt ascendancy of aestheticism changed the commonplace attitude. [...] despite Wilde's unconventional ideas, he promotes a fascination with the diverse possibilities offered by both realism and aestheticism. To put it differently, he does not stop being a realist by remaining an aesthete. He revives the imaginative hunger of expectant readers for innovation by devising (or perfecting) a combination of both artistically and realistically visible.

Moreover, Wilde does not have a clear moral position on issues of right or wrong as most Victorian writers did. This serves as one of the examples of why he is associated with the Decadent movement. In his preface Weir describes the Decadence as “cultural decline, philosophical pessimism, scientific alarmism, physical degeneration, and immorality“ (xvi).

Weir further states that Wilde “leads writers into modernism more by percept than by example, as the example of his only novel shows. In *Dorian Gray* Wilde responds to the changes about him mainly at the moral level; in doing so he appears, sometimes, almost as dogmatic as his opponents: not the contrary (to use the language of William Blake); but the negation of Victorian consciousness” (69).

12 Art in The Picture of Dorian Gray

12.1. Bildung versus Pleasure?

There are many examples of nineteenth century writers whose heroes have to undergo moral growth in order to become who they really are. In all of them “the main characters undergo a process of initiation which leads them to greater self-awareness and helps them to establish a new personal and social identity“ (Kohl 161). Kohl states that Wilde dramatised the genre of the Bildungsroman by claiming that Wilde’s main theme was simply a variation of the “devil’s pact“ as can be found in Goethe’s Faust for instance. (161f.) He further claims that the “narrative dramatisation of the loss of identity is a kind of parody on the classic Bildungsroman and its ilk, in which the hero’s personality develops from selfish egotism to compassionate reality [...]” (161). However, one has to look at in which way Dorian’s career, in contrast to David and Stephen’s, fulfills the Bildungsroman pattern. David, Stephen and Dorian share the naivety at the beginning of each novel. However, in the case of Dorian this naive quality is more extreme since the reader does not meet a boy but a supposedly grown up man.

Wilde did, of course, read a lot and was influenced by other writers. When it comes to Dorian Gray it can be said that there is a connection to the dual personality that can be found in works such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. However, Schmidgall (xvi) writes that the European tradition of the Bildungsroman has its place in Wilde’s only novel:

Dorian at the outset is a charmingly naive tabula rasa. He is most unfortunate in his choice of teacher, yet proves a thoroughly educable student of Lord Henry’s cynicism and vanity. Also famously associated with the SOCRATIC or PLATONIC DIALOGUE [...] The lively, probing conversations between Lord Henry and Dorian, and later those in which Dorian dominates Basil, owe much to this ancient Greek narrative device. (xvi)

Killeen argues that Wilde was highly influenced by Joris-Karl Huysman’s *À rebours* which he read while on honeymoon. The novel is a spiritual Bildungsroman, which “traces the development of its hero from a childhood dominated by Jesuits into a grown up shattered by doubt and sexual and intellectual temptation” (85).

However, fortunately Wilde himself wrote about art and criticism, which makes it easier to access his work. In *The Critic as Artist* Wilde states that the “[t]he nineteenth century is a turning point in history, simply on account of two men, Darwin and Renan, the one the critic of the Book of Nature, the other the critic of the books of god.” (Wilde 1890, 205). However, Dorian himself is not interested in the materialistic doctrines of the “[...] *Darwinismus* movement in Germany [...]” but as an proponent of aestheticism thinks that “[...] no theory of life seemed to him to be of any importance compared with life itself” (Wilde 129).

However, Wilde showed a certain “Intolerance of the naturalist schools of art, which is nevertheless coupled with an equally powerful respect for Darwin’s work, governs Wilde’s yearnings for metaphysical and spiritual freedom” (Varty 165). Furthermore, Wilde called Zola an “aesthetic opponent while being careful to dismiss the widespread moral outrage against him, with which he has no sympathy at all. [...] In the ‘Experimental Novel’ Zola proposes an exact analogy between the scientist and the novelist” (Hannon 187). Wilde did not approve of Zola’s artistic theory and turned to the aestheticians.

With regard to the plot the novel starts with Basil and Lord Henry chatting about the portrait of Dorian Gray. Both agree Dorian is of extraordinary beauty and according to the description of his beauty in the novel, Dorian is an outsider to the world. His beauty marking social isolation, so the reader enters an almost naturalist setting. Soon Basil and Lord Henry make Dorian the personification of art. He is a muse to Basil and the source of all his inspiration. This is when the story begins.

‘He is all my art to me now,’ said the painter, gravely. ‘I sometimes think, Harry, that there are only two eras of any importance in the world’s history. The first is the appearance of a new personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antonius was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will someday 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. I won’t tell you that I am dissatisfied with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that Art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done since I met Dorian Gray, is good work, is the best work of my life.’ (Wilde 9)

The moral growth that Dorian goes through is very different from that of our previous heroes. The fatality of his ending depicts the failure of aestheticism and will be

tracked in more detail in the chapter focusing on morality. One has to admit nevertheless, that “extreme aestheticism cannot be lived, but neither can one live solely in reality” (Upchurch, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Overview*). However, “Wilde also scrutinizes the principle of aesthetic determinism in his fictions. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a sustained disquisition on the competing claims of Art and Nature, the plot notoriously blurring the distinctions between them. The man and the portrait are co-extensive, the portrait yielding Dorian the means for self-understanding [...]” (Varty 165).

12.2. The Aesthetic experiment

“The Artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim. The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material impression of beautiful things.” (Wilde, Preface xiii)

This quote, taken from the preface of *Dorian Gray* already tells us much about the notion of art within the novel. There is a realistic approach to it, the artist should be concerned with depicting reality, thus a realist notion very close to Dickens. However, then there is the notion of aestheticism in which he sees the artist as a translator, a medium between nature and the written word, concerned with the beauty of things.

All art is quite useless. (Wilde, Preface Xiv)

Wilde was an advocate of the aesthetic movement. Roden argues that he “was not the first to insist on art’s autonomy, but he has frequently been seen championing the idea” (Roden pp. 99f.). Kohl writes that the novel is “typical of the transition between Victorianism and the Modern age [...]” (174). *Dorian Gray* marks the departure from realism and into aesthetic and more psychological literature. He was opposed to Zola’s maxims and against any sort of moral campaigning through literature. (see also 166). Moreover, “the increasing internalisation of reality [...] anticipates the ‘stream of consciousness’ technique used later by James Joyce or Virginia Woolf. Loss of identity and isolation from reality are, of course, among the most common themes of modern literature (161)“.

Thus, the only reason one should create is for beauty. This is a recurrent theme that can be followed throughout the novel.

‘I hate them for it,’ cried Hallward. ‘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.’ (Wilde 11)

At first, Dorian serves as a muse, “my life as an artist depends on him. Mind, Harry, I trust you “ (Wilde 13). He is fascinating to both the artist, Basil, and Lord Henry, the aesthete. He is said to be the ideal man, young and beautiful. However, when Lord Henry seduces him, he moves from a realist sphere to a more aesthetic sphere. Consequently, he himself becomes a work of art whereas the picture presents his soul and absorbs his sins. It is also the picture which grows old while he stays young forever (Upchurch, David). Kohl mentions the *Doppelgänger* theme, meaning that Dorian is split apart into two halves which act independently and “yet are linked together in a fantastic manner; the one is physical, the other spiritual, and the link is the changing portrait“ (Kohl 150).

According to Lord Henry one is either a creator or art himself. Consequently art is something that a person can *be*. It is not a concept of creating things such as pictures, poems etc., it is creation itself.

Good artists exist simply in what they make, and consequently are perfectly uninteresting in what they are. A great poet, a really great poet, is the most unpoetical of all creatures. But inferior poets are absolutely fascinating. The worse their rhymes are, the more picturesque they look. The mere fact of having published a second-rate sonnet makes a man irresistible. He lives the poetry that he cannot write. The others write the poetry that they dare not realise. (Wilde 54f.)

Dorian falls in love with Sibyl Vane, an actress who immediately is very dear to him. He loves her art and wants Lord Henry and Basil to watch her play. Before his vow he saw Sibyl in the best light only, but when the three of them watch her that one particular night, she fails to be the talented actress he had in mind. Upchurch even claims that Dorian never was in love with Sibyl but only her art: “When Sybil falls in love with him, she loses her ability to act well. Unlike Dorian, she prefers the real to the artificial. As Dorian is now himself art, he cannot understand Sibyl’s inability to perform well, and loses his interest in her “ (Upchurch, The Picture of Dorian Gray: Overview).

'She has entirely altered. Last night she was a great artist. This evening she is merely a commonplace, mediocre actress.'

„Don't talk like that about any one you love, Dorian. Love is a more wonderful thing than art.' (Wilde 82)

Or when Dorian finally tells her:

“Without your art you are nothing... What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face.” (Wilde 85)

“For Sibyl the reality of art changes to illusion without credibility the moment she is confronted with real life in the form of her love.” (Kohl 151) She commits suicide and consequently Dorian's portrait alters around the mouth- the first sign of his severe sin. Dorian has yet “to recognise that even though art and reality can be kept apart during aesthetic contemplation, the separation becomes illusory when art leads to real-life action, as it does with his engagement to Sibyl“ (151).

When Sibyl commits suicide she returns to the sphere of art and thus to the object Dorian felt attractive to.

„The last night she played- the night you saw her- she acted badly because she had known the reality of love. When she knew its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died. She passed again into the sphere of art. There is something of the martyr about her. Her death has all the pathetic uselessness of martyrdom, all its wasted beauty.' (Wilde 106)

It is important to mention that a realist/naturalistic author such as Dickens would have used scenes like this for social criticism. However, after Sibyl's death Dorian is sent a book by Lord Henry. This is very important since it marks a case of intertextuality and it is a book by French Symbolists, who were very fond of the aesthetic movement.

It was a novel without plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realise in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely

called virtue, as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin.
(Wilde 121)

This particular book is very important to Wilde's era. In fact, it was written by Huysman and is called *A Rebours*. The novel 's "[...] enormous influence surfaced a few years later in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde admitted that the 'yellow book' that had such a pernicious effect on Dorian Gray in his novel was based on Huysman's *A Rebours*" (Pearce 176).

As mentioned above it was the book which Wilde had read on his honeymoon and the celebrated decadence in the novel influenced him when he was constructing Dorian. In fact, the novel has " almost all the elements ascribed to decadence: narcissistic egotism, a provocative scorn for oral and social conventions, preference for the artificial as opposed to the natural, pleasure-seeking [...]" (Kohl 169).

Furthermore, Dorian is a dandy, an offspring of decadence which itself can be seen as a rebellion against Victorian values. "The history of dandyism is inseparable from that of aestheticism. Aestheticism was a protest against Victorian utility, rationality, and realism, or the reduction of human relations to utility and the market and the representation of this bourgeois literature" (qtd. in Butler 6f.). Butler further argues that Wilde's decadence was pure rebellion in the way that "his refusal to conform on questions of dress and manners, his deliberate exhibitionism and the flaunting of his carefully cultivated difference, were taken as direct insults by the Victorian masses" (7).

"The dandy aesthetes of the fin-de-siecle period above all loved their senses and cultivated the rarest of sensibilities; they made the perfection of the pose of exquisiteness their greatest aim and they directed all their languid energies towards nurturing a cult of aesthetic response [...]" (Calloway 34).

13 Hedonism and the Youth Cult

Critics claimed that Wilde's success is owed to the elements of a "supernatural fairy-tale", a "magic portrait" or just the uniting of "timeless fear of old age, with the dream of lasting youth and beauty" or to simply "defy the ravages of time without ever changing, to live without growing old, to enjoy without having to bear the marks of one's dissolution" (Kohl 139). Lord Henry will call this lust for life *new hedonism* but what exactly is this? (Wilde 21). According to Lord Henry the definition is as follows:

'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 or the vulgar. These are sickly aims, the false ideas, 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 country wants. You might be its visible symbol. With your personality there is nothing you could not do. The world belongs to you for a season.' (Wilde 21)

Kohl claims: "The new hedonism, then, is to be an ethical alternative to puritanism. It is based on the Epicurean and Cyrenaic schools of philosophy, in which pleasure (ἡδονή) is the only good in life." (158) For Kohl the idea of hedonism is a direct response to Victorianism:

The weakening of religious faith, scepticism towards an increasingly scientific cosmology, rapid changes in the environment due to technology and industrialisation- all this contributed to an intellectual climate in which the old orders began to crumble, while the new ones had not yet established themselves. The 'new hedonism' was a response to this upheaval [...] (173)

Lord Henry seduces the naive soul of Dorian into his aesthetic philosophy. This philosophy is called *new Hedonism* and according to Lord Henry is "what our century wants" (Wilde 21).

This philosophy believes in pleasure as the ultimate goal in life. Pleasure in return can be found in many things but most of all it can be found in beauty. Duggan claims the theory to be part of “aestheticism advocated whatever behaviour was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one’s life, in the tradition of hedonism” (61).

‘To me beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible [...] When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you, or you have to content yourself with those mean triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats.’ (Wilde 21)

‘I can sympathise with everything, except suffering,’ said Lord Henry, shrugging his shoulders. ‘I cannot sympathise with that. It is too ugly, too horrible, too distressing. There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain. One should sympathise with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life. The less said about life’s sores the better.’ (Wilde 38)

Lesjak argues that Wilde tried “to create a new economy of pleasure based on the paradoxical notion of what I will call the labours of hedonism; the notion, that is to say, that pleasure is something to be worked at and worked for” (179f.). Moreover, in a sense, Lord Henry, implies that Victorianism and its occupation with morality, work and the constant strive to make something useful, has come to an end.

‘I don’t desire to change anything in England except the weather,’ he answered. ‘I am quite content with philosophic contemplation. But as the nineteenth century has gone bankrupt through an over- expenditure of sympathy, I would suggest that we should appeal to Science to put us straight. The advantage of the emotions is that they lead us astray, and the advantage of Science is that it is not emotional.’ (Wilde 39)

Consequently “Wilde fully embraces the multitude offerings of modernity. His attention to consumption and the seduction of commodity fetishism provide a greater sense of the degree to which pleasures have been developed by capitalism [...]” (Lesjak 181).

The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. (Wilde 23)

He soon makes the infamous wish by saying; “If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that- for that- I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!” (Wilde 24).

With the principle of hedonism comes another obsession, the obsession with youth. This will be further referred to as the “youth cult“. Lord Henry says that the world belongs to beautiful people for a season, meaning that the world only belongs to the young.

The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth. (Wilde 22)

This wish for eternal youth is a classic idea of literature. Barrie also created a hero, whose wish was eternal youth and the negation of responsibility.

Blackford claims that the wish for eternal youth was due to the rise of three very important fields in Victorianism. First, there is *child studies*, a field that has been mentioned already in the chapter about Dickens. Second, there was the rising interest in sexology and third the Greek studies (see 179). These studies further provide:

[...] an opportunity to understand how Wilde and Barrie offer case studies of youths conceived as psychologically queer and almost passively trapped in infantile worlds of pure hedonism. Both Dorian and Peter take vows of eternal youth and attract the longings and projective desires of all who see them; they become seductive forces luring others into their hedonistic worlds, not because they have pernicious motivations but because they are queer, precivilized objects for others to play with in their games of pursuing pleasure. (179).

14 The moral case of Dorian Gray

Oh! It is absurd to have a hard and fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read. –Algernon to Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Wilde 10)

As Wilde did not believe in Dickens' maxim that art should always have a moral implication, a clear moral message in Wilde's novel is hard to find. Wilde's maxim was that there "is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all. (Wilde xiii)"

What one does find, however, is a moral decline. The downfall of our hero also marks the end of an aesthetic illusion. In this way Dorian's "[...] great crime is that he seeks to arrest his own development, to stifle change or growth. And Lord Henry's crime is to encourage him." Moreover, "[...] the correlative aesthetic crime is that Basil's portrait of Dorian, having represented an ideal form, turns into a grossly realist work, which directly imitates life, shrunken here to the sordid world of Dorian's conventional crimes and conscience (Varty 173)." But who is this devil that leads our hero down to immorality?

14.1. Lord Henry as Mephisto?

To begin with, the problem with Dorian is that he "has no overall concept of moral order and his view of the world does not even contain the hope of finding one, nothing remains for him but to try to intensify his life both quantitatively, through a maximum of 'pleasurable emotions', and qualitatively through transforming each moment into an experience of passion or aesthetic satisfaction (Kohl 160)."

In Wilde's only novel morality should not be seen in terms of Christianity. Wilde himself did have an aesthetic interest in religion "but it is quite evident that he enjoyed no deep spiritual experience, and that the doctrines, either of the Church or

the mystics, meant comparatively little to him (Woodcock 75).“ Wilde had a certain dislike for people who claim to be saints and thus have the duty to be moral. Wilde’s hedonist approach states that people who follow the philosophy of Lord Henry “generally do less harm in the world than the virtuous who resist ‘sin’ and have to make up for their repressions by ‘legitimate’ forms of compensation (Woodcock 80)”.

I never came across anyone in whom the moral sense was dominant who was not heartless, cruel, vindictive, log-stupid, and entirely lacking in the smallest sense of humanity. Moral people, as they are termed, are simple beasts. I would sooner have fifty unnatural vices than one unnatural virtue. (Wilde qtd. in Woodcock 82)

In his plays Wilde often made fun of philanthropists who would pretend to care about the poor while still retaining their own social advantages. (See also Woodcock 83) So charity often is just a form of hypocrisy.

When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy. (Wilde 75)

Lord Henry also often cynically remarks on moralists. So in the first passage he claims that the only people who actually can afford to be moral are the rich, the souls of the others starve and thus everything they do is hypocrisy.

Of course they are charitable. They feed the hungry, and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret terror of religion- these are the two things that govern us. (Wilde 17)

There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral- immoral from the scientific point of view. (Wilde 16)

Good-bye, Lord Henry; you are quite delightful, and dreadfully demoralising. (Wilde 41)

From the very start of the novel Basil does not want Lord Henry to meet Dorian. He feels that he could be demoralising for Dorian and in this way destroy his “ideal” Dorian. Yet it is not from the very beginning that Lord Henry’s function as Mephisto becomes clear. Of course, he tells Dorian all about his concept of “new hedonism” and seduces him into an aestheticization of life. “Cynically, he recommends to Dorian

a life of sensual pleasure, while he himself enjoys looking on from a safe intellectual distance. Herein lies the mephistophelean aspect of his character (Kohl 156).“

However, it is only when Dorian is guilty of causing Sibyl's suicide that Lord Henry's character is unmasked. After Sibyl's poor performance Dorian accuses her of being nothing without her art, after that he is troubled by what he has said to her. He writes a letter to Sybil and asks for her forgiveness, calling himself mad. His consciousness is still perfectly intact. When he meets Lord Henry, however, he talks Dorian out of any scruple and turns the death of Sibyl into an “aesthetic spectacle“ and frees Dorian of any sort of responsibility. This is when the mephistophelean function of Lord Henry becomes obvious (see also Kohl 152).

Basil, however, is clearly a morally intact figure. Despite his immoral affection for Dorian, which will further be discussed in the next chapter, he can be seen as the responsible path Dorian should have gone. Kohl perfectly describes Basil when he states:

In his view of life and art, Basil Hallward is a moralist and an idealist, whose values are essentially middle class, consisting as they do of such criteria as 'honour'...'goodness'...'purity'...and 'a clean name'...'a fair record'. This man, who wears a Waterbury watch and turns down a lucrative commission for a portrait because the man concerned leads a 'dreadful' life, regards his artistic talent not as the status symbol of a cultural elite, but rather as a fatal stigma that threatens to isolate him from his fellow men; fear of social ostracism causes him to embrace a certain degree of conformity. (Kohl 154)

Nevertheless, “When Dorian finally murders Basil, he finally gives up the role of the mere spectator, Dorian's perverse flirtation with his own moral decline now sinks into common criminality. After the painter's death, art is no longer the prime orientation of Dorian's life, for it is no longer possible for him to aestheticise evil” (Kohl 152).

Dorian fails to succeed because he does not allow himself to grow. His hedonistic approach separates life from art instead of combining them. In his individualism he is looking for the wrong things to guide him through such as Lord Henry. Wilde's own approach to hedonism was more spiritual.

What a man really has is what is in him. What is outside of him should be a matter of no importance. With the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy individualism. Nobody will waste his time in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all." (Wilde qtd. in Woodcock 153)

Or as Lord Henry puts it: "It feels instinctively that manners are of more importance than morals, and, in its opinion, the highest respectability is of much less value than the possession of a good *chef*" (138).

Dorian, much like Wilde himself is a Dandy and thus his energy is directed "towards nurturing a cult of aesthetic response that begins beyond ordinary notions of taste, that lies beyond mere considerations of fashion, and operates quite outside the dictates of all conventional canons of morality (Calloway 34)." Dorian does not have to be responsible or at least he decides not to be, also he has got no vocation such as Stephen. A dandy, being a new phenomenon in the late Victorian age, does not have to worry about morality since his interests lie elsewhere:

The Aesthetes of the Wilde circle were fascinated, naturally, by what they knew as the Brummel era, not least perhaps because those all-too-earnest mid-Victorians of the generations between 1830s and the 1880s had disapproved so strongly of the Dandy's languid self-centredness and their amoral, hot-house culture. With their insistence upon the importance of 'the pose' ultimately outweighing even their concern for the niceties of dress and deportment, the dandies had made an art of their lives, and this the Aesthetes found irresistible. (Calloway 36)

As a Dandy, Dorian has no responsibility such as David, nor does he have a calling such as Stephen. Still, Dorian's problem is not only a moral flaw it is the separation of life and art, the impossibility to combine both that makes maturity impossible.

Dorian's suicide is a logical outcome. It unmask his salving of conscience by aesthetic philosophy as mere self-deception, and by removing the fantastic symbolism of the portrait. It restores the unity and totality of the individual. The fact that this unification can only come about through death represents a deeply pessimistic view of the problem of human identity- a view that has been profound of significance for the twentieth - century novel. (Kohl 152)

15 A Love that dare not to speak its name

What if someone wrote a novel about homosexuality and no body came?
(Cohen 75)

To start with, this paper will shortly note that with regard to the depiction of women, there is rarely a difference to Dickens and Joyce. The women in the novel are shallow and for aesthetic “use” only. So in “Wilde’s work women embody the most conservative norms of society” (White 158). According to Lord Henry they are even to look at only.

“My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly.” (Wilde 46)

Furthermore, Lord Henry does not believe in the concept of monogamy. Something Dickens would not even have dreamt of saying. This becomes very clear when he says: “[...] the people who love once in their lives are really shallow people. What they call their loyalty, and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy of custom or their lack of imagination. Faithfulness is to the emotional life what consistency is to the life of the intellect- simply a confession of failures. Faithfulness! I must analyse it some day.”

Yet there is, in fact, a love like plot in the novel that caused a moral outrage in Victorian society and has kept the audience turning pages for ages. It is the love Basil feels for Dorian. Thus Wilde is said to be “one of the earliest examples of male homoerotic pornography whose encoding of sexual practices between men moves athwart those ideologies that sought to naturalize male heterosexuality” (Cohen 71).

Moreover, “Beyond plays and bons mots, Oscar Wilde may be best remembered for the two years he spent in prison for “gross indecency” - sex with men. Few people know about Wilde’s female inamoratas or his wife. (Baten, Wilde’s women: Constance and inconstancy).

Before the homoerotic aspect is discussed one needs to be clear about the definition of “homosexual” as the term homosexual only just had emerged in this century.

In Britain during the late nineteenth century, ‘the homosexual’ was emerging as a category for organizing male experience alongside other newly recognizable ‘types’ (‘the adolescent,’ ‘the criminal,’ ‘the delinquent,’ ‘the prostitute,’ ‘the housewife’ etc.). Coined by the Swiss physician Karoly Benkert in 1869 and popularized in the writings of the German sexologists, the word (along with its ‘normal’ sibling, ‘the heterosexual’) entered English usage when Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* was translated during the 1890s. (Cohen 69)

Thus at this time the “homosexual subject” emerged. There have been books about homosexual love before, of course, but no book by a popular author that clearly revolved around homosexual desire. This was not because for centuries all the authors, be it male or female, only had had heterosexual desires, it was because: “[...] late Victorian society simply did not allow for a more explicit exploration of the love whose name could not be spoken, much less elevated to a central role in a novel” (Hattersley 10). Consequently, “Dorian’s affairs are all with women, starting with the actress Sibyl Vane, for whom he professes his undying love - before it promptly dies; and on he moves to a series of affairs of increasingly short duration with decreasingly respectable women” (10).

There is no love confession in the novel. Basil never tells Dorian that he loves him, neither does Lord Henry. It is their way of talking about him as “Adonis”, “a face made out of ivory and rose” that marks their intentions (Wilde 3).

In this way the “novel is not explicit, but the obsession Basil Hallward and Lord Henry have with Dorian, the gaps and silences around many of Dorian’s exploits, the trail of ruined young men, the circuit of places and even the choice of an ancient Greek name for the protagonist [...] make homoerotic desire a main theme of the novel” (Cook 104).

As already mentioned *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel with gothic elements. Usually, Gothic novels are said to be “homophobic because their subject by definition is heterosexuality. Nevertheless, Wilde manages to promote same-sex-partnerships in this work, even with its Gothic elements (Horan 88).” Interestingly enough, “Wilde presents Basil as the most obviously homosexual character and the most morally sensitive as well, thus countering the stereotyped notion that homosexuality is decadent” (88).

According to Horan Basil, Lord Henry and Dorian present different aspects of homosexuality.

[...] Lord Henry represents the decadence associated with homosexuality, whereas Basil exemplifies the repressed homosexual who fears that he will be punished by society for his homosexual desires. In *Dorian Gray*, Wilde wrestles with these conventional perceptions of homosexuality. His characterization of Dorian illustrates his own ambivalence about his homosexuality. Like Wilde, Dorian is torn between his desire to be part of the decadent underbelly of London society and his need to be recognized as a genteel member of London’s social circles [...] (88)

Wilde himself was “euphemistic about his sexual orientation, dressing it up as a Greek ideal love when the other man concerned was of his own class or higher and barely recognizing the fact that he had sex with young lower-class boys” (White 158).

It was only when he had an affair with younger Alfred Douglas that his reputation would suffer drastically and the scandal would be perfect. “During the late spring of 1895, the trials of Oscar Wilde erupted from the pages of every London newspaper. The sex scandal involving one of London’s most renowned popular playwrights as well as one of the most eccentric members of the British aristocracy titillated popular opinion” (Cohen 68).

Since the characters of the scandal were set, containing a neurotic and outraged father and innocent young man who would be seduced by an immoral older man it was soon clear where the trials were headed at. At first it was Wilde who sued his lover’s father for slander but he soon found himself being accused of sodomy. “Wilde was portrayed as the corrupting artist who dragged young Alfred Douglas away from the realm of the paternal solicitude down into the London underworld, where

homosexuality, blackmail, and male prostitution sucked the lifeblood of morality from his tender body. How could such a story have failed to engage the public imagination?" (Cohen 68f.).

However, Arty claims that in his trials "In Wilde's trials in 1895, his perceived position as both spokesperson for art and example of sexual deviant resulted in a remarkable elision in the public domain of art and sexuality and thus in the creation of a new category of aestheticism" (Varty 123).

Wilde's trials confronted the public with an art that refused to say nothing but the truth, that refused to take its interrogation solemnly, and a sexuality outside of the rational demands of production. Thus aestheticism came to mean the irrational in both productive (art) and reproductive (sexuality) realms: an indication of the art world's divorce from middle-class life (123).

The link to Pater's philosophy "art for arts sake" and sexuality is evident. "In the art world, Wilde's homosexuality, contrary to mainstream notions of 'productive' or 'purposive' sexuality, likewise contributed to his particular formulation of aestheticism, including his explicit rejections of Victorian notions of the natural (as in 'Nature imitates art'), of the purposive (as in his stance of idleness), and of the productive (as in 'art for art's sake')" (123).

16 Conclusion

Trauma and loss are triggers for self-construction in an artist's novel. There is a crisis of the self and rewriting one's identity often serves as therapy. A therapy Dickens and Joyce clearly used. However, they approached it differently.

David needs to discipline his heart to find home. He has finally reached maturity when his heart is disciplined. In this way, he needs stability and order to follow his artistic vocation. David cherishes the Victorian values such as discipline and needs them as a guidance for his work life as well as love life.

David Copperfield is a realist novel, which focuses on the individual and society, the depiction of working class, the cruelties of child labour, and an individual hero who must find his adequate position in society. However, Dickens' position on morality is very clear: it is a humanist position, where the lines between good and bad are easily drawn. Moreover, moral responsibility is of huge importance. In fact, the theme of charity can be found throughout the novel. In this way, art had to have a moral implication to matter. Dickens himself was an advocate for the mistreated and as a social commentator his moral responsibility as artist was to teach. Art did not exist for its own purpose, it had to have a responsibility. Dickens satirized the Dandys and their extravagance, he did not romanticize the artist in his novels. Moreover, in *Great Expectations*, the reader can follow Pip on his way to become a gentleman. The concept of gentleman was very popular in Victorian times and does not equal social wealth but a good heart, thus, a moral man.

Stephen has to cut all his social ties and desert his moral obligations into a self-imposed isolation that allows him to follow his artistic call. It is impossible for him to write about Ireland while he is still there. However, Stephen did not reject responsibility and moral obligation from the start. First he was attracted by the order and discipline of religion. He has to undergo a metamorphosis that allows him to free himself of the Irish dilemma, stiff family affairs and church. Finally, Stephen is disgusted by order.

Joyce was already opposed to religion and most of philosophy from the last century. Stephen rejects priesthood since it is based on the concept of sin, which almost

makes him mad. Influenced by Pater's philosophy of "art for art's sake", Aristotle and Aquin, Stephen realizes that beauty is what attracts him to art.

The emigration to the metropolis of Paris takes Stephen to a milieu of artists of the same spirit. His basis of self-realization is his superior call to become an artist. In this way, Joyce already uses a romanticised version of the artist. The call to become an artist, however, is used in a naturalistic way since it suggests that you are either born an artist or not.

Joyce's setting, his depiction of family life and the schools his Stephen had to go through, is not so different from Dickens'. The most popular teaching method for both of them was discipline, however, Joyce rejected it and soon rejected that his artist should have a moral responsibility at all.

Moreover, in Joyce's novel sexuality is a topic. Stephen frequents prostitutes and is hunted by his "sins". Dickens did not talk about sexuality at all and his idealized wife, Agnes, is so attractive because she is the Victorian version of womanhood: the perfect housewife.

Joyce's style marks a shift to modernism. The novel already has an aesthetic plot structure and various symbols such as epiphanies are used. Symbols will also be used by Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* as well as another very popular technique among modernist: the stream of consciousness. Furthermore, Joyce had a passion for Greek symbols, which is shared by Wilde's dandy, who supposedly looks like a Greek god.

The Dandy is the image of the aesthete: immoral, hedonistic and self-styled. Wilde turned his Dorian himself into a work of art. It is the perversion of social norms and conventional truths that make Wilde's novel so special. Moreover, the portrait serves as incarnation and thus central symbol of a perverted life. Dorian is the excess of dandyism, however, paradoxically serves as warning example against excessive hedonism. The fate of Dorian goes against Wilde's aesthetic principles: it undermines Wilde's aesthetic intentions and sets a warning example against aestheticism's lack of ethical engagement.

Dorian is a split personality: he does not manage to discipline his heart so to say. Also he does not share Stephen's artistic call that would serve as superior goal in his life. Interestingly enough, Dickens does have a dandy in his novel: Steerforth. He

appears as an aristocratic beauty in Dickens' novel and pursues pleasure, when for instance he runs away with Em'ly not caring about the pain he causes to everybody else. Dorian, however, does not have a Steerforth or Mr. Micawber, who would serve as bad examples, quite on the contrary. Dorian has Lord Henry, who encourages his sinful actions. So while David's encounters make him grow, it is Dorian's encounters that send him on the wrong path. Consequently, Dorian rejects all kind of responsibility and devotes his life to the pursuit of pleasure.

Homoerotic desire is one of the main themes in the novel. Basil and Lord Henry are obsessed with Dorian's beauty. However, homosexuality in the novel is an idealized form of love since it is impossible to fulfil this desire. Once love leaves the sphere of art such as in the case of Sybil, it becomes trivial and undesirable.

So in the end "Dickens is ultimately the most grown- up of the Victorians: he may be mawkish, hysterical, often not very intelligent, but in the end he knows more" (Gross and Pearson xvi).

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18 Appendix

18.1. Abstract

Hat Kunst einen Selbstzweck oder muss sie eine Aufgabe erfüllen? Welche Rolle spielt Moral und welche Bedeutung hat sie für den Künstler? Was bedeutet Bildung und wie kann man sie erreichen?

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit eben diesen Fragen. Dazu werden die folgenden drei Bildungsromane in ihrer Darstellung von Kunst und Moral untersucht: *David Copperfield*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* und *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Die eben genannten Bildungsromane werden einander gegenübergestellt und die Positionen verglichen.

Den Anfang macht Charles Dickens mit seinem autobiografischem Bildungsroman, *David Copperfield*. Eingebettet im viktorianischen England, ist Dickens' Held sich selbst überlassen und muss nach jugendlichen Torheiten feststellen, dass erst der Disziplinierung des Herzens erfolgreiche Autorenschaft folgt. Diese Autorenschaft wiederum hat zur Aufgabe, soziale Missstände und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheiten anzuprangern. Kunst hat also keinen Selbstzweck. Ganz anders bei James Joyce, dessen Stephen von den Theorien Aristoteles und Aquins begeistert ist. Joyce, schon mit einem Fuß in der Moderne, lässt seinen Helden aus erdrückenden Verhältnissen fliehen, um seinem Ruf als Künstler zu folgen. Im Gegensatz zu Dickens' David muss Stephen sich von Zuhause abwenden, um sich zu verwirklichen. Der Künstler Stephen erfreut sich am Schönen und lehnt moralische Botschaften der Kunst ab. Der Höhepunkt dieser Ablehnung findet sich bei Wildes Werk. Dessen Dorian lässt sich von falschen Philosophien verführen und findet sich bald in einem Hedonismus wieder, der jegliche Verantwortung ablehnt und sich nur dem Vergnügen hingibt. Dorians Hedonismus rechnet mit viktorianischen Moralvorstellungen ab und predigt eine Kunst, die ihren Zweck in sich selbst hat, ganz nach Paters Leitsatz „art for art's sake“.

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